

Second edition

The Ottomans 1700-1923

An Empire Besieged

Virginia Aksan



THE OTTOMANS 1700–1923

Originally conceived as a military history, this second edition completes the story of the Middle Eastern populations that underwent significant transformation in the nineteenth century, finally imploding in communal violence, paramilitary activity, and genocide after the Berlin Treaty of 1878.

Now called *The Ottomans 1700–1923: An Empire Besieged*, the book charts the evolution of a military system in the era of shrinking borders, global consciousness, financial collapse and revolutionary fervor. The focus of the text is on those who fought, defended, and finally challenged the sultan and the system, leaving long-lasting legacies in the contemporary Middle East. Richly illustrated, the text is accompanied by brief portraits of the friends and foes of the Ottoman house.

Written by a foremost scholar of the Ottoman Empire and featuring illustrations that have not been seen in print before, this second edition will be essential reading for both students and scholars of the Ottoman Empire, Ottoman society, military and political history, and Ottoman-European relations.

Virginia Aksan's particular interests lie in the Ottomans in a comparative imperial context, focusing on borderlands, warrior societies, knowledge transfer, intermediaries, and perceptions of the Ottoman evolution in a revolutionary age. Her publications include *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–1783* (1995); *The Early Modern Ottomans*, co-edited with Daniel Goffman (2007), and more than 40 edited chapters and journal articles.

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Dedicated to the memory of my beloved Oktay Aksan.



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It has been my task to focus on the transformation of the Ottoman military organization from the late eighteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth. The resulting book is a radically revised version of *Ottoman Wars* that extends the history from 1870–1923. COVID time has given me the opportunity to sink into the new literature to finish the story. For that I am thankful for the many conversations on ZOOM with the new generation.

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As they used to say in Turkish when a young child was surrendered to his first teacher at school: “Eti senin; kemiği benim: The flesh is yours, the bones are mine.”

Virginia Aksan

Hamilton, ON Canada

July 2021

CHRONOLOGY

Date	Sultan	Events
1683–1699	Mehmed IV (1648–1687); Süleyman II (1687–1691); Ahmed II (1691–1695); Mustafa II (1695–1702)	Habsburg–Ottoman Wars with Venice, Poland and Russia
1683		Second siege of Vienna
1686		Russia joins the Holy League (Austria, Poland, Venice)
1688		Belgrade falls to Habsburgs
1690		Belgrade retaken by Ottomans
1696		Peter the Great (1696–1725) as sole ruler
1699		Treaty of Karlowitz
1703	Ahmed III (1703–1730) 1720s “Tulip Period”	“Edirne Incident” deposition of Mustafa II
1711		Battle of Prut—War with Russia
1715–1718		War with Venice and Austria
1717		Belgrade falls to Austria
1718		Treaty of Passarowitz
1722		Collapse of Safavids (Iran)
1724–1746		War with Iran; Russo–Ottoman partition of northwest Iran
1727		First Arabic script printing press in Istanbul
1730	Mahmud I (1730–1754)	“Patrona Halil” revolt in Istanbul
1736–1739		Russio–Austrian Ottoman War
1737		Capture of Ochakov
1739		Treaty of Belgrade; Ottomans regain Belgrade
1740		Ottoman–French capitulations Frederick the Great of Prussia (1740–1786) Maria Theresa of Austria (1740–1780)
1753	Osman III (1754–1757)	
1756–1763	Mustafa III (1757–1774)	Seven Years War in Europe

1756		Diplomatic revolution, France and Austria allies
1762		Catherine the Great (1762–1792)
1764		Stanislaus-Augustus Poniatowski (last King of Poland, 1764–1795)
1765		Joseph II of Austria (1765–1780) with Maria Theresa (1780–1790)
1768–1774		Russo-Ottoman War
1770		Ottoman naval defeat at Çeşme
		Rebellion in Peloponessus
1772		First partition of Poland
1773–1775		Pughachev Revolt
1774	Abdülhamid I (1774–1789)	Küçük Kaynarca Treaty
1775–1804		Cezzar Ahmed Pasha in Acre and Syria
1783		Russia annexes Crimea
1787–1792	Selim III (1789–1807)	War with Russia and Austria (1788–1791)
1787–1822		Ali Pasha of Iannina appointed governor
1790		Leopold II in Austria (1790–1792)
1792		Treaty of Jassy Franz II in Austria (1792–1835)
		Osman Pasvanoğlu seizes Vidin
1793		First permanent Ottoman embassies in Europe <i>Nizam-ı Cedit</i> “New Order” era inaugurated
1798		Napoleon invades Egypt
1801–1802		British and Ottoman defeat French in Egypt Alexander I in Russia (1801–1825)
1804		Serbian revolt
1805–1806		Wahhabis attack and hold Mecca and Medina
1805		Mehmed Ali Pasha appointed Governor of Egypt
1806–1812		War with Russia

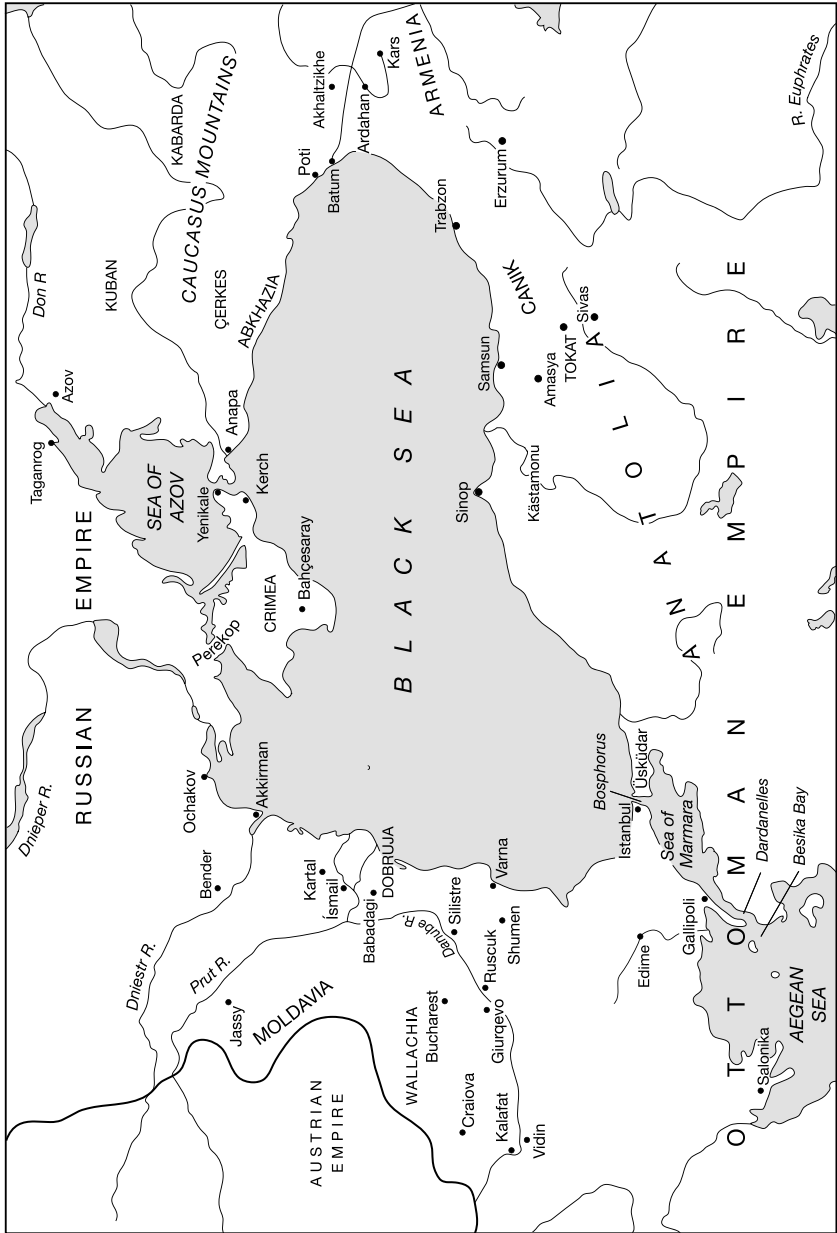
xx Chronology

1806		Resistance to New Order recruitment in Edirne Selim III recognizes Napoleon as emperor
1807		British warships force the Dardanelles
1807	Mustafa IV (1807–1808)	Revolt against New Order in Istanbul—Selim III deposed Treaty of Tilsit: Russia and France agree to divide up Ottoman Balkans
1808	Mahmud II (1808–1839)	Alemdar Mustafa Pasha attempts rescue of Selim III; enthrones Mahmud II Selim III murdered Mahmud II signs Sened-i İttifak with <i>ayans</i>
1811–1818		Massive revolt in Istanbul Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt and son Ibrahim subdue Wahhabis; eliminate <i>Mamluks</i> in Cairo
1812		Treaty of Bucharest—Russia continues Occupation of Wallachia and Moldavia until 1828
1814		Greek <i>Philike Hetairia</i> established in Odessa; Serbian revolt under Miloš Obrenović
1821–1831		Greek revolution
1822		Ali Pasha of Ioannina murdered
1825–1855		Nicholas I in Russia
1826		Abolition of the Janissaries in Istanbul
1827		Treaty of London — Sinking of the Ottoman fleet at Navarino by French, British and Russia Hüsrev military reforms (<i>Asakir-i Mansure</i>)
1828–1829		War with Russia
1829		Treaty of Edirne
1831		First Ottoman census
1830–1831		Revolt in Albania
1831		Mehmed Ali and Ibrahim attack Syria
1832		Battle of Konya; Ottoman defeat

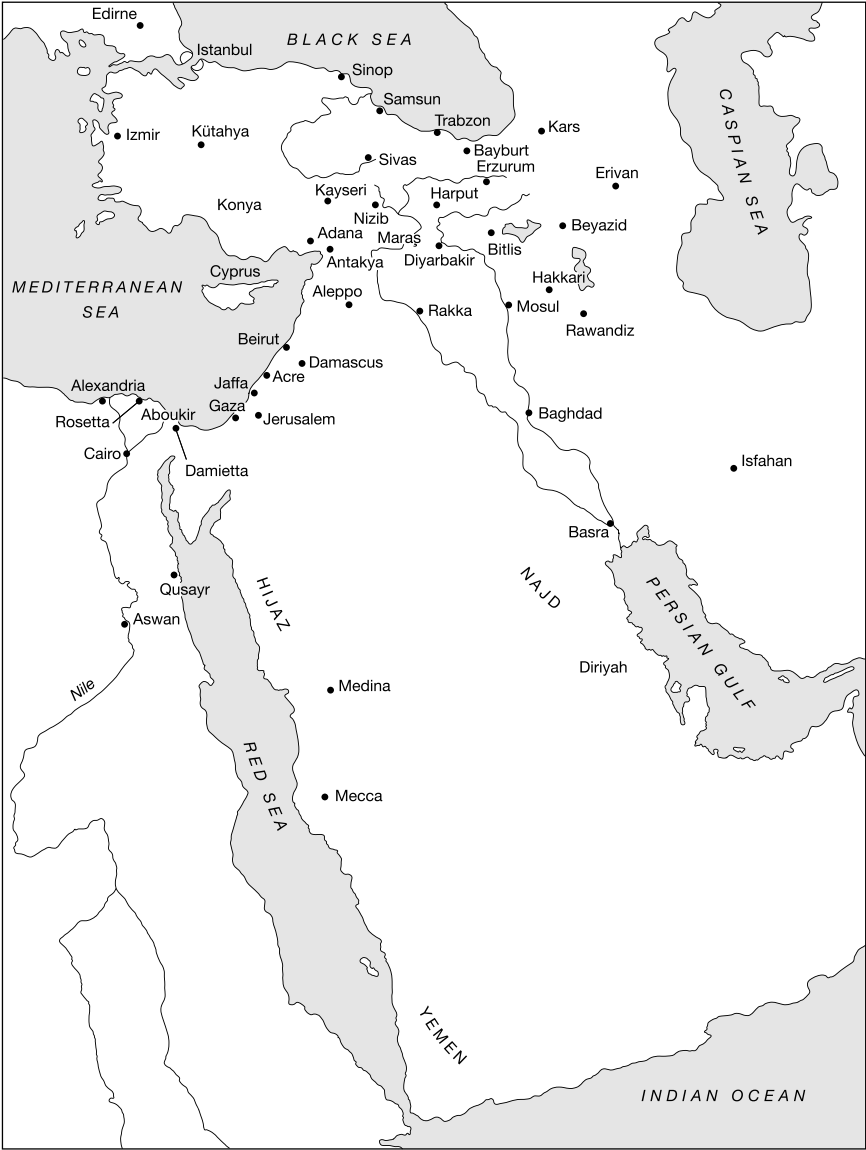
1832–1833		Treaty of London: Greek Independence
1833		Russo-Ottoman Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi
1834		Military Academy opened in Istanbul <i>Redif</i> reserve system established empire-wide
1838		Anglo-Ottoman Trade Convention (Baltalimanı)
1839	Abdülmecid I (1839–1861)	Battle of Nizib; Ottoman defeat
1839–1876		Gülhane rescript Inaugurates the <i>Tanzimat</i>
1840		Mehmed Ali and heirs appointed hereditary <i>Khedive</i> of Egypt
1853–1856		Crimean War
1856		Treaty of Paris and Imperial Reform Edict Ottomans join Concert of Europe
1861	Abdülaziz I (1861–1879)	
1863		Ottoman Bank established
1864		Forced emigration of Caucasus Muslims
1865		Young Ottomans founded
1867		Sultan visits England and France
1869		Ottoman Nationality Law Opening of Suez Canal
	Murad V (1876)	
1876	Abdülhamid II (1876–1909)	First Ottoman Constitution
1877–1878		War with Russia
1878		Congress and Treaty of Berlin
1881		Ottoman Public Debt Administration; French occupy Tunisia
1882		British Occupation of Egypt
1889		Kaiser Wilhelm II (1888–1918) visits Istanbul
1894		Young Turks organized
1894–1896		Sasun Armenian massacres
1897		War with Crete and Greece; Crete autonomous
1898		Kaiser Wilhelm II visits Istanbul and Syria

1908		Young Turk revolution; constitution restored, parliament reopened
1909		Countercoup; “March 31 Incident” Abdülhamid deposed and exiled to Salonika
1909	Mehmed V Reşad (1909–1918)	
1911		War with Italy; withdrawal from Yemen
1912–1913		First Balkan War
1913		Second Balkan War
1914–1918		World War I
1915		Armenian massacres
1915–1916		Ottoman victory at Gallipoli; Ottoman defeat at Sarıkamış
1916		Arab Revolt in the Hijaz
	Mehmed VI (1918–1922)	
1918		Mudros Armistice; allies occupy Istanbul
1919		National liberation movement begins with Mustafa Kemal
1920		Treaty of Sèvres; French and British mandates established; Turkish Grand National Assembly convened in Ankara
1921–1922		Greco-Turkish War
1922		Mudanya Armistice; Turkish Grand National Assembly abolishes sultanate
	Abdülmecid II (1922–1924) (caliph only)	
1923		Treaty of Lausanne; Turkish Republic proclaimed
1924		Caliphate abolished—Ottoman dynasty exile

MAPS 0.1–0.5



MAP 0.1 Northern territories of the Ottoman Empire © Gregory T. Woolston



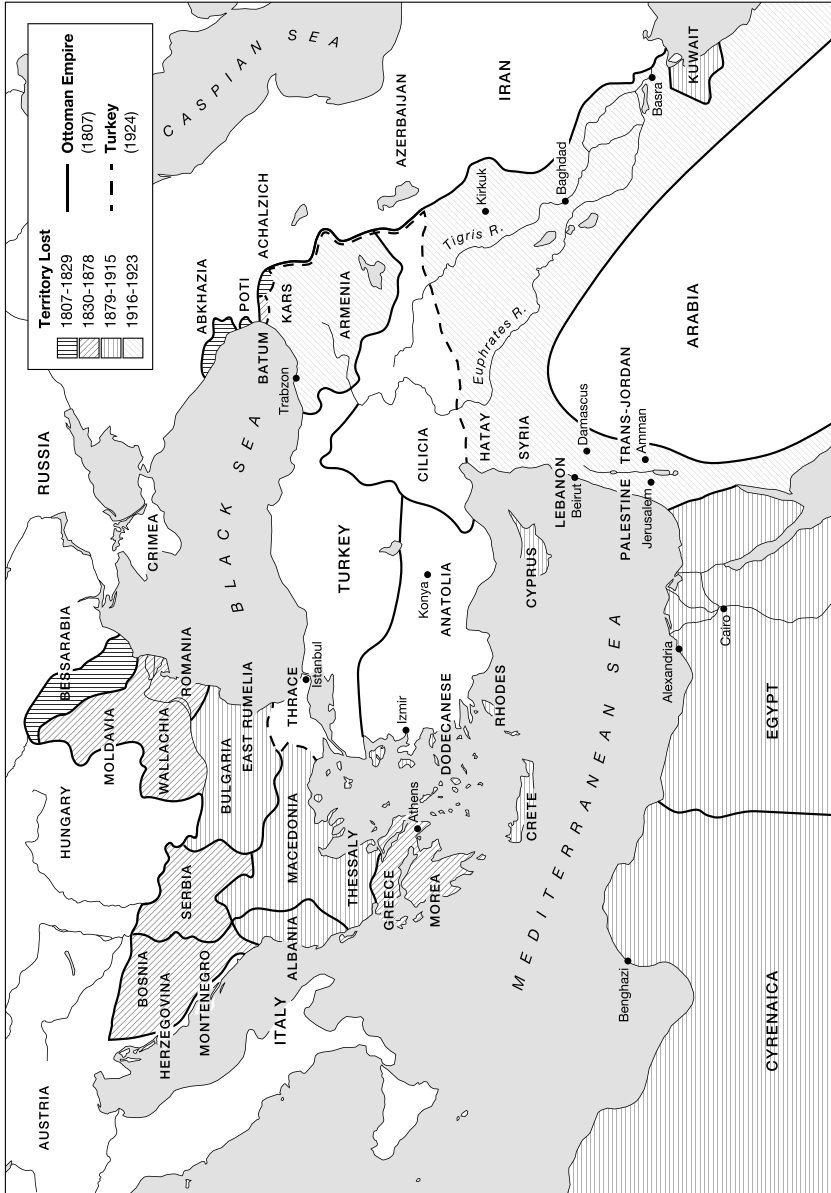
MAP 0.2 Southern territories of the Ottoman Empire © Gregory T. Woolston



MAP 0.3 Greece and Rumelia (Ottoman Europe) © Gregory T. Woolston



MAP 0.4 Persia and the Caucasus © Gregory T. Woolston



MAP 0.5 Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic 1807–1924 © Gregory T. Woolston



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INTRODUCTION

The Ottomans 1700–1923: An empire besieged

“War does not determine who is right—only who is left.” Attributed to Bertrand Russell

Empires rise and fall in violence. Nations too, arise from empires mired in violence and turn those catastrophes into national myths. Just over 100 years ago, the 600-year-old Ottoman Empire collapsed. The victorious powers, Entente partners Britain and France, along with the newly established League of Nations, immediately began deliberations concerning the future map of the Middle East. The lines of the map that finally emerged in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne were the product of Britain and France’s thinly cloaked colonial ambitions for control of the remaining Ottoman territories in Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Greater Syria and the Hijaz. Their territorial negotiations were tempered by demands of the young nation states of Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and Greece, where unsolved borders and violence continued to be part of the legacy of the war settlements. So too the calls for self-determination of Armenians, Kurds and Arabs might have made for a different map, but it was not to be.

In the midst of these deliberations, while Britain was in occupation of Istanbul, home of the defeated Ottoman sultan, Greek and Ottoman/Turkish forces faced one another in a final thrust to determine sovereignty over Istanbul and the straits. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (“father” of the Turks), and his nation under arms up-ended international expectations, drawing a new line around Anatolia, home to countless ancient civilizations, and declared it the homeland of the Turks. The practice of imaginary map-making based on ethnicity and sectarianism has continued since 1923 in the creation of some 40 countries that derive from the original Ottoman territories.

The Middle East/East Europe suffered more casualties (death, disease and wounded) than any other region of the world in that period. The United States’

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losses in WWI amounted to 0.1% of its population, and Canada's 0.8% to 0.9%; the United Kingdom and colonies lost 1.9% to 2.23% of their populations; Russia 1.6% to 1.9%; and Germany 3.3% to 4.32%. By contrast, Serbia lost 17 to 28%; Bulgaria 3.4%; Greece 3.0–3.7%; and Turkey and Arab countries, former Ottoman territories (now Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq etc.) suffered 13–15%. Behind those numbers is a story about the earliest constructions of the twentieth century's system of international relations and humanitarian intervention.¹

A passage from the *London Observer* on 18 November 1922, conveys the ongoing horror four years after the armistice that ended World War I:

It is estimated that more than a million bushels of human and inhuman bones were imported last year from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull. The neighborhood of Leipzig, Austerlitz, Waterloo, and of all the places where, during the late bloody war, the principal battles were fought, have been swept alike of the bones of the hero and the horse which he rode. Thus, collected from every quarter, they have been shipped to the port of Hull and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone grinders who have erected steam-engines and powerful machinery for the purpose of reducing them to a granularly state. In this condition they are sold to the farmers to manure their lands.... It is now ascertained beyond a doubt that upon actual experiment of an extensive scale, a dead soldier is a most valuable article of commerce, and for aught known to the contrary, the good farmers of Yorkshire are, in a great measure, indebted to the bones of their children for their daily bread.²

In its centennial years, historians of World War I have produced a plethora of new books. These new writings bring, in some instances, the Middle East battlefronts more directly into the story, moving beyond the great heroic tales of Gallipoli or of Lawrence of Arabia, which heretofore have served as the primary story of the Middle East from 1914 to 1918. Military historians now consider the 1912–1913 events in the Balkans—when the Ottomans fought Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia—as the crucible of WWI, equally as important as the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 that prompted Austria to declare war on Serbia.

Enlightenment thinkers proposed that the civilizational, progressive teleology of human history was naturally tending toward an end of violence, and that wars were simply interruptions of a peaceful, rational society in the making. Historians have long tended to locate violence outside of historical projects, as military history in the Anglo-American tradition was mostly relegated to a space outside the academy (only nominally present in political history, sociology and philosophy courses). Writing modern military history was often given over to retired generals, whose reading of history included a grounding in the classical Greco-Roman military campaigns and celebrated military heroes as Alexander the Great. Campaign histories emphasizing regimental battles, strategy, and medals continue

to be celebratory ways of justifying the sacrifice of generations of young people and the perpetuation of the relationship between conscripted military service and citizenship.

In historical narratives, wars and revolutions have persisted as world-turning, globe-stopping events, but the aptitude to violence is generally assigned to the losers. It is a cliché that the victors write history, but not less valid. Either the losers are presented as turning inwards on their own subjects, or they become militant, militaristic or barbaric, ethnically and religiously designated as innately violent.

For my generation, the Vietnam war upended many of most treasured assumptions about warfare, patriotism and humanitarianism. As with the Crimean War (1853–1856) and American Civil War (1861–1865), when citizens had daily news and pictures of battlefields for the first time, the horrors of the Vietnam War entered American living rooms viscerally as embedded photographers and journalists broke through the carefully scripted White House story of victory and just war. As World War I produced a generation of eulogies and critiques of the awfulness of death in Europe, so too the Vietnam debacle complicated the study of war by a plethora of remarkable literature by veterans. Witnesses to the pointlessness of such colonial wars, they spurred calls for social justice and equity that challenged narratives of good versus evil and civilized versus uncivilized.

Violence became a topic worth studying, considered part of the incomplete revolutions for equity and justice across world-wide spectrums of gender, race, and class. The study of violence in universities has been given further impetus in the past few decades, in part because of the unspeakable violence against peoples evident all over the globe, where neo-liberalism capitalism continues to disrupt relations between governments and citizens, resulting in spontaneous, often leaderless resistance and revolts.

The international human rights movement and genocide studies—both ongoing efforts to deal with the calamities of WWII—also suffered isolation from the academy in part because they were based in victimhood, and most often prompted by or investigated in United Nations organizations, supported by member states, philanthropic institutions, or private citizens groups. As Chris Hedges' trenchant commentary demonstrates

The ethnic conflicts and insurgencies of our times, whether between Serbs and Muslims or Hutus and Tutsis, are not religious wars. They are not clashes between cultures or civilizations, nor are they the result of ancient ethnic hatreds. They are manufactured wars, born out of the collapse of civil societies, perpetuated by fear, greed, and paranoia, and they are run by gangsters, who rise up from the bottom of their own societies and terrorize all, including those they purport to protect.³

America's war in Afghanistan, now the longest in the history of United States involvement, is still likened to a civilizational crusade against Muslim terrorists, as the Muslim-Judeo Christian line in the sand continues to be drawn. The intimacy

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of the globalized world and the extraordinary levels of violence prompted by a set of unprecedented challenges has created a new call for the study of war *in* history, and a reversal of our insistence that war interrupts peace, when, in fact, peace interrupts war. War can only be captured by studying “the historically contingent and constantly transforming structure of people, government and military with their adherent characteristics of passion, reason and technique.”⁴

The Ottomans 1700–1923: An Empire Besieged is a story about peoples, governments and militaries. I have added three new chapters and an epilogue to my original version (*Ottoman Wars 1700–1870*) to finish the story. It has now also become a book about communal violence. The central narrative concerns the radical transformation and dissolution of a Muslim empire in the midst of an era of imperial rivalry and world economic crises extending from 1750 to 1923, with special emphasis on the reigns of Sultans Mahmud II (1808–1839) and Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). The perspective is from someone standing in Istanbul looking out rather than from someone in London, Paris, Vienna or St. Petersburg gazing in.

Several themes are central to this story of Ottoman evolution, radical reformation and dramatic collapse. The book is largely a story about organizing men and supplies to manage violence. A related theme considers the ways that mobile (nomadic) tribal and peasant communities negotiated their relationship with a Muslim patrimonial dynasty as it pressed them into service. Settling, counting, conscripting, and taxing populations are assumed to be the primary tasks of the modern state however conceived. In its early centuries, the Ottoman dynasty seemed particularly able to establish a web of loyal subjects across its large and multi-ethnic expanse, networks that grew into elite families and their households after 1750. These networks had extraordinary mobility, be they mercenaries for hire on all frontiers; merchants with long caravans or fleets of goods bound for market; privateers who moved with freedom on the seas; or religious pilgrims, such as Sufis and ulema, for whom knowledge required travel. “Stasis” is not a word I would use to describe the Ottomans during any period of their rule. I use a broad brush with my vocabulary for men available for military service beyond the hapless conscript, not all nomadic or tribal, but bandits, militias or revolutionaries depending on the context: *levend*, *deli*, *hayduks*, *armatoles*, *klephths*, *akıncı*, *fedayi*, *bashibozuks*, *sipahis*, *sepoys*, *çetecis*, and *komitacis* to name but a few.

While what we mean by tribe or nomad is still hotly debated, I am taken by a Rudi Lindner comment that seems relevant to this context:

[t]he medieval Eurasian nomadic tribe was a political organism open to all who were willing to subordinate themselves to its chief and shared interests with its tribesmen. It was a dynamic organism that could expand or contract its fellowship in short order; its growth or decay was intimately related to the wisdom and success of its chief's actions. Its identity was derived from its chief, a fact which implied that its continued and powerful existence over several generations was doubtful. Opportunism directed the economic focus

of a tribe, determining whether it would exist on pastoralism, predation, or a mix of the two, while its mounted warriors ensured its political independence and dominance.⁵

The capacity to deploy manpower and supplies in defense of territories and cities, i.e. mobilizing violence as a geopolitical tool, was a paramount consideration of all pre-modern empires. The Ottomans, located at the edges of Europe, Africa, Central and South Asia, guaranteed that their frontier territories were particularly rife with certain kinds of communities. These were largely pastoral and mobile, and resided in the middle grounds of multiple civilizations, sometimes called the shatterzones of Europe and Asia. For the Ottomans to achieve their extraordinary expansion of the first two centuries required negotiations and contracts with very autonomous and quite independent populations. (By negotiation, I mean the constant “conversation” between ruler and subject, be it expressed through petitions, rebellions, disloyalty or desertion.)

The Ottoman tradition of collaborating with existing networks of martial peoples for the protection of far-flung and poorly incorporated borderlands continued into the nineteenth century. As Ottoman military prowess floundered and European borders started to contract, multilateral international relations became part of Ottoman imperial governance. The Ottomans were obligated to concede “rights” to their subjects, sometimes willingly, but more often as coerced by increasingly extractive colonial powers. The process began with the Greek revolution in 1821 and accelerated until 1878, when disputed settlement lines were mapped out to create Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. This book argues that the habit of militarizing segments of the population to contain a continuous string of uprisings of supposed internal enemies was a particularly volatile strategy in an empire that had lost 75% of its territories by 1900, and turned its violence inward, targeting fellow Ottomans.

This book is divided into four parts and nine chapters with an epilogue. Part I, *The Ottoman World Pre-1800*, situates the empire in the geopolitical map of Eurasia to explore the spatial and social context that determined Ottoman politics and culture. The emphasis is on the extraordinary web of communal networks and the mobility of manpower and goods. The Ottoman obsession with Russia, the emerging world power on its northern arc, stretching from the upper Danube to the Sea of Azov, is crucial to understanding the wars with both the Austrian Habsburgs and the Russian Romanov dynasties, 1750–1800. Included in this section is a description of the classical Ottoman system as it started to unravel: the state of the Janissary army, and the crises of mobilization and supply in an unsustainable economic system.

Part II, *The Revolutionary Moment 1800–1840*, describes the social transformation engendered by the total military and fiscal collapse of imperial defenses, and by the need to respond to international and domestic demands for reform, negotiation, and inclusion. The moment begins with the new order of Selim III (1789–1807) and the extension of the Franco-British rivalry to the Mediterranean

with Napoleon's landing at Alexandria in 1798. It ends in the reign of terror of Mahmud II (1808–1839) on his own subjects, resulting in a radical reconstruction of Ottoman rule in the new global imperial context. The very first units of a reorganized Ottoman army emerge, part of the struggle that brought Selim III down in 1807.

Part III, *The New Muslim Absolutism, 1840–1870*, focuses on the Tanzimat era and the imperial reforms embodied in the official decrees of Sultan Abdülmecid (1839–1861). Ottoman bureaucratic rule that emerged from the civil war with Mehmed Ali of Egypt after 1840 was predicated on innumerable compromises with European powers for survival. The gradual restructuring of the Ottoman economy as a colony of Europe, and the continued profligacy and corruption of the dynasty had an enormous impact on relations between the newly westernized elites (and largely non-Muslim) of the empire and the poorly served Muslim populations, who were conscripted as the backbone of the armed forces. The Crimean War of 1853–1856, considered one of the most pointless and wasteful of world wars before World War I, introduced modern technologies to the battlefield: newspapers, telegraph and photographs, exposing the shambles of Ottoman rule ever more effectively to European readers. It was also the high point of hussar-style cavalries: Highlanders, Cossacks, *Bashibozuks*, and Zoaves. In this context, Ottoman army reforms continued to model themselves on European versions—first French and then German—but exigencies of battlefield and purse required simultaneous use of volunteer tribal confederations, often for internal security as suggested above.

Part IV, *The Final Curtain: Imperial Reordering and Collapse 1870–1923*, begins with a mapping of the major Ottoman mercantile cities after several decades of reforms. It then moves to the discussion of the conflicting notions of citizenship and communal identities that arose out of the 1856 reforms during the Hamidian autocracy (Abdülhamid I 1876–1909). Germane to the theme of mobility, the discussion focuses on the largely untold story of the reverse migration of approximately three to five million Muslims from 1860 to 1914 crowding sensitive Ottoman territories such as Macedonia and eastern Anatolia. There is logic in the argument that the need to settle large numbers of refugees accelerated forced expulsions. It is also true that the new refugees made ready volunteer soldiers for the tribal cavalries and special operations forces of the 1912–1923 period. Abdülhamid's draconian policies nonetheless reaffirmed the constitutional reforms for Muslim populations by offering land in return for conscription as part of citizenship, guaranteeing the right to property and prohibiting dispossession (Article 21 of 1876 constitution), reiterated in the conscription law of 1886. As observed by Eren Duzgun, the guarantee of property demonstrates that

[t]he mobilisation of the lowest stratum was no longer based on the relations of a localised and personalised political community but began to be understood within the framework of the universal rights and duties of a new political subject. Geopolitical reproduction of the ruling elite was

therefore becoming dependent on the creation of a new political subject from the ranks of the rural poor, which would, in turn, qualitatively redefine the space of bargaining between the ruler and the ruled.⁶

Simultaneously, huge numbers of Ottoman non-Muslims—such as Armenians, Greeks and Arab Christians—many who broadly speaking were beneficiaries of the market society of the capitulations, with newly minted passports, joined the waves of refugees in international migrations overseas in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

The impact of mobility on military mobilization cannot be understated. Military reforms after 1870 relied exclusively on the German/Prussian model, with demographic engineering determining the settlement of refugee communities of the Caucasus. In retrospect, the military reorganization of this Hamidian period—including educational institutions and command structures such as a General Staff—were to have the largest influence on the post-Ottoman world, especially in the extensive uprisings of Arab nationalists whose leaders included Ottoman battlefield veterans. Abdülhamid envisioned a pan-Islamic unity with colonized Muslims across the world, while British paranoia constructed the great Muslim threat, inaugurating the modern era of religious propaganda which still operates in the Middle East.

This was also the moment when the Ottomans created a constitution, promulgated for a very short time by Abdülhamid and abrogated as the era of incomparable tragedies opened with the Berlin Treaty of 1878. The treaty satisfied no one and guaranteed a complete unraveling of the remaining Ottoman territories. The Young Turks emerged as a Jacobin revolutionary organization within the Ottoman forces, precisely in the context of the struggle over Macedonia, just as guerrillas and revolutionaries spread all over the world and whipped up the violence in the Balkans. The Ottoman economy was by this point largely run by French and British bankers and investors through the Ottoman Public Debt Administration. The military had become a counterinsurgency tool rather than a full-fledged battlefield army. The 1909 coup by the Young Turks (Committee of Union and Progress [CUP] or Unionists) represented the first strike against Ottomanism, and the sustained effort by many Ottoman reformers to create a multi-ethno-religious federation.

The end of the Ottomans for this author came in 1913, when a real coup of the Central Committee of the Unionists brought down the government and radicalized the remaining years of the Ottoman Empire, beginning with the complete collapse of the barely reformed army in the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. Hence, the war years 1914–1923 are told here in an epilogue that traces in brief the further collapse of Ottoman military capabilities, relying on the plethora of remarkable new WWI studies to spell out the international context. Also described is the turn from Ottomanism to Turkism under Mustafa Kemal, one of the CUP Jacobins who renounced the possibility of a Muslim federation and a secularized Islam and spoiled the victors' mandate that outlined a patchwork of ethno-religious nations.

Both Turkish and great power initiatives in fact denied the aspirations of Arabs, Armenians, Greeks and Kurds at the international discussions following WWI.

This book races through a fraught history with broad strokes and select detail for which I make no apology. It is intended for a broad audience in the English-speaking world, though the readers will find an international community of scholars in the further reading sections at the end of each chapter. History, however, is not just about the politics and military organization but also about the ordinary. Using the rubric the *Ottoman House*, each of the chapters includes a couple of portraits and occasional excerpts where appropriate of contemporaries who witnessed, participated in or were victims of the enormous upheavals underway. Who was an Ottoman?⁷ How did they experience the everyday? What was the understanding of their society? Until recently, these questions have remained largely unanswered. Historical works are now full of biographies, as more and more texts and translations become available to general audiences. Their voices help to fill the amnesia and silences of an otherwise unrecoverable past.

The World War I centennial has refocused attention on the origins of both the idea of the sovereign nation state, based on the Westphalia model, and of humanitarianism as European Christian models in the racialized colonial setting of the pre-modern Ottoman Middle East. The great irony, if it can be characterized as such, is that as Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats worked hard at Europeanizing themselves, they were increasingly (or perhaps eternally) “Orientalized,” leading Abdürrahman Cami, a member of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, in 1913 to observe that “only Europe stands in the way of the Turk’s Europeanization.”⁸ The great tragedy is the extent to which the nation state system with its mythic inventions continues to compete with more egalitarian models across the globe in “little wars” that are still couched in terms of the Judeo-Christian/Muslim divide.

Notes

- 1 Keith Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015).
- 2 Wikipedia, “World War I Casualties,” Wikipedia, accessed March 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I_casualties#:~:text=The%20total%20number%20of%20military,deadliest%20conflicts%20in%20human%20history.
- 3 Christopher Hedges, *War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning* (New York, NY: Public Affairs, 2002), 20.
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- 6 Eren Duzgun, “Capitalism, Jacobinism and International Relations: Re-interpreting the Ottoman Path to Modernity,” *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (2017): 52–78, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210517000468>.
- 7 Dina Rizk Khoury, “Where Are the Ottomans in the Historiography of the Twentieth Century Fertile Crescent?” *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/Journal of Ottoman Studies* 36 (2010):

207–24; Donald Quataert and Baki Tezcan, eds., *Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Ottoman and Middle Eastern/North African Studies: A Tribute to Rifa'at About El-Haj* (Üsküdar, İstanbul: İSAM, 2010).

- 8 Quoted in Mustafa Aksakal, “The Trained Triumphant Soldiers of Muhammad: Holy War and Holy Peace in Ottoman History,” in *Just Wars, Holy Wars and Jihads: Christian, Jewish, Muslim Encounters and Exchanges*, ed. Soheil H. Hashmi (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012), 18, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199755042.003.0014>.



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PART I

The Ottoman World pre-1800

When looking at the map of Eurasia in 1700, one is compelled to contemplate huge expanses of territory, bewildering religious and ethnic variations, and intricate lineages and genealogies. After 1800, these territories began to consolidate into nation-states in what constituted the final challenge to the sultanate. However, in 1700, the map had only just begun to change: the Habsburgs had just triumphed over the Ottomans and established a relatively stable border with their long-standing enemy. The victory in Vienna in 1683 is invariably described as the greatest moment in the history of the Christian–Muslim struggle and the counter-reformation. Checked at the gates of Europe, the Ottomans were to confront their need to reorganize their military and supply systems, which had been over-extended for the last quarter century.

Russia was poised to burst on the European and Central Asian stages with the reforms of Tsar Peter the Great and his successor Tsarina Catherine. The three imperial powers shared common problems, namely unsettled western and eastern autonomous frontiers, dominated by nomadic groups or confederations with their own proud traditions and styles of governance. As many have argued, borderlands were territories honed by ambiguity and resistance and often dominated by communal networks of patronage and protection (clientage) that had mastered the art of independence from any polity. This characterization of frontier zones proved particularly accurate for the Ottoman Empire, where kinship and clientage networks—as well as remarkable trans-imperial mobility—defined the population's resistance to incorporation and transformation.

The problem of moving from such warrior mercenary organizations to native, conscripted armies was a universal pre-modern preoccupation. However, it proved more difficult to achieve in the Ottoman context than elsewhere. From 1700 to 1800, the Ottoman military system was primarily Muslim and drawn from peripheral nomadic, mountainous and tribal populations. Determining how to

reform such armies into a centralized force was the key to Ottoman revival in the 1800s. When the Ottoman sultans first entertained reform, they emulated Napoleon and Peter the Great. By the mid-nineteenth century, Tsars Nicholas I and Alexander II, Napoleon III of France, Franz Joseph and Metternich of Austria, and Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany were in power and served as models for the reforms of Abdülmecid I (1839–1861) and his successors.

The first two chapters will explore the nature and challenges of a diverse and ununified empire in the pre-1800 context. Ongoing internal restlessness and external confrontations with increasingly powerful neighbors led to a significant turning point in Ottoman rule and administration. The years 1700–1800 can be understood as a moment of taking stock, of mounting resistance to sultanic demands and a return to increasingly large and costly tri-imperial confrontations. It ends with the 1798 Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, the beginning of the colonial age in the Middle East.

Chapter 1 maps the Ottoman territories through a geopolitical and ecological prism, pausing on the geography of the four points of the compass and the challenges of governing the religio-ethnic diversity of territories as disparate as Transylvania, eastern Anatolia and Arabia.

Chapter 2 describes the Ottoman system from 1700 to 1800 using an Istanbul perspective, the nature of the Janissary system, patrimonial rule, preliminary efforts at reform and the return to the borderland battlefields by mid-century.

1

IMPERIAL CRISIS IN THE EURASIAN CONTEXT

"At Semlin [Zemun, Serbia] I still was encompassed by the scenes and the sounds of familiar life; the din of a busy world still vexed and cheered me; the unveiled faces of women still shone in the light of day. Yet, whenever I chose to look southward, I saw the Ottoman's fortress—austere, and darkly impending high over the vale of the Danube—historic Belgrade. I had come, as it were, to the end of this wheel-going Europe, and now my eyes would see the splendour and havoc of the East. The two frontier towns are less than a cannon-shot distant, and yet their people hold no communion. The Hungarian on the north, and the Turk and Servian on the southern side of the Save are as much asunder as though there were fifty broad provinces that lay in the path between them. Of the men that bustled around me in the streets of Semlin there was not, perhaps, one who had ever gone down to look upon the stranger race dwelling under the walls of that opposite castle. It is the plague, and the dread of the plague, that divide the one people from the other. All coming and going stands forbidden by the terrors of the yellow flag. If you dare to break the laws of the quarantine, you will be tried with military haste; the court will scream out your sentence to you from a tribunal some fifty yards off; the priest, instead of gently whispering to you the sweet hopes of religion, will console you at duelling distance; and after that you will find yourself carefully shot, and carelessly buried in the ground of the lazaretto... After coming in contact with any creature or thing belonging to the Ottoman Empire it would be impossible for us to return to the Austrian territory without undergoing an imprisonment of fourteen days in the odious lazaretto....The [border official] then advanced, and asking once more if we had done with the civilised world, held forth his hand. I met it with mine, and there was an end

to Christendom for many a day to come. We soon neared the southern bank of the river, but no sounds came down from the blank walls above, and there was no living thing that we could yet see, except one great hovering bird of the vulture race, flying low, and intent, and wheeling round and round over the pest-accursed city. But presently there issued from the postern a group of human beings—beings with immortal souls, and possibly some reasoning faculties; but to me the grand point was this, that they had real, substantial, and incontrovertible turbans. They made for the point towards which we were steering, and when at last I sprang upon the shore, I heard, and saw myself now first surrounded by men of Asiatic blood. I have since ridden through the land of the Osmanlees, from the Servian border to the Golden Horn—from the Gulf of Satalieh to the tomb of Achilles; but never have I seen such ultra-Turkish looking fellows as those who received me on the banks of the Save... Whether the fellows who now surrounded us were soldiers, or peaceful inhabitants, I did not understand: they wore the old Turkish costume; vests and jackets of many and brilliant colours, divided from the loose petticoat-trousers by heavy volumes of shawl, so thickly folded around their waists as to give the meagre wearers something of the dignity of true corpulence. This cincture enclosed a whole bundle of weapons; no man bore less than one brace of immensely long pistols, and a yataghan (or cutlass), with a dagger or two of various shapes and sizes; most of these arms were inlaid with silver, and highly burnished, so that they contrasted shiningly with the decayed grandeur of the garments to which they were attached (this carefulness of his arms is a point of honour with the Osmanlee, who never allows his bright yataghan to suffer from his own adversity); then the long drooping mustachios, and the ample folds of the once white turbans, that lowered over the piercing eyes, and the haggard features of the men, gave them an air of gloomy pride, and that appearance of trying to be disdainful under difficulties, which I have since seen so often in those of the Ottoman people who live, and remember old times; they seemed as if they were thinking that they would have been more usefully, more honourably, and more piously employed in cutting our throats than in carrying our portmanteaus.¹

Eothen, Or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East, recounts the 1830s adventures of Alexander William Kinglake (1809–1891). Acknowledged as one of the first travelogues with modern sensibilities, just prior to the opening of the Danube to tourist travel (map 1.1), the work was an immense success in a century of copious such exotic narratives. It offers a contemporary expression of the most significant of the borderland crossings between Europe and Turk, Christian and Muslim, “civilized and uncivilized” that characterized most writings on the dynasty by the later eighteenth century. It also describes a warrior, a member of the communities such as Albanian, Greek, Tatar, Circassian or Serbs, who made up so



MAP 1.1 Danube Steam Voyage Map 1859, Yale University Library

much of the population of Ottoman borderlands. While going by many names, they had become a generic symbol of Ottoman barbarity as *bashibozuks* following the Crimean War (1853–1856).

The ominous and potential threat of violence that is palatable in this description is the subject of most of the later chapters in this book. This chapter begins with a birds-eye view of the four compass points of the territories of the Ottoman Empire as they might have appeared to travellers around 1750. The Treaty of Karlowitz of 1699 ended years of almost continual Ottoman warfare with the European alliance known as the Holy League (Austria, Poland, Russia, Venice and the Papacy). By that treaty, the Ottoman Empire ceded all of Ottoman Hungary (except Temesvár), Transylvania, Slavonia and parts of Croatia to Austria. Kamenice, Podolia and parts of the southern Ukraine were ceded to Poland, and Azov was ceded to Russia, opening the door to the Caucasus for Tsar Peter the Great and his successors. By any standard, it was a crushing defeat for the Ottomans, and one of the major turning points of the empire in its centuries-long confrontation with Europe.

The survey that follows is intended to convey the nature of life in these imperial borderlands as they experienced the flux and flow of three different empires: Romanov, Habsburg, and Ottoman. The impact of such far-flung frontiers on imperial styles of organization and governance was profound for all three dynasties. The survey begins with the northern arc, the Russian–Ottoman frontier, and moves on to the eastern, western, and southern compass points to convey the ecological variety and vulnerability of Ottoman borderlands and their inhabitants as the story opens. Not only did these frontiers determine Ottoman susceptibility

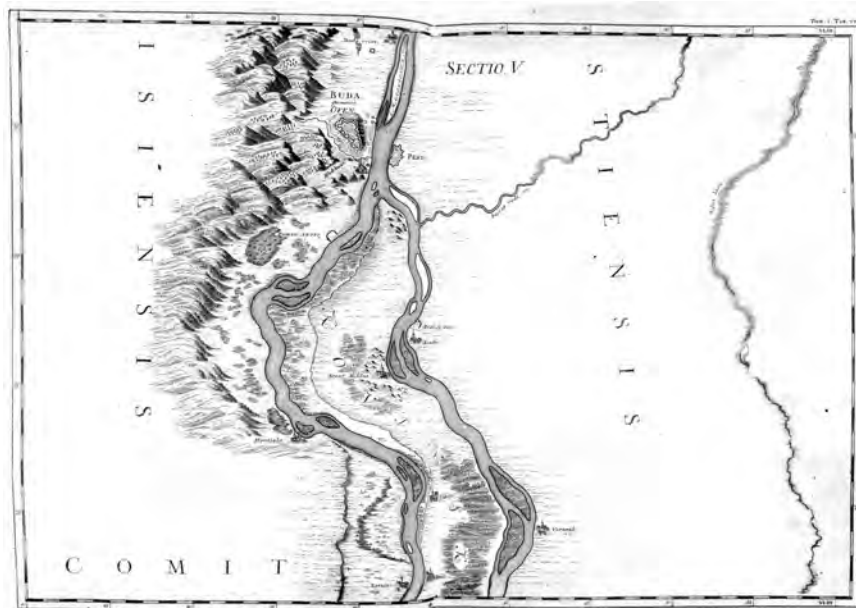
to outside forces, but the varied geography and mobile nomadic and pastoral populations shaped and were shaped by Ottoman culture and development for centuries. Examining the geopolitics of the border territories allows for a better understanding of the drama that would play out in the negotiations between sultan and subject in an age of liberation and revolution after 1750.

The northern arc from Belgrade to Azov

From today's perspective, it is difficult to imagine how someone living in the late seventeenth century might have envisioned the map of the Danube region and the Black Sea. The borders of the unknown were rapidly receding in Europe, but territories beyond Poland-Lithuania, east of Vienna and south of Budapest and Belgrade were still viewed as exotic and dangerous. The traveller on the Danube River was among the great adventurers of the age, facing ill-charted territories, fluctuating frontiers, and threats to health and well-being from displaced populations, bandits, disease-ridden marshes and ongoing warfare. The river itself was unruly, its banks unregulated and unpredictable.

Of the many accounts of diplomats, merchants and traveling nobility that provide much of our information and impressions of this territory, none are more thorough and colorful than the writings of Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, nobleman, scientist, diplomat, cartographer and factotum for both the Republic of Venice, the Austrian Habsburgs and even the French over a long and illustrious career. (*Ottoman House*) As befit young noblemen of his age, especially one interested in a future career in diplomacy, Marsigli first travelled abroad as a member of the entourage of the Venetian baili to Istanbul in 1679. Young and unencumbered with the task of submitting to the niceties of Istanbul diplomatic circles, Marsigli decided to return home overland through Bosnia and Dalmatia, territories within the Ottoman Empire. Thus began a 20-year career in traveling through and documenting uncharted territory. Within a decade, his knowledge of that region became essential to military strategists in Vienna and he entered Habsburg service (map 1.2).

Earlier negotiations around peace between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans had been orchestrated and mediated by the Dutch and English representatives in Istanbul. For the first time in English diplomatic annals, mediator and ambassador Sir William Hussey traveled into Ottoman territory not by sea, but along the Danube, with Marsigli by his side. Marsigli joined the ambassador at the great fortress of Esztergom (Gran) on the Danube in April 1691. Esztergom had been captured from the Ottomans by the Habsburgs in the triumphant campaign of 1683, as the Ottomans retreated from the unsuccessful siege of Vienna and failed to regroup effectively to defend the fortress. The final Treaty of Karlowitz, signed in 1699, ended an Ottoman residence of almost 150 years west of the great bend of the Danube, which remains one of the most interesting crossroads of civilizations in all of Eurasia.



MAP 1.2 Comte Luigi de Marsigli, Buda, Pest and Csepel Island in Danubius Pannonico-Mysicus 1726 © The History Collection/Alamy Stock Photo J7MNF

Although the international effort at mediation in 1691 failed, Marsigli remained in Habsburg service. It would be he and an Ottoman commissioner by the name of İbrahim who would pace out the newly fixed border of the 1699 treaty, which opened a new era in Ottoman–European relations. His were the first modern mappings of the Danube River Basin, which were soon elaborated on and copied across Europe. The maps that Kinglake had at his disposal would likely have been based on those of Marsigli.

The terrain of the northern arc of the Ottoman frontier in 1700 stretched from Vidin in Bulgaria to Kars in modern Turkey, across the Black Sea. For a long time, it was acknowledged as the “Ottoman lake,” and included the Crimean Peninsula, the land of the Tatar Khanate (1441–1783) who were Mongol-Turkic descendants of the Golden Horde. The Danube River and its wild basin flowing into the Black Sea embody the obstacles that pre-modern armies faced in this last frontier of Europe. Vast stretches of marshes, hilly terrain and difficult mountain passes characterize the region. In addition, extraordinary diversity in ethnicity and religion contributed to the normal strategic and logistical burdens of governing the region.

Ottoman sovereignty can be envisioned as an imperial center with Istanbul at its heart surrounded by a wide buffer zone where clientage and border raids sustained autonomous martial communities and a rudimentary economy. The key to military success often lay in the ability to coerce or cajole such border



FIGURE 1.1 ‘The plains of lower Wallachia’ Engraved by J.C. Armytage; Drawn by W.H. Bartlett, 1840. From *The Danube: its history, scenery, and topography*, William Beattie, M.D. (London, 1844) © Antiqua Print Gallery/Alamy Stock Photo GK8X32

communities on the northern frontier to escalate skirmishes into sustained campaigns. By the reign of Sultan Süleyman (1520–1566), the Ottoman system was largely in place in the central Ottoman lands of Anatolia and Rumelia, and spread more thinly in the peripheries. Süleyman’s victories at Belgrade in 1521 and Mohacs in 1526 began the domination of the medieval kingdom of Hungary that lasted until 1699, and successive sultans invested considerable manpower to ensure it remain as the bulwark of the European frontier.

Defined borders of distant frontiers are a modern phenomenon, and empires handled such ill-defined zones with degrees of clientage politics—negotiating mutually beneficial terms as a means of ensuring semi-autonomy and prosperity for the weaker partner—for example, Ragusa in the Adriatic, Transylvania, Wallachia and Moldavia on the northern Danubian frontier, and the Khanate in the Crimea. Populations in such loosely governed lands developed their own survival skills that depended on kinship and/or warrior bands and settlements that could make most use of the fluidity and fragility of multiple forms of governance. From the distance of several centuries, it is hard to imagine on the one hand, the intensity of the closeness of isolated communities, and on the other, the fluidity of pastoral nomads or roving rapacious bands. The appearance of an army in full regalia—the empire on parade with the sultan at its head—must have been heard hours before its arrival, and terrifying in its beauty and destructiveness.

Süleyman ruled from Istanbul as the shadow of God on Earth, sovereign of three continents, including Mecca and Medina, and as caliph of the Muslim

populations of the world, making the Ottomans a global phenomenon. Europeans were terrified, some dazzled, by an empire that welcomed all, renegades and/or aristocrats, by a simple matter of conversion to Islam. Others scorned a system built on slavery and lack of inherited status. The benefits for those who styled themselves Ottomans were enormous. The Ottoman ethos embraced the notion of a family, often referred to as a political household, the largest being that of the sultan himself. His beneficence began with his loyal sons, the Janissaries, and extended to the smallest peasant, his flock (*reaya*), who had the right of appeal to sultanic justice.

The legitimacy of the Ottoman dynasty rested on its adherence to Islamic law, the shar'ia, justified by the seal of approval of the Ottoman chief religious officer (*Şeyhülislam*); although, in actuality, sultanic writ and common law had long infused the Ottoman legal system. The problem of imperial aims and religious justification was hardly unique to the Ottoman context. The Russian Orthodox Church, by way of comparison, became an extremely important arm of the civilizing mission of the Romanovs in the very same era, as did the Catholic Church for the Habsburgs of Austria.

The problem of control over such distant heterodox populations, however, in the terrain just described, figures as the greatest of the late Ottoman dilemmas on the northern frontier. By the realities of defeat and the language of the 1699 Karlowitz treaty, the Danube assumed the function of the final frontier. This function was cemented after Temezvar was ceded to the Austrians in the Belgrade Treaty of 1739. After 1700, preservation of the fortress line from Belgrade to Azov became the primary strategy of all future Ottoman campaigns and treaty negotiations before 1800. Neutrality, or at least disengagement, was also a part of the new diplomatic strategy following the Karlowitz treaty, especially during the time that Europe was itself engaged in the Seven Years' War from 1756 to 1763.

In this context, the Karlowitz Treaty is significant for a number of reasons. It was the first time that the Ottoman sultans agreed to extended multinational negotiations with their opponents, a practice that continued for at least the next century. Secondly, the language suggested a treaty among equals, the Holy Roman Emperor and the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire styled as "The Most Serene and Most Powerful Prince and Lord Leopold, and the Most Serene and Most Powerful Prince of the Ottomans and of Asia and Greece and his glorious predecessors," an evocation of the change in the balance of power.

The third novelty was that Rami Mehmed Efendi, the *Reisülküttab* (Chief of the Scribes)—an office that evolved into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the nineteenth century—was head of the Ottoman delegation at Karlowitz. Heretofore, negotiations between belligerents had been conducted on the battlefield by the sultan and grand viziers. The *reis* and his staff became adroit at the niceties of diplomatic manoeuvring, as observed by diplomatic representatives of friend and foe alike. Rami Mehmed Efendi was accompanied by Alexander Mavrocordatos (1639–1709) in his capacity as Grand *Dragoman* (Translator), the

second time that a Greek Orthodox subject had negotiated with western powers on behalf of the Ottoman Turks, and certainly not the last.

Of particular interest in this treaty is the justification for peace to be found in the preface to the Ottoman version, summarized thus: “The Austrians, Poles, Russians [called Moskov or Moskova by the Ottomans] and the Venetians had so strongly united together and attacked the Muslim frontiers from all sides, from land and from sea, that it was impossible to divide and conquer them. Suspending hostilities and seeking peace was to be interpreted as the equivalent of jihad, and therefore good for the supreme state.” This, it was argued, was why the men of state, the ulema and the sultan had agreed to it.² Jurists were reinterpreting the concept of holy war to permit a legal state of peace, basing it on the rationale of the good of the Muslim community—*maslaha*—a term much evoked in later treaties. In other words, peace was another way to continue war, rather than merely signifying the absence of war.

This obvious fiction, publicly recognized as such or not, was in keeping with the imperial Ottoman notion of the permanently expanding frontier of the abode of Islam (*Dar-al-Islam*), and the inadmissibility of peace with infidels. The Karlowitz language sufficed for the 1699 treaty, though the news of the defeat engendered considerable protest and rebellion in Istanbul. It became harder and harder, however, to maintain such fictions as defeat piled upon defeat in the later eighteenth century.

Border societies in the Danube region

At one end of the newly created borders lay the territories of Croatia, Serbia, Transylvania, Wallachia (Romania), Moldavia, Bosnia, Albania, Bulgaria and the Crimea, home to a complex array of ethnicities. The region is popularly known, though not strictly accurately, as the Balkans, and has become synonymous with unrest from centuries of border negotiations, territorial reconfiguring and religious and ethnic disputes. A “hedgehog of frontier fortresses,” built by the Ottomans and their enemies, and unruly bands of border populations characterized much of the region, resulting in permanent instability. Osman Agha of Temezvar’s autobiography, a rarity for its times, is one example of what life was like for an Ottoman cavalryman in the Ottoman-Habsburg wars, charged with the patrol and defense of these frontiers. (*Ottoman House*)

As suggested above, the Ottomans preferred zones of influence and clientage of warrior communities to established defensive military corridors for their territories north of the Danube and the Black Sea. This strategy allowed them to retain administrative control and military influence without investing significant resources in the frontier territories, a practice perhaps best illustrated by the relationship between the Ottoman sultanate and the Tatars. The Tatar Khanate centered at Bahçesaray on the Crimean Peninsula was understood to be the legitimate descendant of the Golden Horde, which had dominated Moscow for over two centuries. The Tatars, perhaps the most mobile of all the Ottoman clients,

contributed thousands of men, horses and supplies to the major northern campaigns. Until at least 1700, the Tatars served the Ottomans effectively as a raiding force, plundering Ottoman enemy territories in times of war. They were notorious for their slave trade practices that supplied the sultan and Ottoman notable households alike. The relationship was ambivalent at best; the Khanate was in fact maintained by large influxes of money from Ottoman coffers, a system that guaranteed Ottoman continual interference in Bahçesaray politics.

After 1700, as the Russians began the invasion of the Black Sea littoral and penetrated Moldavia on a regular basis, the Tatar Khanate's usefulness to the Ottomans was considerably lessened. After 1774, when Tatar's independence was secured by the Russians as part of the Küçük Kaynarca treaty, the issue of the Khanate's survival was subsumed by the greater public debate and pressure to recover a large chunk of lost Muslim territory. The Ottoman fixation on this territory accounts for the sustained and debilitating attempts to recuperate the northern shores of the Black Sea that drove Ottoman foreign policy until 1792. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Ottomans had lost the northern coast of the Black Sea.

In contrast to the territories north of the Black Sea that were characterized by continuous military campaigns and interventions, the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were administered by no more than a token presence of Janissaries as part of a clientage contract. Moldavia and Wallachia provided essential grain livestock and honey for Istanbul and the Ottoman armies in return for semi-autonomous, non-Muslim status. In both principalities, hereditary princes had been allowed to rule their Christian populations by contributing men and supplies to the imperial campaigns according to an arrangement that lasted until the early 1700s. In practice, their independence meant that they could maintain their own private armies, and as a result were susceptible to competing loyalties. Russian support for their Orthodox co-religionists, subjects of the sultan in Ottoman territories, was reflected in the behavior of the leaders of the principalities. For example, Dimitrius Cantemir in Moldavia and Constantine Brancoveanu in Wallachia were both accused of collaborating with Peter the Great. In response, the Ottomans attempted to consolidate their control over Moldavia and Wallachia by appointing rulers (*voivodas*) from within the Istanbul Greek Orthodox Phanariot community residing in Istanbul, the Mavrocordato family being the most illustrious example. The territories continued to serve as a buffer zone well into the early 1800s, a primary battleground for the Russo-Ottoman confrontations that began in the 1760s.

At the other end of the northern line lay the territories on the frontiers between the Ottomans and the Russians, who had signed their own treaty with the Ottomans in 1700. The Russians withdrew original claims to the Crimean Peninsula itself, after suffering from the logistical realities of campaigning on the northern shores of the Black Sea and in the Caucasus. However, they returned repeatedly until rewarded with success and the addition of the Peninsula to the Romanov Empire in 1783. Russian historian V.O. Klyuchevsky divides the

Russian campaigns into three distinct periods: first, of Kievan Rus and the river Dnieper, and second, of the upper Volga and of a consolidation around Moscow by the late fifteenth century. The third period began in the seventeenth century with the Romanov entrance onto the European stage, the third side of the triangle that included the Poles and the Ottomans.³ Here, topography and environment again drove the style of rule and negotiations as much as the wavering loyalties of Tatar and Cossack. The territory between the Prut and Dnieper rivers to the Don and Kuban rivers and beyond to the Volga Basin was contested for over a century, resulting in significant dislocation and resettlement of populations on both sides.

As Belgrade and Azov represented the east–west axis of defense, Hotin on the Polish–Ukraine border assumed the role as the northernmost pivot of Ottoman imperial interests, so that one of the focal points of Ottoman–Russian campaigning in the eighteenth century became the Prut River valley. With 1699, the Poles had thrust the Ottomans back on that defense line; by the end of the eighteenth century, the estuary of the Danube itself was under siege by Russian forces. While the Russo–Ottoman Treaty of 1700 recognized Peter the Great’s enterprise in capturing Azov and establishing a naval base at Taganrog, his gains were lost at the spectacular Ottoman victory at Prut in 1711. This Russian loss was played out against Peter’s Great Northern War with Sweden (1700–1721), the flight of Charles XII into Ottoman territory and increasing Russian interference and control of Poland. When a final agreement was reached in 1713, Azov had returned to the Ottoman defensive line, but the Russians had achieved the right to a permanent representative in Istanbul for the first time, the beginning of the Russian march south.

Eastern border strategies—Persia

The eastern side of Ottoman territories, stretching from Baghdad into the Caucasus and Central Asia, was another zone of nomadism, religious confrontation, and warfare for the Ottomans, but on very different terms. Since the early 1500s, the Ottomans had been in competition in the east with the Persian Safavids, a dynasty of Sufi mystic origins that adopted Shiism as the state religion and challenged the very basis of Ottoman rule over the Muslim world.

The sixteenth-century struggle between Ottoman Sunni and Safavid Shiite was an eastern echo of the reformation underway in western Europe. The Religious Peace in Augsburg, and the Treaty of Amasya, by coincidence both negotiated in 1555, legislated the right of individual princes to determine religious preference within their own territories. This had followed on the Ottoman defeat of the *Mamluks* in Cairo in 1517, which gave them access to Mecca and Medina, the most sacred sites of the (Sunni) Muslim world.

The Shiite Safavids also challenged the global ambitions of the Ottomans, who on numerous occasions responded to requests for assistance from their common enemies, such as the Sunni Shaybanids in the north, numerous rulers on the shores of the Indian Ocean, and even from the rival Sunni Mughal house in Delhi. The geopolitical context of the Ottoman/Safavid territories is generally discussed in the

larger context of the international spice trade rivalries, especially after the arrival of the Dutch and English in Persia by the mid-1600s. The Ottoman and Tatar threats made for some curious bedfellows: the Pope and the Russians; the Persians and the Russians; and subsequently the Persians and the English. By 1750, it is possible to see the genesis of the nineteenth century great game in Central Asia, particularly after the British East India Company's occupation of India.

In 1639, the border between the Ottomans and the Persians was defined by the Treaty of Zuhab, following the Ottoman recapture of Baghdad in 1638 by Murat IV (1623–1640). The treaty is notable for its language, for the recognition of the shah of Persia as “the ornament of the Persian Throne, the splendour of the kingdom of Djem, and whose magnificence is equal to that of Darius, the great prince and illustrious Lord, the Precious Pearl of the Sea of Royalty, the sun of the sky of Sovereignty, the noble Eagle of the high region of the Dignity of Shah, the Most Illustrious and Majestic Prince,” and for the reiteration of the role of the Ottomans as

“the most glorious Padishah who is the Defender of the faith, whose Majesty is as great as that of Solomon, who is the substitute of God in the world, and who has justified the maxim that an equitable Sultan is the shadow of God on earth... the supporter of Islamism and Musulmans, the exterminator of heresies and of the polytheists, the Sovereign of the two Orients and the two Occidents, the servant of the two Holy Cities, the Treasure of Mankind and the apple of the age, who is protected by the Supreme Being whose divine assistance men implore, and favoured by the most High and propitious God.”⁴

While the threat to the Shiite “heretics” is implied in the text of this treaty, it reads as much like a statement of divine right along the lines of James I of England and reflects the rhetoric of dynastic politics of the early modern age.

This border agreement survived into the nineteenth century, but unrest along the Sunni–Shiite frontier zone was continuous, exacerbated at least partially by the rise of Russia and the resultant migration and emigration of populations. Immigrant nomadism was accelerated by the shifting balance of power and increasing intolerance of religious and ethnic difference that characterized both Russian and Ottoman imperial centers. Significantly, the east was a border of few fortresses, where formidable and forbidding mountain ranges (Zagros) and a climate of extremes served just as well to prevent conquest. It was also a mix of ethnic and religious communities: besides the Sunni/Shiite, the area was populated by Kurd, Armenian, Jewish, Georgian, Çerkes (Circassian), Laz, Abkhazia, Tatar, Kalmyk and Kazakh communities to name but the most prominent. Without an extensive waterway system such as the Nile or Mesopotamia rivers, camel caravan trade and pastoral nomadism were integral to the Persian economy and paramount to the silk trade.

The geopolitical realities of such vast Ottoman territories and their neighbors drove not only the language of diplomacy, but also the style of governance and

negotiation, the creation of real or imaginary frontier zones, and varying degrees of central control. Distance, seasonal change, and unpredictable but regularly expected disasters—famines, floods and plague—often made sustained campaigning impossible. It is worth remembering that Baghdad was 1,334 miles from Istanbul, while Belgrade was only 587. The harsh and stark setting, Safavid scorch-and-burn strategies, and increasing Janissary resistance to eastern campaigns kept major Ottoman incursions in the east to a minimum after the seventeenth century.

The tenuous Safavid hold on Persian hegemony fell apart in 1722 when Isfahan was conquered by the Afghan leader Mahmud Ghazlay. The Ottomans became progressively embroiled on the eastern frontier, with some predictable results: a further loss of control over revenues and an increasing degree of nomadization of eastern and northern Anatolia. A well-documented Janissary revolt, led by one Patrona Halil in Istanbul in 1730, arose in reaction to the news that the destination was that particular frontier. Distance, heterodoxy and nomadism remained powerful obstacles to establishing control in the east, and the reliance on tribal confederations for local security continued until well into the nineteenth century.

The southern frontier: Egypt, Arabia, the Gulf and Mesopotamia

Egypt, Arabia, the Gulf and Mesopotamia (present-day Syria and Iraq) which were predominantly Muslim but robustly heterodox, with ancient Christian and Jewish communities—can be conceptualized as the southern Ottoman frontier. The entire eighteenth century, largely post-1750, was characterized by massive Ottoman campaigns on the northern frontier to be described in the next chapter; campaigns that increasingly demanded fighting forces and supplies from the southern territories. In areas around Aleppo, Baghdad, Damascus and the Levant coastal cities, these campaigns led to the emergence—and in some cases the re-emergence—of nomadic or semi-nomadized, highly autonomous tribal groups such as the *Türkmen*, various Kurdish populations, the Bedouins and the Druze. Such autonomous confederations undermined Ottoman authority jeopardizing the success of the pilgrimage from Damascus to Mecca both for status and income; on the stability of Egypt for its annual tax revenue; and on the 3,000 Janissaries normally supplied by Egypt for large campaigns.

The physical and financial neglect of the Janissary garrisons in cities of the southern tier seems to have been fairly profound. Istanbul relied on the dwindling numbers of Janissaries to make their own way to distant battlefields. To do so turned them into entrepreneurs, bandits and even gun runners. City defense mechanisms involved creating local armies, such as the *yerliye* of Jerusalem, or the *Mamluk* beys of Cairo, a Turkish speaking warrior class that competed for local resources and attacked the Janissary garrisons on a regular basis.

Egypt and its Nile riverine system, at the edge of the vast Saharan desert, operated as a semi-autonomous province under an Ottoman governor and a Janissary garrison and remained a significant center for the pilgrimage to Mecca.

The centrally appointed Ottoman governor generally walked into a maelstrom of competing mercenaries or militias and could find himself besieged in his own headquarters. Because of the unreliability of networks and loyalties, local rulers such as Cezzar Pasha, defender of Acre against Napoleon, created and financed their own mercenary armies, which very often incorporated foreign (including European) renegades.

Mediterranean strategies: the western frontier

The southern tier story is deeply tied to events in the Mediterranean and the rivalries between the great maritime powers of the French and the English after 1700. The Ottomans as a maritime power has long preoccupied scholars of empire. At its height in the sixteenth century, Ottoman influence extended into the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea (Qusayr), and the Persian Gulf (Basra). Of greatest importance were the Bosphorus Straits and the Dardanelles, which, according to premodern maps, divided Turkey in Europe and Turkey in Asia (map 1.3). The convergence of the two provided the setting for the Ottoman



MAP 1.3 Map of Turkey in Europe, Greece and the Balkans, Cary 1801 © CPC Collection/Alamy Stock Photo CX67MT

capitol of Istanbul, which—with an estimated population of half a million—was the largest city in all of Europe.

For the sultans, maintaining open passages for food imports necessary to sustain the Janissaries and an enormous urban population was a constant preoccupation that influenced the strategies of naval admirals and merchant communities alike. The capitulations or treaties that were granted for trading privileges with the empire were typically favorable to imports to ensure the free flow of goods into Ottoman cities.

The Genoese colony in the Istanbul district of Pera, the European colony across from the Topkapı Palace, signed the first trading pact with the Ottomans in 1453, while the Venetians became their major opponent. For the next 100 years, the galleys of the Venetians and the Ottomans dominated the eastern Mediterranean, while client rulers of the sultan in Algiers and Tunis along its southern shores annually threatened the populations of Spain, France, Italy and Greece. The Adriatic coast and Peloponnesus served as an unruly Italian-Greco-Ottoman frontier. Normal trading patterns were occasionally punctuated with great naval campaigns, which continue to serve as examples of very costly, symbolic confrontations in the epic Muslim-Christian encounter. Among these are the Ottoman failure to take Malta in 1565; the famous battle of Lepanto of 1571, when advanced European naval technology destroyed the Ottoman fleets along with thousands of fighting men and enslaved galley crews; and the Ottoman capture of Crete in 1669 after more than a decade of struggle. Much new scholarship has demonstrated that all nations—from the Italian city states and the Maltese Knights of Rhodes to Algerian foreign renegades and Dutch captains—engaged in the profitable slave trade as well as the routine capturing of rich cargos. An Ottoman legal system developed that was used by Muslim, non-Muslim networks, and foreign consuls alike to negotiate their way through the capitulations and the pirates of the eastern Mediterranean. One of the post-1700 trends is the gradual implementation of international law of the seas in the Mediterranean as the global economic order started to take shape.

Istanbul (Constantinople): Gate of Felicity

In the eastern Mediterranean, all roads led to Istanbul, home of the shadow of God on Earth and *padizhah* of the tri-continental sprawl of territories just described (Figure 1.2). Here was the residence of the sultan, the embodiment of the glory of the dynasty, source of all wealth and power. Arriving in Istanbul by water is one of the great visual experiences of a traveler to the city, as true today as it was in the eighteenth century. In 1718, Lady Wortley Montagu wrote: “the pleasure of going in a barge to Chelsea is not comparable to that of rowing upon the canal of the sea here, where for twenty miles together down the Bosphorus the most beautiful variety of prospects present themselves. The Asian side is covered with fruit trees, villages and the most delightful landscapes in nature. On the European side stands



FIGURE 1.2 General view of Constantinople from Scutari, circa 1850, W. H. Bartlett
© Heritage Image Partnership Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo R8CKR0

Constantinople, situated on seven hills... showing an agreeable mixture of gardens, pine and cypress trees, palaces, mosques and public buildings.”

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (*Ottoman House*, Figure 1.3) described Topkapı Palace, the sultan’s residence to which she had limited access, as “a palace of prodigious extent, but very irregular; the buildings all of white stone; leaded on top, with gilded turrets and spires. There are six large courts in it all built round and set with trees, having galleries of stone.” Lady Montagu resided in Pera, where all Europeans lived, which she describes as a Tower of Babel. In her household, ten different languages were spoken: “my grooms are Arabs, my footmen French, English and Germans; my nurse an Armenian; my housemaids Russians; half a dozen other servants Greeks; my steward an Italian; my janissaries Turks, that I live in perpetual hearing of this medley of sounds.”⁵

The pomp, the circumstance, the distance, and the extraordinary setting were all part of the Ottoman performance of empire. As the diplomatic hub of the empire—no Ottoman permanent residents were sent to Europe until the end of the eighteenth century—all roads did lead to the Gate of Felicity as it was known. Newly appointed ambassadors often waited weeks or months before presenting their official credentials to the Porte. They were guests of the Porte and given an allowance, unique in early modern imperial practice, and assigned Janissary guards. Access to the grand vizier, the sultan’s second-in-command was determined by the adroitness and connectedness of the foreign representative and his entourage to the



FIGURE 1.3 Lady Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) in Turkish Dress © Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo 2B2H6RK

court *dragoman* and the intricate networks of trading families and overseas partners who dominated Istanbul diplomacy and trade.

By the eighteenth century, the Istanbul Pera district was synonymous with the non-Muslim communities, though Jews and Armenians also resided in villages on the Bosphorus. It was the residence of all foreign representatives and their staffs. Fener, across the Golden Horn, like Pera, another district inherited from the city of the Byzantines, housed the Greek Orthodox Patriarch and his flock. However, it was Pera that came to represent the European community both locally and internationally, and until the very recent past, it remained the lively center of a cosmopolitan city in contrast to the stately, imposing and imperial precincts across the way. In the period of Lady Montagu's visit, the city was economically vibrant, expanding into neighborhoods up the Bosphorus with new palaces and mansions, and the intersections between Muslim and non-Muslim communities were increasingly blurred in public spaces. The Tulip Period—as the first half of the eighteenth century is sometimes called by historians, because of the proliferation of public gardens and tulip displays—was notable for the rising wealth, ostentation and visibility of the Istanbul grandees and their families, including Greeks, Jews and Armenians.

Proximity to the sultan was essential for the accumulation of wealth, but Istanbul was also a city of bazaars, the pre-modern shopping malls. The greatest

was the Grand Bazaar, located in the heart of the city, adjacent to the imperial precincts. The Grand Bazaar was flanked by two imposing mosques: Beyazit and Nurosmaniye, the former from the sixteenth century and the latter an eighteenth-century construction. In 1700, the Grand Bazaar comprised some 60 streets, 18 gates that locked at night and 3,000 shops, all organized according to goods: textiles, leather goods, furniture, ironware etc. In the heart of the Grand Bazaar stood the I.ç Bedestan, the location of luxury goods and the silver and gold markets. The sumptuary laws that governed the dress codes for Muslims and non-Muslims in public spaces was reflected in the sale of goods, for example, in the shoe market: yellow shoes were reserved for Muslims, blue for Greek orthodox, black for Jews and red for Armenians.

Control over the non-Muslim population, most obvious in clothing laws, was based on the *Zimmi* or Protected Communities principle of shari'a law, consolidated by the Ottomans under the Hanafi branch of Sunni Muslim law. The first such Ottoman agreement was the one between the Greek Orthodox Patriarch, still in residence in Istanbul today, and Sultan Mehmet II, the conqueror of Istanbul. It was based on the acquiescence of the non-Muslim communities to the new Ottoman government and the payment of a head tax, called the *âizye*, in return for protection and the right to practice their own faiths. Subsequently, the other religious communities of the city were given similar status and their religious leaders ran their own communal affairs and religious courts. The exceptions to this arrangement were the instances in which non-Muslim individuals had a dispute or entered into a contract (including marriage) with Muslim subjects of the sultan. Such occasions were legislated in the *kadi* (judge) courts, named after the Ottoman appointee of the religious class. The court records of the Ottomans remain one of the vibrant sources of our understanding of Ottoman social history. The stories they tell about interfaith communal and commercial relations present patterns of interchange and interaction that are far more nuanced than simply the "us versus them" binaries of earlier histories of the empire or, for that matter, present-day.

By contrast with early modern Europe, this legal status and apparent tolerance of non-Muslim religious communities was viewed then and now as exceptional and tolerant. It is important to remember, however, that while non-Muslims might have dominated trading networks, they could not serve in the army, the single most privileged status of the Ottoman house of the period beyond the royal entourage. So, while it was exceptional, characterizing Ottoman practice as tolerant is problematic. This distinction becomes even more apparent during the Tanzimat, or the radical reform of Ottoman society's traditional organization in the nineteenth century, to be discussed in subsequent chapters. Social biases were always evident in the street, where those on horseback could by law only be Muslim, and disdain for the non-Muslim was routinely, if haphazardly, demonstrated by palace officials and Janissary alike. However, studies of eighteenth-century probate records demonstrate that cooperation and wide-scale lending across presumed hard communal boundaries was also part of the story.

Consider the case of Rabiye, a woman of eighteenth-century Salonika, whose wealth is recorded at her death as a small flock of sheep and small quantities of soap, and “who gave the incredible number of 162 loans to a wide variety of amounts to people of all religions and social origin: Ottoman officials, Christians, Muslims, and 22 villages formed a gigantic web of financially dependent people on this Muslim woman, who must have enjoyed a prominent position in the urban social echelon. She died without leaving any debts to her heirs.”⁶ As this story suggests, one of the successes of the Ottoman dynasty in its heyday was the ability of the system to engender confidence in its Muslim subjects, reflected in the thousands of such documents of belonging in the vast surviving archives of the empire.

The confluence of cultures often described as Levantine might have been unique to Pera, but variations of it were replicated in all the Mediterranean cities of the empire such as Salonika, Izmir, Beirut, Alexandria as well as in trading and pilgrimage cities such as Aleppo or Damascus. As Ottoman dynastic fortunes declined because of excessive warfare, the loss of revenues as territories shrank, and the new global economy shaped by Britain and France, cities with access to overseas markets grew in size, and their non-Muslim merchant communities eventually undermined the economic power of both the Grand Bazaar and Muslims merchant families alike. This is especially apparent after the 1850s as described in Chapter 7.

Topkapı: the imperial household

Across the Golden Horn from Pera lay the imperial precincts, the gardens and palace known as Topkapı. Present-day visitors come away with two observations: one, the immense wealth on display—diamonds and emeralds as big as one’s fist—and two, the rather small, even insignificant size of the palace itself. Before 1800, the palace functioned as the greatest of the Ottoman political households and it employed thousands. The Harem, which housed the mothers of the sultan, and the current favorite concubine and her young children, were virtual prisoners who nonetheless received annual salary allotments. The *Kafes*, or the Cage, was the male quarters where the Sultan and princes resided. Both were administered by eunuchs. A large courtyard in front of the ceremonial gate, the entrance to the sultan’s quarters, was the scene of the public performance of power. The most evocative ceremony held there was the accession of the new sultan to the throne when the Janissaries swore their allegiance to the sultan, and he, in turn, offered them an accession bonus, an outlay of state funds that was ruinous by the mid-1750s. As *kapıkulu* (“household-slave,” the term used for the imperial troops), the Janissary served the sultan, operating within a corps structure, pledging gratitude, eternal loyalty and unflinching heroism. The relationship between Janissary and sultan has often been described as that of father to his sons, but with some exceptions: until the 1650s, most members of the households had slave origins, a subject to be taken up in the next chapter.

Ottoman elite society was based on an understanding of each individual’s place in the hierarchy of the sultan’s indulgence. The Ottoman glue, so to speak, was the

ability of the Ottoman house to convince its residents that justice and beneficence emanated from the Gate of Felicity. The sultan's justice was embodied in the notion of the household on campaign, a legacy of their Central Asian origins from the distant (and highly mythologized) past, with imperial power perpetually on the move. Images of the military forces deployed on the battlefield in this period clearly show the crescent formation that the Ottomans employed in major open field confrontations, with the sultan's tent (latterly the grand vizier's tent) at the center, surrounded by the Janissaries and the cavalry forces deployed to the left and right in strict hierarchical order. This formation was maintained at enormous cost, even as new technical and strategic developments in armaments dictated otherwise. The arrangement of order of the apparatus of war was the expression of the order and proximity to the privileges granted by the royal household—the sultan, or his substitute, the grand vizier. Well into the eighteenth century most of the bureaucracy of the court marched with the army while proxies occupied their vacant offices in Istanbul. Such representation of the founding myths and the physical replication of the court remained in use well into the eighteenth century even as the traditional order began to crumble in the face of better organized European and Russian armies.

Political households were also a prominent feature in the provinces of the empire. They were ruled by court-appointed governors (*valis*, pashas) who had established significant networks of power in extended households. Governors normally had short terms, an Ottoman method of preventing attachments to a specific place. They organized small, Janissary-style mercenary armies in their own entourages, called the *kapuhalkı* ("household folk"), for prestige and protection. By 1750, the Ottoman map was dotted with local variants of such households, particularly in the ungovernable borderland districts, headed by *ayans*, or warlords, who challenged the sultan and his Istanbul elites by organizing private armies in collaboration with local warrior bands: mercenaries, militias, protectors, bandits, freedom-fighters—*delis*, *levend*, *bashibozuks*—a ubiquitous arrangement which perpetuated insecurity and rapacious behavior. The following chapter examines that transition in an environment of newly circumscribed frontiers, increasing economic chaos and sustained campaigning on the Danube.

Observing the Ottoman House: Luigi Marsigli, Osman Agha of Temeşvar and Lady Wortley Montagu

Comte Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, 1658–1730⁷

Born into the aristocracy of Bologna, Marsigli had both the responsibilities and opportunities few ordinary citizens would have had, such as the option of choosing a life in public service or the church. He seems to have had an avid

*interest in the new post-Galilean science and was a natural polymath. Marsigli acquired an interest in Turkey, which led him to sign on with the Venetian consul (bailo) of Istanbul as described at the beginning of this chapter. In 1683, Marsigli, now a volunteer officer in Habsburg service, found himself a captive, first of the Tartars and then of Bosnian horseman, who tried to ransom him in the same manner as Osman Agha of Temeşvar. After much negotiation, Marsigli was rescued thanks to the intervention of local Franciscans. The information he collected during his captivity and throughout the rest of his career in Habsburg service was not fully published until after his death in 1730. Marsigli's accounts appear in *Stato militare del Imperio Ottomano*, printed in 1732, full of remarkable illustrations, which remains one of the most informative books on the Ottoman military system of the period.*

*As was customary with foreigners, during his travels Marsigli was typically accompanied by an interpreter. However, his eagerness and natural sympathies allowed him to bridge the formal distance and join the intellectual circles of Istanbul; the court astronomer gave Marsigli the horoscopes of Sultan Mehmed IV, and Hezarfenn, an encyclopedic chronicler, shared with him many official texts describing the Ottoman forces and the revenues supporting them. At this time, Marsigli also became involved with geography and mapping and met Ebu Bekir of Damascus who had been ordered to translate Blaeu's *Atlas of the World*, which had been given to the sultan in 1668 by the Dutch Resident in Istanbul.*

Marsigli's long career in service to the Habsburg command in the Balkans made him the expert on the geography and vagaries of the Danube, and the natural choice for delineating the boundary dictated by the Karlowitz Treaty. As General Marsigli, he was the Imperial Boundary Commissioner for the Habsburgs from 1699 to 1701. Marsigli became an important source of knowledge as he continued to survey the Habsburg-Ottoman borders and amassed an enormous collection of maps that dealt not only with the flow of rivers and the placement of bridges, but which also established the sites of Roman forts and detailed the ecology of the Danube and its tributaries, geology, biology, botany and ornithology. In his later life, Marsigli fell out of favor with the Habsburgs. He returned to Bologna and service to Rome and became an immense patron of the arts and sciences in his native city. He remains a remarkable example of the early Enlightenment when the interest in antiquity merged with the new sciences of observation and travel.

Osman Agha of Temeşvar⁸

The autobiography of Osman Agha is a highly exceptional piece of writing for a society largely illiterate and bounded by communal rather than individual

obligation. An Ottoman cavalryman, Osman Agha who was a captive of the Habsburgs for a number of years. He illustrates the nature and uncertainty of soldiering in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of our story. As a young man, Osman participated in border raids around Temeşvar. When he matured and inherited some property, he had the resources to properly equip himself with a horse and weapons and was assigned to the head of a detachment of light cavalry with ten men under him. At that time, after the 1683 campaign, the Habsburgs were besieging the fortress line along the Tisza and Maros rivers. They attacked the fortresses of Čanad and Arad north of Temeşvar, then burned the perimeters and withdrew. Osman writes:

"All the Serbian people who had run away became bandits or mercenaries attached to the Austrians.... Almost every day, they would attack Temeşvar residents, killing or enslaving travellers, farmers and the like, taking them to their forts to be imprisoned, later ransomed. We, too, attacked their forts and took prisoners."

This was the situation when Osman's detachment was asked to deliver the Janissary salaries to the Arad fortress. Their task was to escort the salary money as far as Lipova, a lesser fortress to the east of Arad on the Maros River, and a ten-hour ride from Temeşvar. Osman was among 80 soldiers assigned to the task, which they accomplished without incident.

It was cherry season in Lipova, so the detachment dallied an extra day to enjoy the abundance. The defense of the fortress, Osman recalled, was reduced to "less than three hundred men, more than a hundred having been killed in previous battles. In short, including us, there were fewer than 500 soldiers in the garrison." The Austrians had 16 infantry and cavalry regiments. SomeSome 2,000 Serbian bandits and other irregulars blocked the Maros bridge crossing, making it impossible for the visiting detachment to escape. Osman and the others retreated to the fortress after burning the bridge. The siege of the fortress began on the second day before dawn: "[T]hey began to pound the walls with cannons and mortars, and demolished a large enough section to get through by afternoon. A few of the company inside responded by filling the gap with pillows and mattresses."

As the Austrians closed in, most of the defenders concentrated their fire on the breach, fighting with light cannons and handguns and leaving the other gates unattended. These gates were forced by the Serbian and Hungarian bandits and irregulars. The defenders found themselves besieged in the inner fortress, with the outer perimeter and the town of some 2,000 houses burned. For three days and nights, the Austrians pounded the walls and picked off defenders from atop minarets and roofs. Osman's detachment was assigned the most dangerous parts of the walls. Finally, the fortress raised the white flag. The defenders asked to be allowed to depart in peace for Temeşvar. This was refused, and the Austrians reserved the right to take prisoners. Fighting was resumed for another two days, after which the fortress surrendered unconditionally.

According to the agreement, men and women in the fort began to go out unarmed. We were watching the process from the battlements. Austrian soldiers had lined up from their army to the fort in two rows. The distance between the Austrian army and the fort was a quarter of an hour. The soldiers standing on the road forcibly pulled at the men, women and servants and stripped them. Those who resisted were killed and robbed of everything. Their carcasses were spread all over the road. However much the Austrian officers wanted to stop this, it was not possible. Even as we watched, generals on horseback shot and killed some of those who stripped and killed Muslims.

About 60 of the garrison fighting force were kept as captives for potential ransom, while the rest of the population of Lipova was forced into slavery. Only women, the sick and the poorest were allowed to depart for Temeşvar. Osman and a companion were sent as captives to officers in the General Prince Louis Guillaume de Bade regiment. Osman's master, a Lieutenant Fischer, had a "Saxon" girl from Erdel province as a servant with whom "he fulfilled some of his bodily needs." She served as a translator. Before long, the Lieutenant proposed that Osman go home to Temeşvar and arrange his ransom. Osman secured a guarantor in return for raising a second ransom, and actually returned to Temeşvar for that purpose. Five of the captives crossed an abandoned landscape to their homes. In the promised seven days, they returned to Austrian territory with the ransom only to find that their captors had been reassigned to the area around Ösijek. Again, they marched across boundless wasteland, "passing towns left abandoned and derelict by the heels of the Austrian soldiers, using the wells dug in their encampments, and encountering Serbian bandits, who questioned them, but did not harm them."

In the end, Osman was not released by his Austrian master, even after the Karlowitz Treaty. He finally escaped after 11 years of enslavement, seven of them spent in Vienna. He returned home to a much changed Temeşvar, which most of his family had left, where he served the local governor as a translator for a number of years. Osman appears to have been involved in the commissions established to solve border disputes arising from the new treaty line. By the time Temeşvar itself surrendered to the Austrians in 1717, Osman had lost everything, including his wife. Afterwards, he served the Vidin commander as translator, then emigrated to Istanbul in 1724.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 1689–1762

The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 1689–1762, are justly famous as the acute observations made by the first English woman to write about the Ottoman Empire during her stay from 1716 to 1718. It was a period of upheaval in Istanbul, and Lady Mary's letters have served as a portrait of the empire in the

midst of the extended war with the Habsburgs and the possibility of war with the Safavids. Of aristocratic stock, she has been celebrated as an early feminist, outspoken about her travels, observations, and critical of the role of women in the British upper class. She wrote prolifically with a rare and unprejudiced insight about the Orient that proved unpopular with the Eurocentric views of the time and embroiled her in a number of controversies upon her return to England. One such controversy was her championship of the smallpox inoculation she found in use in Istanbul. Another was her experience of the harem of the sultan, a rare instance of personal observations of an institution that has been characterized through the ages as a site of debauchery and illicitness. Lady Mary, however, deployed the assumed oppression and debauchery of women in the harem and the hamam—a common perspective in many writings of the period—as a means to criticize British restrictions on aristocratic women's lives.

Despite her unique observations, Lady Mary's correspondence with the literati of eighteenth-century England, public disputes concerning her estrangement from her husband and family, and the history of her letters—which circulated widely but were not published until after her death—have overshadowed her writing on Istanbul. As a result, the importance of the information included in her letters from Istanbul had not been properly assessed until very recently.

Notes

- 1 Alexander William Kinglake, *Eothen or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* (London: John Oliver, 1844), location one of digital version.
- 2 Rifaat Abou-El-Haj, "Ottoman Attitudes Toward Peace Making: The Karlowitz case," *Der Islam* 51 (1974): 131–7.
- 3 Paul Dukes, *The Making of Russian Absolutism, 1613–1801* (2nd ed.) (London: Longman, 1990), Klyuvhesky quoted in Ch. 1.
- 4 JC Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record* (Vol. 1) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 26.
- 5 Mary Worley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters*, eds. Terese Heffernan and Daniel O'Quinn (Peterborough, ON: Broadview editions, 2013), letter 41–2, 163–64.
- 6 Phokion Kotzageorgis, "Wealth Accumulation in an Urban Context: The Profile of the Muslim Rich of Thessaloniki in the Eighteenth Century on the Basis of Probate Inventories," *Turkish Historical Review* (2014): 165–99.
- 7 Description drawn from John Stoye, *Marsigli's Europe 1680-1730* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994).
- 8 Osman of Temeşvar, *Kendi kalemiyle Temeşvarlı Osman Ağ'a*, ed. Harun Tolasa (Konya, 1986), 21, 44–55.

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2

THE OTTOMAN SYSTEM CIRCA 1700

The Ottoman difference

In 1703, a serious revolt broke out in Istanbul among the sultan's military forces stationed in the city (Figure 2.1). The revolt was an expression of discontent with high prices, low wages and sultanic ineptitude. This was not the first nor the last such revolt of the period, but there were some new participants who joined the ranks of the rebels. Observers noted an interesting mix of subjects of the sultan, including a new coalition of soldiers as well as artisans and members of the religious class. Sultan Mustafa II (1695–1703) had attempted to keep the details of defeat from the public for a considerable period. As part of that strategy, in 1701, he left Topkapı Palace and moved the seat of government to the Ottoman palace in Edirne, where he took up residence. The demands of the rebel leaders in Istanbul in 1703 were legitimated by members of the religious class, the ulema, who normally were not part of fairly regular, often unruly demonstrations of the military men stationed in Istanbul. Apprised of the latest round of military disasters on the Danube River, the rebels disdained such obvious attempts by the sultan to escape the consequences of the loss of political legitimacy.

In this case, serving as arbiters of justice, the religious officials brought the demands of the soldiers to the sultan. The complaints numbered four. The first concerned Mustafa II's neglect of his "trust" in looking after his subjects, "allowing injustice and inequity to reign" while he went hunting in Edirne, wasting the public treasury. The second legitimated the right of a Muslim community to stand up to an unjust ruler. The third condemned those who sided with an unjust ruler. The fourth charged Mustafa II with having failed the community by conceding so much territory to the Christian powers. This manifesto, echoing many others of the period, argues that the sultan's chief duty lay in maintaining the balance and stability of the Muslim community, while defending and extending

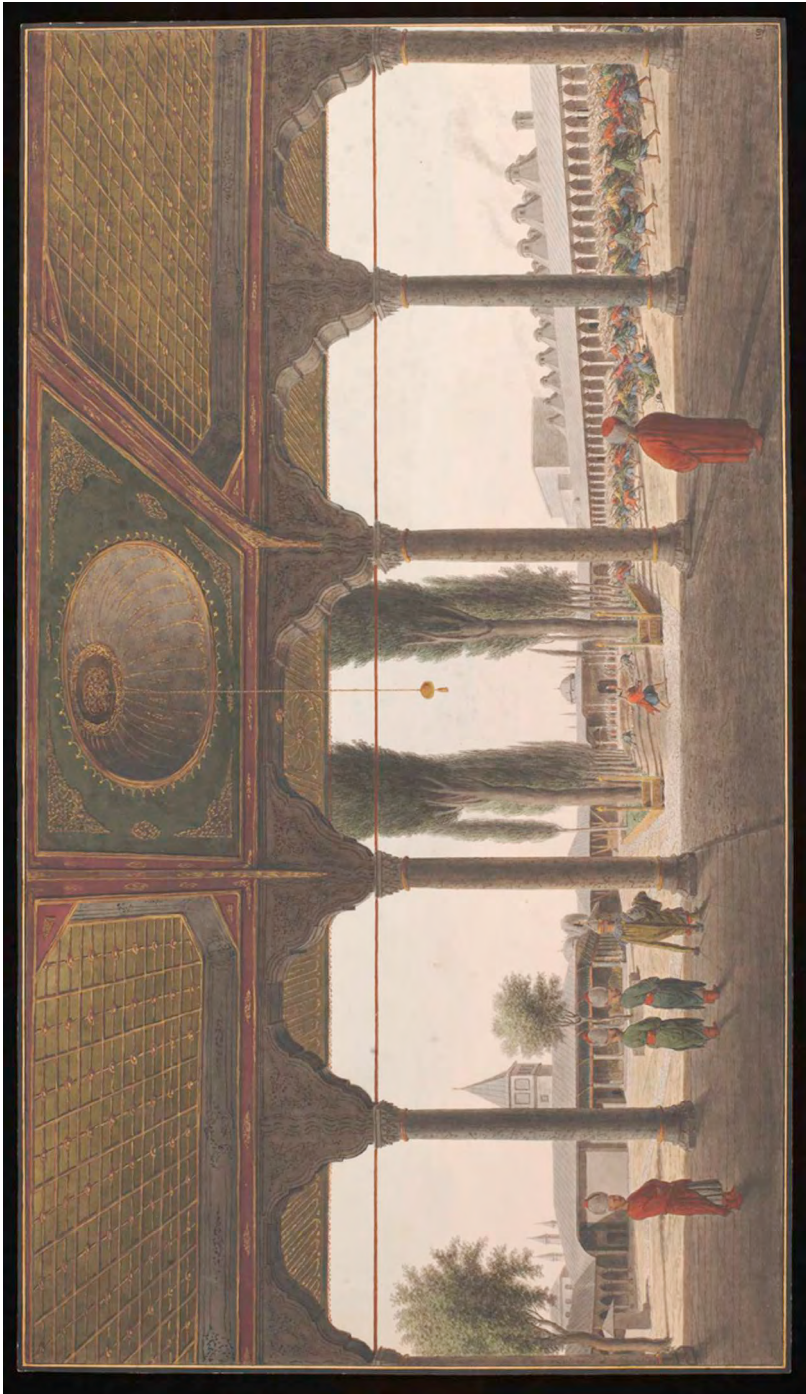


FIGURE 2.1 “Janissaries running to collect their pay at Babussaada or Gate of Felicity, entrance to one of the courtyards in the Topkapi Saray, by an artist of the Greek studio or circle of Konstantin Kipidagli,” 1809, Victoria and Albert Museum

the borders of the territories of Islam. Its consistent use of rhetoric should not blind us to the reality of dynastic politics; the sultan was primarily interested in personal and familial survival. For that, he was dependent upon the army of the Janissaries, his “children” whose loyalty had to be reacquired with each accession. They had become the icons and guardians of a vast patrimonial system with the sultan as its father and patron.

In this particular revolt of 1703, Mustafa II was deposed and his brother, Ahmed III (1703–1730), became sultan. Mustafa II spent the remainder of his life in seclusion in the palace. After his deposition, the violence in Istanbul became more generalized, resulting from three related problems: the lack of discipline and control over the disorder and destruction; the dissolution of rebel unity amidst typical rivalries among the various branches of the army; and competition for the coronation accession gifts, the traditional reward for the Janissary pledge of allegiance to a new sultan. Until Ahmed III distributed the accession money to guarantee the continued loyalty of his Janissaries, the revolt in Istanbul continued to simmer.

This particular crisis was the capstone of a 50-year period of continuous upheaval in the countryside, driven in large measure by the pressing need for men and money, and, as some have argued, the global crisis of the seventeenth century. It was a time of seismic shifts in the global economy, especially after the consolidation of Great Britain in the 1707 merger of England and Scotland, the eclipse of the Spanish Habsburgs, the rise of the Dutch Republic of the Netherlands, and the ambitions of Bourbon France. Wars and rebellions, climate fluctuations, inflation, demographic decline and social upheaval characterized much of the period, not just in Europe, but across the world. In the Ottoman context, environmental disasters and population declines had a profound effect on the prosperity of the city and countryside alike. The seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were particularly bellicose eras, when weather, crop failure, disease, and distances from supply sources were as important in the survival of monarchs and sultans as success on the battlefield. As whole societies came to be mobilized for increasingly large campaigns to sustain dynastic goals, resistance to collaboration with imperial aims grew. Shortages, hoarding, starvation, disease, and nomadism forced absolutist rulers to negotiate with their elites and peasants alike.

Dynasties could not continuously over-extend their exploitation of the very manpower and resources that keep them in power, any more than they could overburden those who chose to support the enterprise. Negotiation over rights to collect taxes and other such privileges was an integral part of going to war, and the source of wealth of many of the prominent families of Europe of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The delicate balance between bellicosity and the ability of the state to finance war could easily be disrupted by the simple refusal of the peasants to pay taxes. This was as true in Ottoman territories as elsewhere, although refusal to pay taxes was demonstrated by flight from the land rather than outright resistance, a strategy that had visitors to the Ottoman Balkans and eastern

Anatolia remarking upon the striking emptiness of the countryside after 1750. Set in a comparative context, the difference in approaches become more evident.

Austro-Russian-Ottoman imperial strategies

The Habsburgs ruled over a complex federation of well-entrenched nobilities with their own holdings. These independent principalities were economically self-sufficient for the most part but remained tied to an imperial center through a common culture, counter-Reformation Catholicism. In the period under discussion, especially the 1680s–1740s, the Austrian model of an empire had its moment of fruition, even as more religiously and ethnically disparate populations were added to its territories. Habsburg's Maria Theresa (1740–1765) and her son Joseph II (1765–1790) ruled over territory that had pushed back the Ottoman invader from the walls of Vienna in 1683, acquiring fame as the counter-reformation bulwark against the Muslim threat. Sovereign of Austria, Croatia, Bohemia, Transylvania, parts of Italy, Galicia, Austrian Netherlands and Lorraine, Maria Theresa ruled over populations that included Greek Orthodox, Protestant and Muslim, making it a composite and consultative empire which required endless negotiation and persuasion.

In Russia, vast expanses of territory and hundreds of multi-ethnic populations were added to the Russian dominions in the period under discussion. The construction of a universal empire was intricately bound up with local military and administrative service and supply of men and arms. Peter the Great (1682–1725) is credited with creating the modern Russian army, but it was Peter's 1722 Table of Ranks that brought coherence to the Russian administration and created a new service nobility. The Charter of 1785 promulgated by Catherine the Great (1762–1796) continued the process by establishing a corporate structure and legal privileges, but reasserted Russian Orthodoxy as the religion of the empire and the rights of the nobility over the serfs. Russification and conversion were strengthened in nineteenth-century Orthodox missionary movements as part of Russian expansion into central Asia, often vigorously opposed,

In the Ottoman world, Ottoman nobility was an oxymoron. Europeans were astounded by the apparent classlessness of the sultan's court, although closer examination of the complex organization convinced later observers—such as Paul Rycaut, author of the very influential history *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1685)—that slavery and submission to the beneficence of the sultan made the dynasty the model of Oriental despotism. The reality in 1700 lay somewhere between the two views. One had to be Muslim, convert or native, to serve in the entourage of the dynasty, but background and wealth were not generally required. The accumulation and ostentation of wealth by others, in fact, was much frowned upon by the sultan, who was ideologically the source of all wealth and generosity for his subjects. The only compact was complete submission to the sultan. The only dissent began as confrontation which dissolved into violence, and replacement of the sultan.

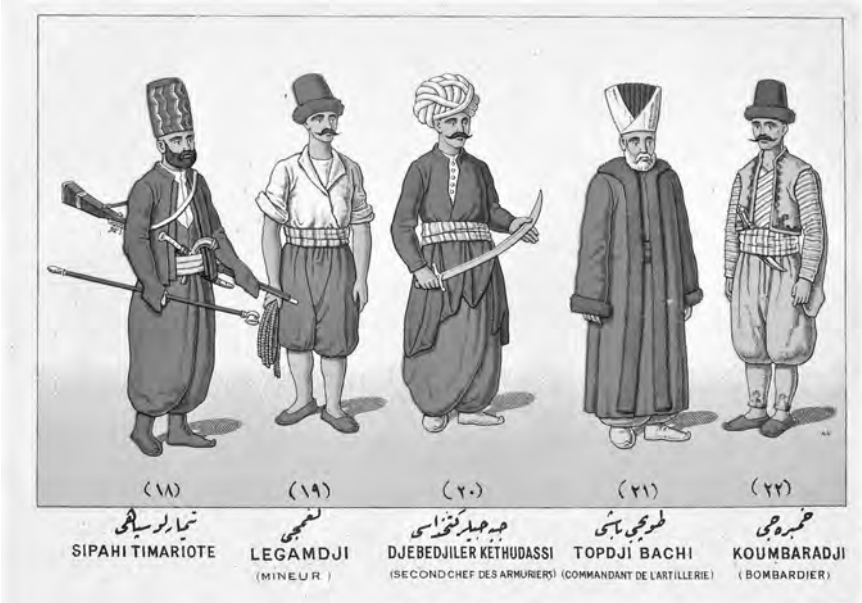


FIGURE 2.2 Members of various Ottoman forces pre-1926. Chevket Pacha Mahmond, *L'organisation et ces uniformes de l'armée Ottomanne*, 1900, author's copy

The Ottoman universal message was Muslim, an Islam generally tolerant (in theory more than practice) of multi-ethnic, multi-religious communities: to become Ottoman was to assume a cultural, rather than an ethnic, identity. Ottoman patronage of Sunni Islam, and the persistent belief among large segments of the Muslim and non-Muslim populations in the impartiality of shari'a justice constituted a powerful unifying ideology as long as the empire continued to prosper.

While negotiations are less obvious in the Ottoman patrimonial autocracy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the sultans were increasingly pressed by the changing circumstances of the battlefield to “persuade” prominent families and provincial tribal forces for men and supplies. Such local notables, or *ayans*, had emerged in the peripheries of the empire, appointed as local administrators or tax collectors, especially in the loosely governed frontier territories, where the experienced warriors were mostly likely to be prevalent.

The Ottoman military system

The Ottoman military system consisted of a standing army, the Janissary corps (Figure 2.3), and the artillery corps (Figure 2.2); a fief-based cavalry (*sipahi*) as well as various auxiliary forces, most often drawn from the proximate terrain of the battlefield, and from both Muslim and non-Muslim populations. To be a member



FIGURE 2.3 Janissary officers. Chevket Pacha Mahmond, *L'organisation et ces uniformes de l'armée Ottomane*, 1900, author's copy

of the sultan's *askeri* (military) class was a marker of privilege and tax-free status. The Janissaries were the salaried imperial infantry corps, founded in the mid-fourteenth century and the heart of a military system that was the “terror of Europe” until well into the eighteenth century.

As military historians acknowledge, it is difficult to estimate the number of active members of any military organization in the pre-1700 period. Official records of soldiers (rolls) under arms are often incomplete and unreliable, as are the accounts of contemporary observers whose desire to inflate the numbers of the enemy—dead or alive—was pervasive. The problem is particularly acute in the Ottoman context, because of the tendency to view every member of society except the peasant as a member of the Janissary corps. Take the lament of Thomas Thornton, author of a history of the Ottomans, writing in 1807:

Sir James Porter considers the army to be composed of the body of the people, and the janizaries to amount to two to three hundred thousand men, independently of those who get themselves enrolled to enjoy the privileges. Pey[s]sonnel supposes they may consist of many millions. Baron de Tott calculates them to be four hundred thousand: and finally, Mr. Eton... determines them to be an hundred and thirteen thousand four hundred. But the number of effective janizaries is best determined by the amount of their pay. Two thousand four hundred purses are issued every six months from

the treasury; a sum which allows thirty piastres a man for an army calculated at forty thousand.”¹

A figure of 30,000–40,000 mustered Janissaries is consistent with Thornton’s evidence as well as that compiled by Rhoads Murphey, who notes, “[i]t cannot be said of any period of its [Ottoman] history that military institutions dominated civil society.”² The major dilemma of the Ottoman state was the problem of maintaining a standing army as the Janissaries were and resources; the Janissaries were salaried and exceptionally privileged, which meant a considerable drain on state resources. The tension between the demands of potential recruits and the ability to pay them, is one of the leitmotifs of later Ottoman household dynamics.

The Janissaries were initially composed of young non-Muslim men, mostly from the Balkans, conscripted (enslaved) and converted, in a system known as the *devşirme*. New recruits were added to the *acemioglan* corps, the reserve for the Janissary corps, and used to top up Janissary numbers as necessary. Manumission was automatic upon ceremonial admission into the Janissaries, even though they remained officially, as was everyone else in the Ottoman bureaucracy, a *kul* (slave) to the sultan. Until 1600, the Ottoman army and palace bureaucracy were drawn almost entirely from this source, from lowest foot soldier to grand vizier. By 1700, however, the military slave system had long been largely abandoned as the chief source of Janissary recruits. Pressure from within the ranks of the regiments to admit outsiders, mostly Muslim-born, sometimes children of the corps itself, had in fact gradually replaced coercive country-side recruitment missions. By the time Thornton was writing in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and just prior to the official elimination of the Corps in 1826, who the Janissaries were had become exceedingly difficult to determine.

The central dilemma of the Ottoman state for the next century was how to contain the numbers of the Janissaries. Corps members, initially deployed beyond Istanbul to large fortress garrisons for major campaigns or to quell rebellions in the provinces, interacted with local societies, and gradually found ways to integrate into local economies. It has to be said that central neglect of this process led to loss of control over numbers and discipline. So not unnaturally, provincial Janissaries occasionally contested the administrations of both local and Ottoman officials, while periodic revolts rocked Istanbul as described above.

Janissary elites had begun to be part of the manpower of powerful local households that dotted the landscape of the late eighteenth century, though more often they were in a contest with locally raised household militias. Yet the dynasty had still to mobilize effective fighting forces for the far-distant, seasonal and siege warfare characteristic of the age, as well as to maintain the fortresses scattered across the empire. As the tightly controlled recruitment system fell into desuetude, other means of recruitment and retention were employed, such as the imperial displays in long lead ups to major campaigns.

To go to war was to take the government on parade, which if adequately controlled, could have the effect of stimulating the economy. The presence of the

entire imperial household in frontier zones did guarantee a temporary restoration of the tributary relationships that characterised Ottoman dynastic behavior. Theatrical ceremonies conveyed sultanic benevolence and power and reinforced the tenuous kinship bonds of independent and entrepreneurial troops. It was an empire-wide endeavor that could be sustained only as long as local populations were not routinely or systematically disadvantaged. Imperial pageantry as a reinforcement and recruitment tool is a considerable argument for the regularity with which the Ottomans mounted large campaigns.

The dilemma, however, was not entirely the issue of payment, discipline and training, although these were always offered as causes of discontent by Janissary rebels. Their discontent in 1703 was equally a reflection of changing power structures, the rise of competing households, and the challenge to the privileged position of the Janissary.

The Janissary *Ocak* (literally, hearth), as the corps was known, embodied the symbols of the kitchen—the great soup cauldrons and ceremonial meals shared with the sultan or his substitute, the grand vizier, on the eve of battle—themselves symbolizing the generosity of the Ottoman dynastic household. The Janissary accession gift from any new sultan guaranteed the voluntary submission to the new sovereign by his unruly “sons.” Belonging to the Janissaries became an entitlement and an honorific. Extra privileges accorded the corps included annual allotments for uniforms; incentive bonuses before and after battles; “healing money” for meritorious battle wounds; and money for retirees and widows. Such entitlements were regularly distributed to members of the corps in its heyday and continued to be part of their demands in the eighteenth century. The Janissaries retained the status of a privileged caste, a Praetorian guard, long after their usefulness on the battlefield had declined. In true Praetorian fashion, they became way too comfortable—especially in Istanbul—and interfered in dynastic politics.

Individual regiments developed an esprit de corps that resembled an extended family, with fierce loyalty to comrades. Organized into 101 *ortas* (battalions), each assembled a repertoire of symbols and stories to nurture care of their members. The *ortas* were entirely self-governing, including collective fiscal responsibility, care for their members and families after death, and the meting out of punishment, the latter a notable difference with Europe. Even the head of the Janissaries, known as the Janissary Agha, a palace appointee, had little control over *orta* regulation. It was a system rife with corruption and inter-*orta* dissension.

The sultan and grand vizier alike faced the increasing debt burden not just of army wages, but also of the accession gift, which had become obligatory. The scale of that one-time payout had ballooned; Sarı Mehmed Pasha, who served as chief financial officer six times between 1703 and 1716, was said to have melted the palace silver to make up the accession payment for Ahmed III (1703–1730). Obviously, this had become a ruinous policy, and fell by the wayside as the economic crisis deepened at the end of the century. The Janissaries embodied a pre-modern social welfare system with benefits, which, however insignificant it became in terms of individual livelihoods, extended throughout Ottoman society.

Small wonder, then, that there was a clamour to join the ranks as volunteers, and a vigorous resistance to change.

Provincial forces: *sipahis*

The oldest element of the Ottoman forces was the military organisation based on the *timar*, the land grant (usufruct) to a *sipahis* (or *timariot* as preferred here) who received his estates in return for military service, but who retained the right to the fief for his lifetime only (Figure 2.4). The *timariot's* position as a feudal landlord was precarious and increasingly financially unsustainable after 1700 due to the financial burden of paying for the costs of his own military service. The main obligation of the ordinary *timariot* was to report to campaign in person along with his retinue. *Sipahis* were also obliged to furnish their own horses, arms and sustenance, and soldiers from each *sancak* (district) often collectively organized provisions. Governors of the provinces were responsible for mobilizing the *sipahis* for campaigns, and army campaign scribes maintained registers, updated as each cavalryman arrived on the battlefield. Those who did not report were in danger of losing their entitlement, at first only temporarily. However, as time went by, and



FIGURE 2.4 Spahi (Sipahi), after J. Le Blond, 1675, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

more and more *timariots* failed to appear, the authorities responded by striking the defaulters from the lists permanently.

The serious problem for Ottoman stability was that the *timar* land could no longer support the cavalryman's obligations to report to campaign. By the end of the seventeenth century, the revenues of entitlement from the *timar* were not sufficient. Many *timariots* simply could not afford the cost of campaigning. Those who did turn up for a campaign were ill-equipped to face the mercenary firepower of the Habsburgs, were increasingly reluctant to fight, and were the first to want to leave to return to their holdings. Istanbul responded by converting the *timariot* fiefs into tax farms, and large numbers fell out of the jurisdiction of the *timariots*, amplifying what was already an established trend in the seventeenth century. Beneficiaries of the evolving system were the imperial household, administrative officials and Janissaries.

During the Süleymanic age (1520–1566), *timariots* numbered around 80,000; by the early 1600s, their number had dropped to half that amount. A realistic count of *sipahis* would hover around 50,000 for smaller campaigns, and 80,000 for sultan-led campaigns, which were rare in the seventeenth century and non-existent in the eighteenth. How many *timariots* reported for duty is of course another story altogether. Ahmed Resmi noted a few stragglers in 1769, old men encumbered with too much baggage and too many retainers. None of the official Ottoman counts of soldiers for the 1768–1774 war includes *timariots*. Instead, Janissaries were continuously demanding that they be given *timars* as supplementary income. Most of the remaining *timars* had long been usurped by provincial Janissaries, or were absorbed into tax revenue farms, and no longer represented soldiers required to report to the battlefield.

Political households and elites

What happened, then, to the potential military manpower represented by the *sipahis* in the century following the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699? The evolution from *sipahis* to private armies was accelerated by the Ottoman use of local irregular bands, mercenaries variously known as *levend*, *sanca* and *sekbân*—terms which originally connoted armed, vagrant and landless peasants. Such provincially mustered troops became a common feature of the battlefield in the eighteenth century, local regiments raised by governors and other officials of the provinces. These soldiers became the private armies of ambitious local lords. By the 1720s, even the provincial governor was expected to arrive on the battlefield with 200 of his private guard and 1,000 to 2,000 recruits, infantry and cavalry, the latter increasingly paid out of the inner treasury of the sultan. Between 1683 and 1769, the number of mustered state militiamen, paid directly from the center, rose from roughly 10,000 to 100,000; a remarkable change in the style of recruitment of manpower for the Ottoman army.³

This shift in recruitment came about in part due to dwindling numbers of *timariots*, but also because of the threat of local uprisings. The Ottoman center

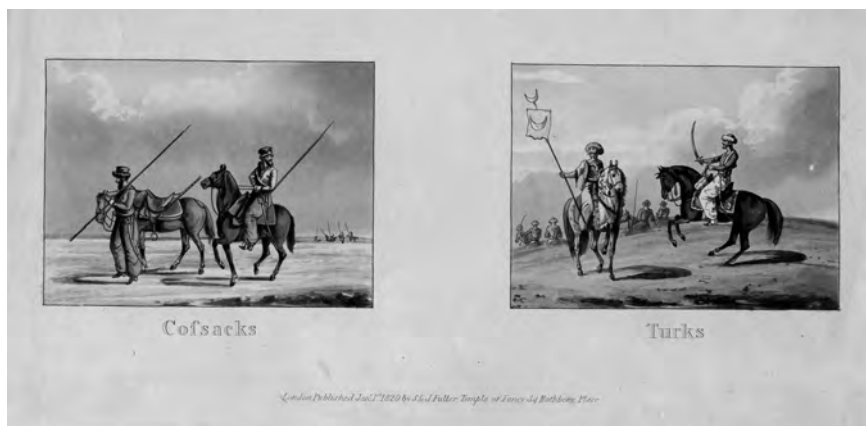


FIGURE 2.5 Cossacks and Turks, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

recognized the increasing need to organize provincial security in cooperation with the local state-appointed religious official, the *kadi*, in order to curb the abuses of the military administrative class and to control countryside violence. That imperative had first sent Istanbul Janissaries into the provinces in an attempt to curb local revolts. It became common practice for the Ottomans to eliminate the militia-turned-bandit by arming the countryside for its own protection, and then enlisting the resulting bands for the next campaign. This practice has been described as the Ottoman effectiveness in “embodying within itself the potential forces of contention.”⁴

The loss of control over the distribution of the Janissary and *timariot* entitlements forced the evolution of the entire Ottoman system. Over the next hundred years, the increased use of such local militias had a direct effect on the Ottoman ability to make the transition to a modern conscript army. Of course, the reliability of such locally-raised troops was an acute problem, especially as it was determined by the financial stability of the state and its willingness to redistribute provincial revenues to benefit local officials.

The Ottomans attempted to curb Janissary excesses by employing local militias continuously for 200 years. However, those bands also represented accessible manpower to their enemies, and the Habsburgs and Romanovs made use of them at various times. Ambitious local leaders also did so, and it is this tango of ambivalent organization that so characterizes Ottoman eighteenth-century history. Various degrees of incorporation of rebellious ethnic forces into their regimental structures distinguish the Habsburgs and Romanovs from the Ottomans in this later period (Figure 2.5).

The Cossacks, frontier colonists par excellence and a free population that escaped serfdom by settling and defending the fringes of the Russian empire, serve as one example. After the Russo-Ottoman War of 1677–1681, when new infantry

regiments successfully defended Ukraine against the Ottomans, the settlement of the southern regions of Muscovy accelerated. Russian Field Marshal P.A. Rumiantsev is credited with reorganizing the Cossacks into his regimental structure in the 1768–1774 Russo-Ottoman War, part of an extensive Cossack settlement system implemented by the Romanovs and on occasion, vigorously resisted.

The Habsburg military border was organized as a buffer zone in the ill-defined border regions. It also functioned as a long-term mechanism for drawing unruly and mixed ethnic populations into the imperial orbit and settling them on abundantly available land. Settlers were given basic autonomy, freedom to practice their own religion and tax relief in exchange for permanent military service. Eighteenth-century reforms gradually incorporated such *Grenzer* units, as they became known, into the imperial army, and the military frontier became a source of reserve troops for the state. Some 88,000 *Grenzers* served the Habsburgs in the Seven Years War.⁵

Subversive strategies abounded, and the lines drawn by ethnicity, style of life (nomad, mountaineer, bandit) and religious persuasion of such groups are ambiguous and multi-layered. A standing army required a census; conscription and forced settlement often went hand in hand, although military colonies were freer than mobilized regiments, especially in Russia. The ideology of unity and exhortation of Romanov and Habsburg, however fictive, was couched in religious garb: inclusion ('citizenship') implied Orthodoxy in the Romanov context, as it implied Catholicism in the Habsburg realms and conversion was an eighteenth-century dynastic strategy. By contrast, "Muslimness" was assumed if one served in the Ottoman army, and was a badge of exclusivity if one was in the Ottoman dynastic circle, but conversion was not generally part of Ottoman Balkan military strategy in the eighteenth century.

That changed after 1800, when forced exile became endemic with the Ottoman losses in Rumelia after 1750, as further explored in Chapter 7. The tremendous influx of Muslim peoples into highly mixed territories in Anatolia and the Balkans was reflected in the increasing public clamour for a reiteration of Ottoman Muslimness. Shrinking boundaries and mounting distrust of Christian loyalties forced a reliance on the peoples from the peripheries of empire; on mobile warrior populations from the Crimea and the Caucasus as well as on the long-standing use of Albanians and Kurdish tribal groups as the source of manpower for the militias of later campaigns.

Distribution of wealth/Ottoman economic system

Organizing and going on campaign was a cumbersome and lengthy process for the Ottomans. The logistics of maintaining such long frontiers, as well as supplying the larger campaigns in the field, was an undertaking of enormous proportions for any pre-modern dynasty, but particularly so in the geographical context previously described. Compounding the issues of terrain, distances and infrastructure is the

question of unpredictable seasonal variations, dry and wet, which plagued all military systems that relied on grain for bread and for their transport animals.

However, the Ottomans demonstrated a particular aptitude for logistical systems, explaining their sustained battlefield success even well into the eighteenth century. The excess of manpower, however, especially servants, is one of the complaints of Ottoman observers in the eighteenth century. Such excess was a phenomenon that tended to overwhelm even well-thought-out supply systems. Commanders and provincial pashas came with large entourages, in imitation of the grand vizierial staff, which included the bureau chief of most of the central offices of the Istanbul government. Campsites were plagued with followers of all stripes, reckoned in the thousands, who set up stalls and coffee shops. By contrast, though camp followers were still a persistent problem in European armies of the eighteenth century, frugality and mobility were becoming an essential part of their military strategy.

The call to arms was sent out on the main campaign routes to Anatolia and the Balkans in December of the year before the campaign, often signalling to opponents the intention before the declaration of war. Troops in Istanbul mobilized and left the city in early spring, while those raised from the countryside were ordered to join the main army on the march. The tremendous distances, and an average daily march of no more than ten miles, meant that reaching the actual battlefields in Hungary or in eastern Anatolia might not occur until mid-June. It took the army 85 days to march from Edirne to the Drava crossing in the spring of 1663. This included a 16-day stop in Sofia to pasture the animals on new fodder and wait for far flung troops to arrive, and another 11 days in Belgrade to gather supplies. By the time the army reached Esztergom to make the final Danube River crossing to Uyvar, some 119 days had passed.⁶ Major confrontations were often confined to July through October, after which field conditions and the lack of fodder generally forced the suspension of hostilities.

The Ottoman soldier, even at the worst of times, was often better fed than his opponents. Sharing a meal with one's soldiers remained an important part of Ottoman military ceremonial, and keeping the Janissaries well fed and supplied was an integral part of Ottoman campaign strategy. Bread and/or biscuit were imperatives, accompanied by rice and mutton, with barley for individual horses and pack animals forming part of the rations. For the 1683 campaign, this probably meant as much as 32,000 lbs of meat and 60,000 loaves of bread *per day* to maintain the troops.⁷ In 1768, the initial requisition of biscuit (*peksimed*) was for 22,400,000 kilograms from Istanbul, Gallipoli and İsakçı, the main supply center at the mouth of the Danube. These central depots were supplied by biscuits produced by villages all over the empire.⁸

Camels, mules, water buffalo and oxen drew both supply wagons and artillery, the largest of the cannons requiring up to 20 oxen (Figure 2.6). The successful Baghdad campaign of 1638–1639 required 77,444 camels carrying 542,113 *kile* (almost 14,000,000 kilograms) of grain, primarily barley for fodder, in territories notorious for their harshness and scarcity.⁹ In one report for 1769, the Chief Drover reported that 962,353 camels and 52,578 mules were leased for the

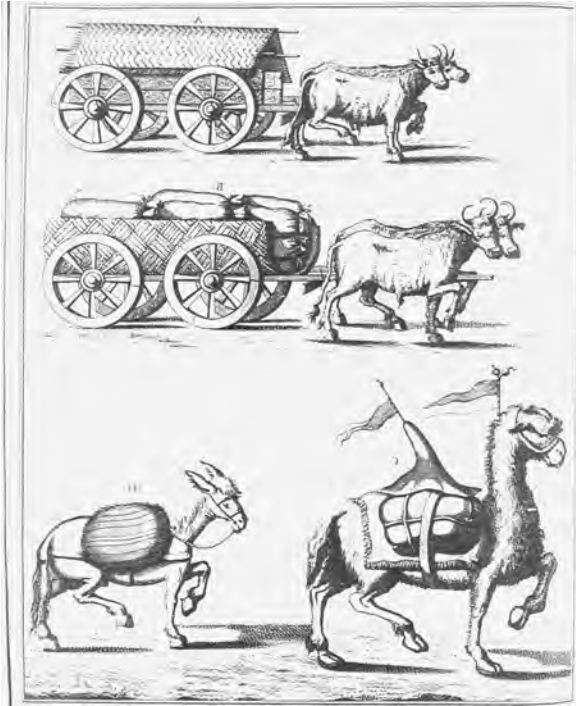


FIGURE 2.6 Examples of Ottoman transport circa 1700. “L’état militaire de l’empire Ottoman,” par Mr. le comte de Marsigli. A La Haye: Chez Pierre Gosse & Jean Neaulme, Pierre de Hondt, Adrien Moetjens: A. Amsterdam: Chez Herm Uytwerf, Franc. Changuion, 1732

campaign season, the camels assigned to the imperial army and the grand vizier, while the mules were primarily for the transport of supplies. Of these camels, 48,306 were distributed to the entourage and officials of the grand vizier alone.¹⁰

Supporting the numbers described above forced the creation of a system of warehouses and well-stocked way stations (*menzils*). The way-stations’ primary purpose was to stable spare horses necessary for communications with Istanbul. Maintaining them was the responsibility of the towns and villages along the routes to the battlefield, paid at fixed prices for the goods they brought to the army, or whose taxes reflected their obligation to military supply. This network of service was in keeping with the general principle of communal obligation, or guarantee, which framed all transactions between the Ottoman state and subjects. Villagers were obliged to stand surety for local militias should they desert and were responsible for way stations, grain, wagons and drovers, among a myriad of other expectations. As a result, there were just as many opportunities for the entrepreneur as there were for the potential ruin of village economies.

Until at least 1800, representatives from all the guilds of Istanbul were required to accompany the army on campaign. In an age when all subjects expected to be

tapped to support the campaigns in some fashion, the community of merchants and tradesmen were no exception. They served both by producing a collective levy and by accompanying the troops with a tent and goods to sell. In theory, they stood to make a profit on the battlefield. For the proposed Persian campaign of 1730, for example, one or two representatives from each of the 28 trades with a total of 85 tents were required to report for duty and to pay the cash contribution, or *ordu akçesi*, of each guild. Included were leather workers, saddle makers, butchers, bakers, grocers who supplied dried and fresh nuts and vegetables, mattress and blanket makers, soup makers and blacksmiths of various sorts who produced goods like horseshoes, utensils and cauldrons. In 1730, however, the trades collective, while willing to produce the required levy, officially protested against the misuse of the funds by the government when the campaign was delayed, demanding the return of their *ordu akçesi* in the Istanbul court. This protest is one of the underlying explanations for the collective's participation in the Patrona Halil revolt of 1730, which is often described as a reactionary revolt of Muslim fanatics against the westernization of the court (the Tulip Period) of Ahmed III (1703–1730). The targets of the mob were indeed the fancy, western-style pleasure palaces of the Ottoman court, but the real issue was elite excess and inequity.

All Ottoman efforts to maintain some control over state revenues were directed at resisting the growth of rival power bases, which were considered a threat, and thus the fiction of *miri*, or that all property belonged to the sultan, was maintained in order to mask the real growth of a kind of private property in the eighteenth century. Provincial tax collection was increasingly farmed out to administrative officials and wealthy investors, sometimes locally based but more often than not, in Istanbul and other big cities. Tax farming, at first only an annual assignment, became lifetime holdings with the introduction of the *malikane* in the eighteenth century, allowing tax farmers to accumulate estates. An annual auction determined the amount of taxes to be extracted from each district, which the tax farmer then advanced to the state treasury, long before the harvest and the actual yields. This had the dual effect of further reducing the actual return to the imperial treasury and creating a gentry class of brokers in the countryside who were powerful enough to negotiate their share in the war effort, be it for men or for supplies. They would also successfully resist attempts at land reforms when the time came.

While complete information may never be completely recoverable, the central treasury budgets for the 1500–1700 period appear not to have risen or fallen dramatically. This apparent stability causes some historians to argue for a degree of financial continuity that remained unaffected by warfare, although most acknowledge that the sultan's Inner Treasury (Privy Purse) tended to be tapped to cover campaign expenses.¹¹ The budgets extant for the 1768–1774 war period, again fragmentary, indicate significant minting of coins and the financing of the provincial non-Janissary militias almost exclusively from Mustafa III's (1757–1774) private purse funds. These trends, accelerated by the demands of increased army size and more sophisticated arms of the eighteenth-century battlefield, led directly

to Selim III's bankruptcy, which prevented the full implementation of his planned reforms after 1792.

Shortage of money at the center meant that the tax contributions that village collectives had often paid in kind—be it in horses, wagons, grains or other supplies—were converted into cash substitutes, a cycle that Balkan historians have noted increased village indebtedness and enriched local power brokers. This system, which depended on an Ottoman official, the *mubaayacı* (or state purchaser), has received little study. The *mubaayacı* determined the village contributions by distributing them over a tax base, saw to the payment and shipping of war supplies, particularly grain, and attempted to maintain the balance between state needs and village realities. One alternative for the villager was simply to flee and join the ubiquitous bands of tax rebels, who then turned up on the battlefield as volunteers.

Another way to finance war-related enterprises was to give local officials, governors and their representatives (district tax and law enforcement officials were called *mütesellims*, or *mutasarrıfs*) the right to levy provincial taxes. These included a bewildering variety of extraordinary taxes, which were reorganized by 1700 into a levy on village households. The local judge, along with a local official (elected, state or self-appointed—all three were possible), determined the equitable distribution of such taxes across the tax base. Such extraordinary taxes were generally assessed on a six-month basis in the provinces and might include paying for visits of pashas on the way to the battlefield, support of local officials in fulfilling their duties and a host of other minor exactions. Corruption had become a way of life, and violence very often accompanied collection. Hiding assets became a topic of folklore and fleeing the intolerable burdens the only alternative.

To counter the extractive power of the state, more and more taxable territory was alienated by converting it to family-run endowments (*vakfs*). Such tax-exempt, large-scale charities offered the corollary benefit of social welfare to the Muslim community at large, in hospitals and schools, but impoverished the central treasury. The royal household itself, especially the women of the Harem, had, in earlier centuries, supported war efforts with contributions from their own endowments, a practice that continued throughout the eighteenth century.¹² Protection from state oppression came also in the form of entitlements and goes a long way to explain the continuation of the Janissary system. Documentary entitlements, be it the pay and rations of the Janissaries (*esame*), or licenses (patents) of privilege (*berat*) for almost any category of service and trade, could imply status or tax exemption, and were the badges of membership in Ottoman pre-1800 society. Each group took care of its own; each Janissary regiment had its own treasury, and court cases are full of inheritances recorded as reverting to individual regimental treasurers. At the village level, appeals for tax relief took the form of judicial affidavits (from provincial courts, *hüccets*) which appealed to the sultan's justice, and occasionally received attention as we have learned from the documentary record.

Despite these various approaches to producing income for the state, properly financing the military remained a constant problem for the Ottoman center, and

the burden on Ottoman subjects caused both financial hardship and a festering resistance to what they viewed as administrative impositions. Ottoman logistics depended on the will of the population to participate in the supply system as it has been described. Archival documents reveal a plethora of obligations concerning all manner of military purchase and supply, which cemented the contractual relationship of sultan and subject. In other words, there were some ways of negotiating respite from the long arm of grievous exactions, at least for those who had access to capital or a network of influence. Little could otherwise prevent the strong-arm tactics imposed on peasants and townsmen by rapacious overlords.

Stalemate and illusions 1700–1760s

The first half of the eighteenth century saw the continuation of the closing of the eastern frontiers of Europe, in a series of campaigns between Ottoman, Habsburg and Romanov armies along the Danube River. Between 1700 and 1739, the Ottoman army participated in two swift and successful campaigns: on the Prut in 1711 and against the Venetians in the Morea in 1715. However, they suffered costly defeats by the Austrians in 1717. The Europeanization of Ottoman diplomacy continued, as each new diplomatic or hostile confrontation was accompanied by mediation by other western powers. France, Great Britain, the Dutch Republic and, later, Prussia offered to intervene in the eastern European quarrels. Ottoman embassies to Europe became more commonplace, and concerted efforts at mid-century to stay out of European conflicts—especially during the vizierate of Mehmed Ragıb (1756–1763), known as Koca Ragıb—are also indicative of a new diplomatic worldview.

By the late eighteenth century, local Ottoman elites were chiefly responsible for manning and supplying the army, and in some cases, for defending the borders almost single-handedly. Local families profited from the needs of the state, and their challenges to Ottoman sovereignty by 1800 are well documented. Simultaneously, new allegiances to the dynasty were also created, a process of Ottomanization that allowed for the nineteenth century bid for absolutism under Mahmud II (1807–1839) and Abdülhamid II (1876–1908). Many of the revolts of the period represent the struggle not just against Ottoman oppression, but also rivalries between older elites, for example between the centrally appointed and locally despised Ottoman governors and the newer gentry who profited from proving their reliability as suppliers of men and food. Balkan and Arab provincial areas also shared such trends, with nuances of difference driven by the ethnicity and religion of their respective populations and the degree to which local Janissaries played a part.

The centuries-old and gradual nomadization of eastern Anatolia, for example, was exacerbated in this period by the dissolving Safavid–Ottoman borders and the new alliances between tribal and urban elites. The Ottomans engaged in a long struggle with Nadir Shah and the Afsharids in the 1720s and 1730s, a struggle finally settled by the treaty of 1736. War against fellow Muslims, however

heretical, was never popular, so major campaigns could seldom be mounted to the east. The obduracy of the Janissaries in Istanbul, as seen in the 1703 revolt and again in the revolts of 1730 and 1740, who expected little profit from warfare in the east, proved an effective deterrent. This led to the increasing reliance of the grand viziers on local military leaders, such as the Jalili family in Mosul, who were responsible for preventing the Persian occupation of Baghdad in 1743 (map 2.1).

The Austro-Russian-Ottoman war of 1736–1739 was a singular example of three over-stretched agrarian empires throwing ill-prepared and underfed armies into combat with one another. The arenas of warfare were the peninsula of Crimea, a foreshadowing of the Crimean War of the nineteenth century, and the upper Danube River around Belgrade, which the Ottomans considered vital to their defensive line in Europe. Russia declared war on Turkey in April of 1736. In the normal course of affairs, four to six months were required to fully mobilize the Ottoman troops from long distances. Levies of soldiers from Bosnia and Albania were ordered in the summer of 1736, 1 in 20 from the Bosnia militia, estimated at the time at over 20,000 strong.¹³ By the following summer, the garrison at Ochakov included 7,000 Albanian and Bosnian recruits.¹⁴ Consequently, the ill-prepared Ottomans relied heavily on the Tatars in 1736, as they always had in the Crimea. Until that time, the Russians had not seriously attempted to conquer the peninsula. The Ottomans were also preoccupied in the Caucasus, where a treaty with Nadir Shah and the Persians was not finally in place until October of 1736. Peace with the Persians provided the opportunity to redirect soldiers to the Danubian battlefields.



MAP 2.1 Carte des environs de la Mer-Noire: où se trouvent l'Ukraine, la Petite Tartarie, la Circassie, la Georgie, et les confins de la Russie Européenne, et de la Turquie, 1783, Lloyd Reeds Map Collection, McMaster University

General European opinion was that the fatal moment of the Ottomans had arrived. Religious fervor against the infidel had not entirely died, making it easy to stir up popular opinion in Habsburg lands. On paper, Austria assembled an army of 122,540 combatants, divided into three divisions: one for Wallachia and Moldavia, one for Bosnia and the third to attack Vidin and Niş.¹⁵ By August 1737 the Nemirov Peace Congress was already underway as an anxious Europe pressed for settlement.

By all accounts, the Austrians had to rebuild the army on the Hungarian front from scratch, as the imperial army had been deployed on three different fronts for too long. The Russians suffered acutely by underestimating distance and supply. All sides were crippled by disease and unsanitary conditions. The period of 1737–1739 are notable plague years, and disease accounted for more deaths than the fighting. By the time of the Belgrade Treaty in 1739, the Russians had been forced to withdraw from Moldavia and the Crimea because of the impossibility of maintaining healthy and well-supplied garrisons in the area. At Ochakov alone, an estimated 60,000 Russians were lost before it was abandoned in late 1738. At the Belgrade siege the same year, an estimated 80–100 Austrian troops died of plague, malaria and dysentery each day.¹⁶ Ottoman loss and desertion figures are practically impossible to estimate with any certainty, although archival documents will occasionally reveal the continuing problem of getting men to the battlefield and keeping them there.

Diplomatic negotiations at Nemirov were suspended when the Ottoman legation left in mid-October; relations between the partners in Vienna and St Petersburg were fractious and fraught with mistrust. For the remainder of the war, Ottoman diplomacy aimed first at an alliance with France, and when that proved unrealizable, at French mediation. On both the diplomatic and military fronts, the Ottomans exhibited a tenacity which exasperated diplomats and discouraged both opponents.

Most of the 1738 campaign season of the Austro-Ottoman conflict was spent investing in and surrendering the strategic areas around Orsova (Old Orsova), specifically Adakale (New Orsova), an island just downriver from the Iron Gates. The fall of Adakale was pivotal in all subsequent peace negotiations and left the Ottomans in a position of strength.¹⁷ The 1738 season was just as disastrous for the Russians as the Austrians. Russian Commander Münnich once again failed to cross the Dniester in his march on Bender. Having overloaded his army in preparation for the desolation of the proposed march, he did not reach the banks of the Dniester until mid-July, where he faced an entrenched Ottoman army of 60,000. General Lacy made the same trek into Crimea as in the previous two years, retreating as before with very little accomplished.

With a new resolve, Vienna and St Petersburg decided on closer coordination in the 1739 campaign. The empress pledged 20,000 Russian troops to aim at Hotin and Transylvania to divert the Ottoman forces from the Danube, but international pressure on all sides was urging an end to the hostilities. In Istanbul, the peace party prevailed by mid-March with the appointment of İvaz Mehmed as

Grand Vizier (1739–1740). The Ottomans were inclined to end the conflict with diplomacy. By early May, Sultan Mahmud I (1730–1754) gave the French Ambassador, the Marquis de Villeneuve, the power to negotiate the treaty on behalf of the Ottomans.

By early August 1739, negotiations were underway between Chief Negotiator Count Leopold von Neipperg, representing the Habsburgs, and Villeneuve on behalf of the Ottomans. While isolated—essentially a hostage—in the Ottoman camp, Neipperg remained ignorant of the changing battlefield environment, which had begun to favor Austria and Russia. He negotiated on instructions from the emperor himself, dated from 18th August. On 29th August, the plenipotentiaries drafted a peace treaty which all three sides officially signed at Belgrade on 18th September. On 6th September, as part of the treaty stipulations, the demolition began of the outer fortifications that had been newly erected by the Habsburgs at Belgrade. On 8th September, the news arrived in Vienna. Münnich, who had just routed the Ottoman army at Hotin, received the news in astonishment at his new headquarters in Jassy, Moldavia on 24th September. All sides were forced to accept the triumph of the Ottomans and Villeneuve by December of 1739.

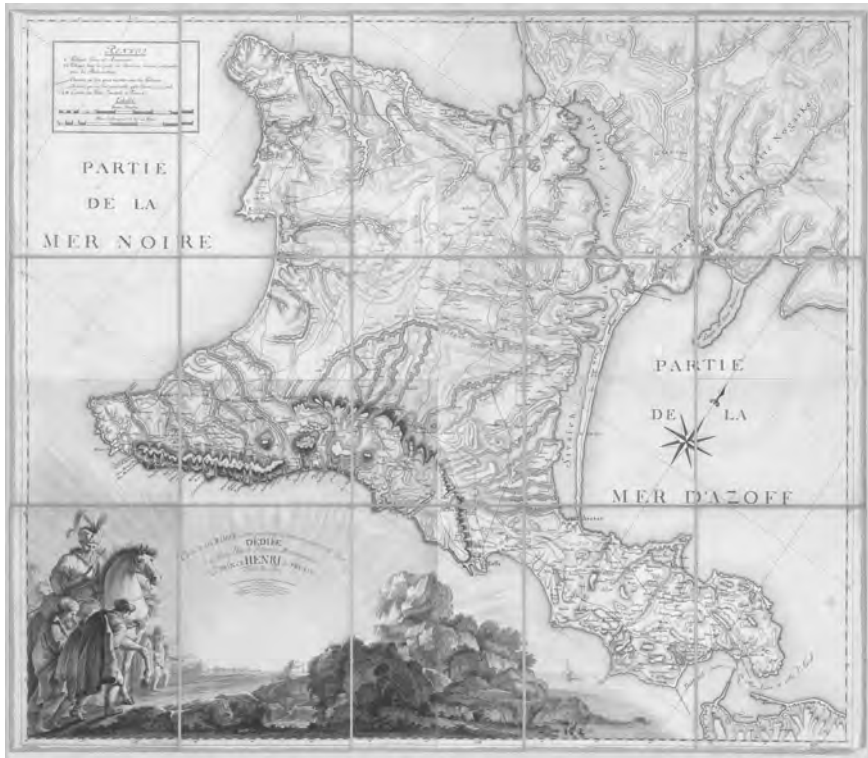
By the conditions of the treaty, the Ottomans acquired Belgrade, Old Orsova and Adakale. Azov remained under Russian control, although the fortress was razed and the territory became a no-man's-land. Russian merchants would be allowed the right of free trade in the empire. Villeneuve's reward was the renewal of the French capitulations in 1740, guaranteeing substantial French trading privileges with the Ottomans. The Ottomans rightfully viewed the Belgrade treaty as a vindication of their half-century of efforts on the Danube and the Black Sea. How illusionary the victory actually was would only be revealed on the battlefields of 1768–1774.

It is impossible to overestimate what exchanging the territories in the Danube area did to local populations, Muslim and Christian alike. One western observer in Belgrade noted:

Earlier one thought himself to be in Germany because of the architecture, administration, commerce and manufacture, clothing, citizens, spirit, Christians and Jews—all were German; and now: All European culture has disappeared, the city and its inhabitants have been devoured as if from earth and the city seems possessed by a foreign, Asiatic being."¹⁸

Significant ethnic bias aside, the observation points to the human costs year after year of imperial campaigns in this region. Especially affected were the Serbians, whose loyalties were suspect and who fought on both sides or even as bandits, depending on individual groups. Belgrade became the western end of a middle-ground frontier for Janissary and Serbian bandits and profiteers alike.

The negotiating success on the Danube as part of the 1736–1739 war has been begrudgingly accorded to the Ottomans by historians only after cataloguing the



MAP 2.2 Carte de la Crimée levée pendant la dernière guerre de 1772: & dédiée à Son Altesse Royale Monseigneur le Prince Henri de Prusse, Frère du Roi, 1776, Lloyd Reeds Map Collection, McMaster University

weaknesses of their enemies. In particular, emphasis on French mediator Villeneuve as engineer of the coup during negotiations over Belgrade has masked a considerable body of evidence that the Ottoman negotiating team was clear-sighted and tough. Not only was Hekimoğlu Ali Pasha involved, but also *Mektupçu* Koca Ragıb Pasha, later grand vizier under two sultans, already a veteran of crafting peace with Persia. So too was Mustafa Tavukçubaşı Efendi, Chief Scribe, functioning as foreign secretary. All three men were instrumental in keeping the Ottomans out of European wars for the next two decades. Koca Ragıb's account of the siege of Belgrade and the resulting negotiations became one of the most widely circulated manuscripts of the eighteenth century, stimulating a new generation of Ottoman officials to think seriously about reforms to the military.

A few Ottoman intellectuals were aware of the growing gap between Ottoman military and leadership organization and that of their rivals. One such was former Chief Financial Officer Sarı Mehmed Pasha, who was concerned with the well-being of the enlisted men, but equally insistent that good leadership and knowledge of enemy strategy were just as important. His

contemporary İbrahim Müteferrika (*Ottoman House*) went even further, citing the model of Russia's Peter the Great who had rebuilt his army by modeling it after those of victorious nations.¹⁹ By the end of the 1768–1774 war, a number of others had raised their voices, among them Ahmed Resmi Efendi (*Ottoman House*) and Ahmed Vasıf Efendi, both witnesses to the disasters that had begun to unfold (map 2.2).

Imperial collapse 1768–1800

The military organizational and leadership gap between the Ottomans and their imperial rivals was real; a problem that would become increasingly apparent with the outbreak of war in 1768. Before then, lulled by the relative peace on both eastern and western fronts, and guided by astute bureaucrats, the empire experienced an almost unprecedented quarter-century of calm before plunging once again into an interminable struggle with the Romanovs over control of the northern coast of the Black Sea.

With the exception of the Iranian frontier, which erupted in warfare and rebellion after the break-up of the Safavid order, as described above, the empire rested on the triumph of Belgrade in 1739. Koca Ragıp Pasha, Grand Vizier 1757–1763, convinced several sultans of the virtues of peace and multilateral negotiations. As a result, the empire achieved two decades of tranquillity and economic recovery, simultaneously benefitting from the expanding world economy of the period. Part of the reason for this prosperity was that the Ottomans sat out the international upheavals of the Seven Years War (1756–1763), a global conflict that permanently altered the balance of power of Britain and France in North America and India, and established the primacy of Russia and Prussia in Eastern Europe. The campaigns in Europe produced Russian generals like Pyotr A. Rumiantsev (d. 1796) and Alexander Suvorov (d. 1800), who would go on to provide decisive leadership in the two Ottoman–Russian wars at the end of the century. Austrian struggles with Ottoman and Prussian armies alike awoke Habsburg Vienna from its lethargy, leading to a vigorous reorganization of the military.

When the Ottomans took up arms again in 1768, it was to inaugurate almost a century of confrontation on the northern arc. The pattern of events would indeed go on to establish a certain rhythmic regularity: Austrian or Russian armies would invade a Danube Principality, which precipitated a hasty declaration of war from the Ottomans. Russian army headquarters were established in Jassy, from where commanders could deploy troops down the Prut to pivotal garrisons on the mouth of the Danube. In the years after 1774, the Russians maintained troops in Moldavia or Wallachia almost at will. The Ottomans were slow to mobilize, although considerable and fairly constant attention was paid to the garrisons in the fortress line from Belgrade to İsmail at the mouth of the Danube River. In 1812, and again in 1828, when the Rusçuk fortress and its town were completely destroyed by the Russians, Sultan Mahmud II initiated reconstruction projects of the fortress system that lasted until the Russo–Ottoman war of 1877–1878.

The two wars of the late eighteenth century—from 1768 to 1774 and from 1787 to 1792—were characterized by a long and bitter series of sieges, by numerous bloody attacks and by counterattacks, mining and sapper activity. The Ottoman garrisons were eventually worn down by endless artillery barrages, and often followed by a massacre of the occupants of the fortress towns. Ochakov, the last Ottoman garrison in the Crimea, was invested and captured in 1788, and İbrail, a major garrison (and source of supplies) protecting Bulgaria, in 1791. These were very significant victories for the Russian army. Russian observers were impressed by Ottoman last-ditch efforts, which often resulted in a terrible toll, with troops dying down to the last man. Şumnu, in present-day Bulgaria, became the Ottoman campaign headquarters in the late eighteenth century, and figures prominently in the wars of the first half of the nineteenth century. The Russians increasingly focused on subduing the Trans-Caucasus, a secondary diversion for the Ottomans, but which assumed primary importance by the Crimean War. Kars and Erzurum in eastern Turkey were first attacked and occupied by Russian armies in 1828 and remained a borderland of contention until World War I. During the confrontations of 1828–1829, the Russians came perilously close to Istanbul, which led to a panic and quick capitulation by the city and dynastic household.

Once actual conditions of peace were agreed upon, carrying out of the terms often lasted decades, especially in the 1760–1830 period. The loss of the Crimea in 1783 was bitterly resented in Istanbul. After 1807, arguments over borders in the eastern Black Sea region were long and acrimonious. Similarly, Mahmud II stubbornly resisted international interference in populations he considered his subjects, notably the Serbians and then the Greeks. It is easy to argue that the Ottomans and Russians were in a constant state of hostility after 1768, with the possible exception of the brief and uneasy alliance against Napoleon at the turn of the century.

By 1768, the Ottomans had largely moved from a professional to a “volunteer” militia-based army, paid for by local—sometimes extraordinary—taxes, combined with direct support from the sultan’s treasury. Even the Janissary regiments, who still manned the border fortresses, were newly reconstituted for the campaigns that began in 1768. The hiatus had meant the almost total collapse of any system of discipline and recruitment, and the Ottomans were completely unprepared for a major campaign when they made the initial declaration of war against Russia in 1768. Their tenuous economic recovery was halted by the two decades of warfare, impeding any efforts at military and fiscal reform until the peace of Jassy in 1792. Between 1760 and 1800, prices tripled, deficit budgets became the norm and the state occasionally forced loans from its nobles and confiscated their estates in order to continue to finance warfare.²⁰

The period after 1750 was one of the most significant of the phases of the development of the modern European army. The Ottomans missed a generation of developments by remaining outside the battlefields of the Seven Years War. This technology gap significantly hindered their ability to counter the power of the mobilised rapid-fire field artillery characteristic of the post-1756 period.

Ottoman sultans like Mustafa III (1757–1774) were well aware of the problem and commissioned foreign experts such as Baron de Tott to rectify the deficiency, but systemic economic and organisational problems proved insurmountable. Reconfiguring the armed forces only became a primary preoccupation of generations of Ottoman statesmen after the utter collapse of the Danube defence system post 1787.

There are two persistent ideas about the 1768–1774 war, both of which concern Poland. The first is that the outcome of the war could only be determined after Austria, Prussia and Russia decided on the first division of Polish territory in 1772. The second is that French diplomats were responsible for bribing the Ottomans to precipitate the hostilities in late 1768, as part of their effort to secure their candidate for succession in Poland. Neither view of the 1768–1774 war in itself is wrong, merely incomplete: they ignore Ottoman strategic imperatives. Ottoman diplomacy, conducted until the end of the century from Istanbul, depended on information circulating in the hothouse of the foreign community, using the infamous *dragomans* as their linguistic go-betweens. Another source of intelligence was the Tatar exile community, whose size and influence expanded enormously as a result of the Russian conquest and subsequent annexation of the Crimea. Sifting through the conflicting reports from the Crimean Khan and his rivals, as well as from the governors of Moldavia and Wallachia, was the task of the newly-emerging foreign affairs bureaucracy of the eighteenth-century Ottoman court, which had become the responsibility of the *Reisülküttab* and his staff.

The *Reis* and the Grand Vizier were fully aware of the problem of Poland, but more concerned about the territorial aggrandisement of Russia, as numerous political memoranda of the period acknowledge. Furthermore, the lengthy negotiations that Frederick the Great carried on for a decade with Mustafa III and Grand Vizier Koca Ragıb, which culminated in Ahmed Resmi's official embassy to Berlin in 1763, demonstrate a level of awareness generally not accorded the Ottoman side. (**Ottoman House**) Resmi's route took him across Poland, and he described the current disorder there following the death of Augustus III. French pressure to intervene aside, the Ottomans preferred neutrality in 1764, and a note to that effect was circulated in the diplomatic community in Istanbul.

In 1768, the Bar Confederation, an insurrection of Polish Catholic nobles who resisted the imposition of the Russian puppet-king, stimulated a Cossack/*Haidamak* revolt of significant size. A Russian army, already stationed in Poland, moved south to suppress both and violated the Ottoman territory at Balta. This was too close for Ottoman comfort and a protest was lodged, which then became an Ottoman declaration of war. France's leading minister, the Duc de Choiseul, boasted that French influence and bribery forced the Ottomans to the battlefields, but the politics of the Danube proved equally influential. (*see Vergennes, Ottoman House*)

A closer look at the state of Wallachia and Moldavia will make this assertion clear. Nicholas Mavrocordato was the first Phanariot ruler (*voyvoda*, later *hospodar*) of the Principalities, appointed by the Ottomans first to Moldavia (in 1711) and

then to Wallachia (in 1715). Thus began the semi-colonial rule of the territories, which were initially demilitarized and obedient to officials in Istanbul. During the Phanariot period, which lasted into the 1830s, the countryside was occupied four times by Austrian and Russian armies, and the populations subjected not just to the hardships of warfare, but increasingly odious tax and service burdens imposed by their new rulers. Stripped of their private armies, the governors were responsible nonetheless for buying, often at fixed prices—and delivering the agricultural products demanded by Istanbul and Russia. The result was peasant flight. One estimate for Wallachia and Moldavia suggests a loss of half of the peasant families to territories south of the Danube River in the 1740s.

Ottomans were sensitive to border disturbances in the Balkans and wary of the gradual creeping imperialism of Russia in Ukraine and Polish territories. Grand Vizier Muhsinzade Mehmed Pasha urged caution, arguing that the empire was simply unprepared for a major campaign, but to no avail. He was dismissed and replaced by Hamza Pasha, a man more amenable to the wishes of the court, but extremely incompetent and likely mad. Hamza Pasha was quickly replaced by Mehmed Emin Pasha, himself a product of the court system. It was he who commanded the troops as they left Istanbul in October 1768.

The Ottomans were completely unprepared to return to war. They still insisted on travelling in the traditional manner, with huge baggage trains and large numbers of camp followers. Late eighteenth-century Ottoman camps may be likened to disturbed beehives. It was also the case that the government still accompanied the Grand Vizier, so the chief financial officer and his staff, for example, were in command headquarters, while stand-ins held their offices in Istanbul.

The fighting potential of the Ottoman forces on the battlefield in this period is also generally exaggerated in the histories. For this campaign, probably 70% of both the central and provincial forces were raw recruits. Incoherence and disorganization characterized the forces: insubordination was endemic and the encouragement of individual prowess and immediate cash rewards for valor persisted. While it appears from the documentation that manpower was over-abundant, the vast armies vanished into thin air on the road, and almost immediately upon a major confrontation with the enemy. One significant reason appears to have been the inconsistent application of discipline: severe when meted out, but generally not part of the Ottoman soldier's daily life. There was no equivalent to the ubiquitous gauntlet used by European armies, reputedly most severely applied in the Russian case. Ottoman punishment took two forms: banishment to one of the castle-prisons, such as in Gallipoli or immediate execution.

By contrast, the Russians had introduced considerable European order and discipline into the post-Petrine army, as well as the beginnings of a military command structure. This became more evident after they began to emulate Prussia in the 1740s, but the system was further developed during the 1768–1774 war under Field Marshal Rumiantsev, who was given sole command of the battlefield after his victory at Kartal in 1770. He was responsible for the strategy of installing military settlements in the newly-acquired territories of the south, and his

instruction concerning recruitment and training—especially field formations and discipline—became operational over the rest of the century. Rumiantsev, known as the “Transdanubian,” was the first Russian officer to break the formidable Ottoman fortress line along the Danube in 1773–1774.

While command gave the Russians considerable advantage over their Ottoman foes, supply remained the greatest imponderable, affected by dreadful terrain and uncertain weather, and consequently leveling the presumed advantages of either side. We have already seen how difficult the Crimean Peninsula proved to be for Russian armies in the 1736–1739 campaigns. Wallachia and Moldavia were equally difficult to maneuver, criss-crossed with gorges and ravines. The Danube regularly flooded, forcing constant vigilance at strategic crossings. The Ottomans had to rebuild the bridge over the Danube (at *İsakçı*) in 1769, and again in the spring of 1770, when it was washed out by floods. Spring thaws brought oceans of mud. In 1773, Rumiantsev could not besiege *Ruşçuk* and *Silistre* until mid-July because of excessive rain.²¹ Drought often preceded or followed flooding, making crop availability uncertain. An unexpected blizzard at *Bender* in 1788 killed one quarter of the Russian troops.²² Plague similarly wrought devastation: in August 1771, 400–500 Russians were dying per day from a particularly virulent outbreak caused by the war conditions of the southern frontier.²³

For the Ottomans, of course, the Russian occupation of fortresses like *Hotin*, *İsmail*, *Kilya* and *Bender* was disastrous, not just from a strategic but also from a logistical point of view. The Ottomans were dependent on—and justly famous for—over-supply, but the 1740–1768 hiatus in campaigning had meant a neglect of the roads and warehouse systems which guaranteed their ability to function in the Danube region even though they maintained a Danube fleet, which in the seventeenth century had numbered 52 vessels. The fleet was composed largely of frigates and riverboats (*shayka*) for transport of troops and grain, frequently captained by Christians.²⁴ The 1769 campaign required the restoration of fortresses, supply depots and means of transportation, which disabled much of the field action of that year.

In 1770, the Ottomans suffered tremendous losses and abandoned much of their supplies to victorious Russian armies. Another disaster was an unprecedented appearance of a Russian fleet, which defeated and set alight the entire Ottoman Mediterranean fleet at *Çeşme*, near present-day *Izmir*, resulting in the Russian occupation and blockade of the *Dardanelles*. The Russian ships were first refitted in British naval dockyards. Then, commanded by *Alexis Orlov* and several British naval officers, they sailed through *Gibraltar* and attacked the Ottoman fortress towns in the *Morea* (*Peloponnesus*), in support of a local rebellion. The attack was without opposition from the Ottoman fleet, which withdrew into the safety of *Çeşme* harbor. Caught there, the 20-odd Ottoman ships were destroyed. The net effect was to strangulate the supply system of *Istanbul*. Combined with disorderly retreats and the invidious habit of fleeing troops to plunder their own camps, the renowned Ottoman supply system fell apart.

The confrontation at Kartal (Kagul in Russian) in Moldavia in late 1770 is best represented by contemporary observer Ahmed Vasıf, who described the Ottoman army as resembling the waves of an ocean. Rumiantsev was astonished by the Ottoman ability to dig trenches overnight, and the considerable resistance of what he described as the last of the formidable Janissaries in the inner ring of trenches. He described the Janissaries as ancient in appearance and age.

In his report to Catherine, Rumiantsev described the confrontation with the Janissaries as fierce and accompanied by five hours of continuous firing from the heaviest cannons. The Tatar cavalry fled first, sparking the desertion of the infantry and leaving Abdi Pasha's infantry and the Janissaries to bear the brunt of the confrontation. The entire baggage-train and 150 cannons and carriages were left behind and captured by the Russian forces. Some 3,000 Ottoman soldiers are said to have died at Kartal, but worse followed. Those fleeing had to cross the Danube by boat—and the Russians fired on the fleet assembled for that purpose, sinking many vessels. "Fleeing troops were crushing and slashing each other, some climbing about the ships, others clutching at the ropes and planks. The greatest loss was there—as evidenced by the drowned bodies floating in the river."²⁵ Estimates ranged from 20,000 to 40,000 dead after the final confrontation at the fortress of İsmail on the mouth of the Danube a few days later.

The news of the worst military disaster ever suffered by the Ottomans arrived in Istanbul simultaneously with the news of the complete destruction of the Ottoman navy at Çeşme. By November 1771, with the reappointment of Muhsinzade Mehmed as Grand Vizier and Commander-in-Chief, both sides needed a time-out. Catherine II, intending to negotiate without intermediaries, steadfastly opposed the mediation of interested parties such as the Austrians, the Prussians or the British. The Ottomans settled on Prussian and Austrian mediation, and negotiations got under way in July 1772, although the mediators were ejected by the Russians at the first meeting. By late August, negotiations had broken off over the question of the independence of the Tatars. Field Marshal Rumiantsev wrote the grand vizier directly to try to salvage the moment, and together they arranged a peace conference in Bucharest in November that extended the truce.

In late 1772, the Ottoman and Russian armies were idle, while diplomats engaged in the long, fruitless negotiations for peace that continued until the spring of 1773. By that time, Mustafa III had spent more than 25,000,000 (pounds sterling) on the war. Ahmed Resmi, a scathing critic of Ottoman logistic efforts in this period, notes how ill-prepared the chief administrators were, referring particularly to the "demented" Commissar Tahir Agha, who had failed to see that the warehouses on the passage to the front were adequately prepared, causing needless death and suffering of the soldiers. After 1770, the Ottomans had to rely entirely on their own territory for supplies, a significant influence on the outcome of events.²⁶

For historians more informed about the Polish question than the Tatar question, August 1772 resonates as the date of the first partition of Poland. Some argue that the outcome of the Russo-Ottoman peace negotiations was dependent on the settlement of the Polish question, which temporarily resolved the differences

among the Russian, Austrian and Prussian courts. For the Russians, it meant the Russian military presence in Poland could be reduced or redirected to the Ottoman frontier. Catherine spent most of the winter of 1771–1772 negotiating an alliance with the Crimean Khan, that effectively broke the centuries-long Ottoman–Tatar connection. The Russian–Tartar alliance also fractured already divisive Tatar factions that had taken refuge in Ottoman territory, and incited Istanbul to continuous belligerence over the question of Crimea and the strategic fortresses of the northern Black Sea coast.

Plenipotentiaries Abdürrezzak (for the Ottomans) and Obreskov (for the Russians) started negotiations in November 1772 but were unable to break the impasse over Tatar independence. By February 1773, Obreskov made the following offer: Tatar independence under a Russian guarantee, with continued Russian occupation of the fortresses of Kerch and Yenikale at the egress of the Sea of Azov, and free navigation of the Black Sea and Bosphorus Strait by Russian ships. This proved totally unacceptable to Istanbul at the time, even though those conditions formed the basis of the final treaty of 1774.

Neither side wanted to go back to war, but Catherine II insisted on doing so, and that Rumiantsev press his troops south of the Danube for the coup de grâce which would force the Ottoman surrender. There was some urgency in her request, as 1773–1775 were also the years of the Pugachev Rebellion, when a pretender to the throne and his Cossack supporters represented a very real threat to Catherine's rule and pulled reinforcements from the southern frontier. The campaign year of 1773 was punctuated with significant confrontations up and down the banks of the Danube. The Russians focused their attack on Silistre until early July, which after fierce resistance was finally abandoned by the Russians. It is one of the maxims of Ottoman warfare that here, as in the 1736–1739 war, the Ottomans were able to recuperate from tremendous losses with a greater resolve to resist, if only temporarily. This is especially the case along the Danubian garrison line, happening again in 1787–1792, 1806–1812, 1828–1829 and 1853–1854.

In spite of spirited regrouping in fall 1773, the Ottomans were unable to mobilize an army of sufficient size to resist the Russians in the spring of 1774. Grand Vizier Muhsinzade Mehmed commanded a completely demoralized and disintegrating force. The prospects for 1774 were bleak. Camp revolts were common, looting of supplies normal and desertion endemic. In spite of the exaggerated statistics of Ottoman strength, neither side had more than 50,000 troops (the Russians had far fewer than that) in the final set of confrontations around Şumnu in late June 1774. Completely surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the gravely ill Muhsinzade Mehmed agreed to a cessation of hostilities and an immediate peace conference. He died just after the 21 July 1774 treaty was signed by plenipotentiaries Ahmed Resmi and Nikolai Repnin at Küçük Kaynarca, headquarters of Rumiantsev. Henceforth “Küçük Kaynarca” became synonymous with the Eastern Question.

It was in fact a Russian triumph. Rumiantsev's army had occupied the principalities and penetrated deep into Ottoman territory to the southern bank of the Danube, however temporarily. There is no way to calculate real statistics for the 1768–1774 confrontations, but the combination of battle and disease may well have cost the two sides 500,000 lives. 1768 inaugurated more than 50 years of continuous fighting on the Danubian and Black Sea littoral, with accelerating damage to both the ecology and the human community.

The Russians had a foothold on the Black Sea, cause enough for alarm bells to ring in European courts. The principalities were restored to their former status, but the Russians assumed the right of protection over the Orthodox populations. In spite of much debate among historians about the significance of the religious clauses of the treaty that precipitated later Russian interference in Ottoman minority affairs, real Ottoman anger was reserved for the article that had caused the breakdown of negotiations in 1772: Tatar independence. It was well understood that the so-called independence was simply a step towards incorporation of the Crimea into Russian territory. While remaining ceremonially and religiously tied to their fellow Muslims by the treaty (the sultan was recognized as the Grand Caliph, a term alien to Tatar–Ottoman relations and to Muslim law),²⁷ no one was to interfere with their political and civil liberty. Ottoman loss of the first major piece of Muslim-inhabited territory represented the most humiliating blow inflicted by the treaty. However, worse was to come in the following decade when the second of Catherine's Turkish wars precipitated a complete collapse of the Ottoman defense of the northern arc and prompted the stirrings of significant reform in Istanbul under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807.

Questioning the Ottoman House: Ibrahim Müteferrika, Comte de Vergennes and Ahmed Resmi Efendi

Ibrahim Müteferrika (1674–1745)²⁸

Credited with the printing of the first book in Arabic (Ottoman) script, Ibrahim Müteferrika was a Hungarian-born Protestant from Transylvania who arrived in Ottoman territories already a Muslim, sometime after 1690. His pre-Ottoman biography is the source of much speculation, representing him either as an enslaved prisoner of war, or as a Unitarian [or freemason] persecuted for his interests in Judaism and Islam. He represents himself as being converted of his own free will while still in Hungary, a convenient profile for someone who became a member of the Ottoman palace corps of attendants to the sultan called müteferrika, hence his name. Most conclude that Müteferrika continued to draw inspiration from his previous life, evident both in what he chose to print on the

new press and in the contents of his library listed in his probate document following his death in 1747.

The biographies of individuals such as Ibrahim Müteferrika continue to interest later historians, many of whom remain puzzled that he might abandon Christianity for Islam, but most of whom credit him with enlightening the Ottomans with his knowledge of the printing press. At his printing shop, which was officially sanctioned and established in 1726–1727, Müteferrika first printed four maps and then some 22 volumes between 1729 and 1742. These are now generally known as the Turkish Incunabula. The books dealt with secular subjects such as history, geography and physics such as the famous world atlas by Katip Çelebi, Cihanüma (1732). Müteferrika's probate document from 1747, recently uncovered in a collection in Sofia, Bulgaria, identifies him simply as Ibrahim the Printer even though he had a distinguished career as a diplomat and interpreter.

Of importance here is his own text, called Reasonable Principles of Public Order (Usul-ül Hikem fî Nizam ül-Ümem), and printed in 1732. Müteferrika argued that reform of the military could be accomplished by learning from other states, without jeopardising sultanic and Quranic notions of justice and order. Specifically, he pointed to the disorder in strategy and logistics, to the huge size of the forces, to the total lack of discipline which overrode individual courage and wisdom, and to the need for accurate intelligence of the enemy. Ottoman bravery, agility and heroic nobility were unknown in the Christian world according to Müteferrika. All that was required was to harness and discipline that energy to triumph once again. His critique of the state of the empire probably reached a much larger audience than had hitherto been possible. His work enfolded the justification for military change into a larger critique, outlining the need of the Ottoman–Muslim world to widen its intellectual horizons and to study successful enemies. As a result, his work joined the Muslim reformist literature that continued to punctuate reform agendas both inside and outside the Ottoman context until the fall of the empire.

Charles Gravier, Comte de Vergennes 1717–1787 (with thanks to Frank Castiglione)

After the Treaty of Karlowitz of 1699, the Ottomans began to engage in bilateral agreements with the European powers. In the new environment, diplomats played an important role in the exchange of information as well as in monitoring and promoting the trading networks of European nations. There is no better example of this than Charles Gravier, the Comte de Vergennes, who served as the French Ambassador to Constantinople from 1755–1768.

Vergennes was a complex, transitional figure in French diplomacy with the

Ottomans in the post-1750 period, as the interactions between France and the empire became profoundly disrupted due to the rapidly changing European landscape. His main task as ambassador was to preserve peace and the profitable trading partnership supported by renewal of the 1740 Capitulations. However, Vergennes often disagreed with his superior, Minister of Foreign Affairs Duc de Choiseul about Ottoman-Russian affairs, which eventually led to his recall to Versailles in 1768.

Charles Gravier de Vergennes was born in Dijon in 1717 to a family of lower-level nobility. He was educated by Jesuits, later studied law and became licencié en droit early in 1739. In that same year, he began his diplomatic career when he took up the post of Counselor of the Embassy in Lisbon to his uncle, Théodore Chevignard de Chavigny. Vergennes continued in the diplomatic service alongside his uncle when he was moved to Germany in 1743 and again to Lisbon in 1743, until they were recalled to Versailles in 1749.

After further distinguished service in Europe, Vergennes was appointed envoy to Istanbul upon the death of the Comte des Alleurs, his predecessor as ambassador. Alleurs left huge debts behind, typical of diplomacy of the age, which required employing a large entourage and the purchase of lavish furniture



FIGURE 2.7 Portrait of Charles Gravier Count of Vergennes and French Ambassador, by Antoine de Favray, Pera Museum, Istanbul © Album / Alamy Stock Photo P9BDE6

and art, as well as extensive gift-giving to the various Ottoman officials. Vergennes too had an impressive entourage: the Baron de Tott and his son, François, the latter who served the court of Sultan Mustafa III as a military reformer, as well as Antoine de Favray, a French artist whose trademark was painting Europeans in Ottoman dress—all the rage in Europe at the time (Figure 2.7).

The beginning of the Seven Years War in 1756, which pitted Britain and Prussia against France, Austria and Russia, produced a renewal of the French and Austrian alliance in May 1757. Vergennes was left to explain to the Ottomans how and why France was now allied with the Ottoman's chief enemies, Austria and Russia. It did not go well: the Ottomans approached Prussia for the alliance (see Ahmed Resmi below) that France had been after, but the international crisis around Poland dominated the diplomatic world after Russia invaded Poland in 1763. The extensive correspondence between Choiseul Gouffier and Vergennes makes it clear that the French ambassador remained something of a friend to the Ottomans during that period, trying to bridge the bellicose intentions of France with his own understanding of the Ottomans' complete lack of preparedness for war. Considering this contentious position, his recall seemed appropriate from a diplomatic point of view. There was also a rumor that the chief reason for his retraction was his marriage to Anne Viviers, the widow of the dragoman François



FIGURE 2.8 Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700–1783. Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

de Testa. Vergennes's decision to marry in March 1767 without first securing Louis XV's permission was considered an inappropriate act. It was also discovered that Vergennes and Viviers had two sons out of wedlock, Constantin, born in October 1761, and Louis Charles Joseph, born in March 1765.

Despite these disgraces, the Comte de Vergennes had an even more distinguished career following his return to France, including serving under Louis XVI as Foreign Minister after 1774, when he negotiated a treaty of alliance with the American revolutionaries (1778) in the interminable Franco-British rivalry that characterized world affairs. The City of Vergennes in Vermont testifies to the eternal gratitude of the new republic (Figure 2.8).

Ahmed Resmi Efendi (d. 1783)

Ahmed Resmi represented a new generation of reformers. An experienced diplomat, he served as deputy to Grand Vizier Muhsinzade Mehmed during the 1768–1774 war, and was the unfortunate plenipotentiary who signed the humiliating Küçük Kaynarca Treaty (1774). Born in Réthymnon, Crete 1694–1695, Ahmed Resmi arrived in Istanbul sometime between 1734 and 1735. Once in Istanbul, he allied himself with an intellectual circle of reformers who transformed diplomatic relations of the Ottomans with Europe in the eighteenth century, including Grand Vizier Koca Ragıp Pasha. His patrons were among the most distinguished statesmen and literati of the eighteenth century. Ahmed Resmi compiled two biographical dictionaries, one on the chief black eunuchs of the places and the other on the chief scribes of the empire.

In 1757, Ahmed Resmi was appointed to an embassy to Vienna to announce the accession of Sultan Mustafa III, (1757–1774). This appointment was followed by the first ever embassy to the court of Frederick the Great in Berlin (1763–1764). Ahmed Resmi submitted reports on the geography of his passage and the politics of the courts he encountered. In the case of the Berlin embassy, he left behind not just an account of diplomatic niceties but also a portrayal of Frederick and the description of the Seven Years War, which was by then winding down. His observations, however tentative, inaugurated a new emphasis on the need to study European politics, decades prior to Selim III's 1793 initiative to send diplomats to permanent posts abroad.

In 1765, Ahmed Resmi became chief sergeant-at-arms (çavuşbaşı) that began his long connection to Muhsinzade Mehmed Pasha (d. 1774), twice appointed grand vizier and commander of the disastrous 1768–1774 Russo-Turkish War. Ahmed Resmi served as Kethüda, or deputy of the grand vizier, and was the signatory to the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, a factor which likely affected the rest of his career.

Author of Hulâsat ül-î'tibar (Summary of Admonitions), completed shortly before his death, Ahmed Resmi was an acute critic of the state of the Ottoman armed forces and military logistics of his era. His observations from three years on the battlefields of the Danube are accessible, indignant, sometimes comic, but always sincere and passionate. Not by any means a well-composed or highly stylized piece, it nonetheless circulated in multiple editions, both manuscript and printed, well into the nineteenth century.

Ahmed Resmi is also the author of two small advisory memorandums addressed to grand viziers in the midst of war. His catalog of woes included the problem of disorderly troops—who plundered their way to the battlefield—and the provincial governors who brought sufficient troops but could not control them. He described the complete lack of order in headquarters on the Danube, poor leadership and insufficient and poorly organized logistics.

In 1772, he presented a discussion of the possibility and necessity for peace to the grand vizier and the chief negotiator of Küçük Kaynarca, arguing that the Russians were badly overextended and that both sides should recognize their military and territorial limitations. This unprecedented recommendation was much in keeping with the balance in power diplomacy of Europe he had observed in Vienna and Berlin. He died in August 1783. One son is said to have preceded Ahmed Resmi to the grave; no other information concerning his family has been discovered.

Notes

- 1 Thomas Thornton, *The Present State of Turkey* (London: Joseph Mawman, 1807), 173–4. English Ambassador Sir James Porter's *Observations on the Religion, Law, Government and Manners of the Turks* was published in London in 1768. Peyssonnel and Tott were both French consuls in Ottoman territory, and authors of studies of the Ottomans. Tott's *Memoirs of Baron de Tott*, published in English and French in 1785–1786, was a European best-seller. Eton's famous diatribe against the Turks, *A Survey of the Turkish Empire* (London, 1798), long served as a major source of information for nineteenth-century European historians.
- 2 Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 49.
- 3 Virginia H. Aksan, "Whatever Happened to the Janissaries?," *War in History* 5 (1998): 23–36.
- 4 Halil İnalcık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation of the Ottoman Empire," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 301, 307–8.
- 5 Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Military Border in Croatia, 1740–1881: A Study of an Imperial Institution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 40–41.
- 6 Geza Perjes, "Army Provisioning, Logistics and Strategy in the Second Half of the Seventeenth Century," *Acta Historica* 16 (1970): 1–51, estimates 20 kilometers per day; Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 65–70, contrasts rearguard wagon trains who managed two miles per hour to crack vanguard troops who managed three miles per hour, with four–six hours/day an average. Generally, European armies counted on five miles per day.
- 7 John Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 20–22.

- 8 Virginia H. Aksan, "Feeding the Ottoman Troops on the Danube 1768–74," *War and Society* 13 (1995): 1–14.
- 9 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 77. 1 kile is equal to 25.659 kilograms. The number seems very large, but wheat and barley fed man and beast alike.
- 10 Başbakanlık Archives, D.BŞM 3949, 4 and summary, 16–17. The number of camels seems fantastic and may represent a multiplicity of service (lease or rent) of individual camels. Still, the statistic suggests the scale of the enterprise. In fact, the statistic is based on number of days service; the figure was probably more like 5,000–10,000 camels: they were reckoning 237 days for the campaign, at 20 akçe a day, but length of service was various. Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 75–78.
- 11 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 50.
- 12 Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 200–20.
- 13 Michael Hickok, *Ottoman Military administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia* (Leiden: Brill), 26–27.
- 14 Keralio, *Histoire de la guerre entre la Russie et la Turquie* (St. Petersburg: n.p., 1773), (Vol.1), 107.
- 15 Keralio, *Histoire*, (Vol. 1), 96.
- 16 L. Cassels, *The Struggle for the Ottoman Empire* (London: John Murray, 1966), 152–3.
- 17 Adakale (New Orsova) had become Austrian territory in 1717, and St Elisabeth, the fortress had taken over a decade to build. More than half the Ottoman army had disappeared from death and disease, and the Ottomans had resorted to leaving empty tents erected to disguise their reduced strength. AZ Hertz, "Ottoman Conquest of Ada Kale 1738," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 152–3.
- 18 Karl A. Roider, *The Reluctant Ally: Austria's Policy in the Austro-Turkish War, 1737–39* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, 1972), 175–6.
- 19 Both are examined in Virginia H. Aksan, "Ottoman Political Writing, 1768–1808," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 55–56. Sarı Mehmed's work has been translated: *Ottoman Statecraft*, ed. and trans. W.L. Wright (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1935). Müteferrika's *Usul ül-Hikem fi Nizam ül-Ümem* was published in French translation in 1769: *Traité de Tactique*, trans. K.I.S. Revinsky (Vienna: Trattner, 1769).
- 20 See Şevket Pamuk, *A Monetary History of the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), 150–71, who views the 1787 war measures such as price ceilings and coin debasement as the most comprehensive and ambitious package of intervention in the money and commodity markets that occurred during the eighteenth century.
- 21 William G. Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 107.
- 22 Fuller, *Strategy and Power*, 108.
- 23 Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 213. Similarly, Tott reported 150,000 dead in Istanbul from plague. Baron Francis de Tott, *Memoirs of Baron de Tott* (London: 1785; New York: Arno Press, 1973), (Vol. 2), 83.
- 24 Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*, 235.
- 25 P. A. Rumiantsev, *Sbornik dokumentov*. Moscow, 1953. *SIRIO* (Vol. 1), 158, 159, 345, 347.
- 26 Baron de Tott, *Memoirs* (Vol. 2), 136. Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace: Ottoman Resmi Efendi 1700–1783* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 140–42.
- 27 C.J. Heywood, "Küçük Kaynardja," E12 CD edition.
- 28 Information drawn from Orlin Sabev, *Waiting for Muteferrika: Glimpses of Ottoman Print Culture* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2018).

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PART II

The revolutionary moment 1800–1840

The period of 1800–1840 was a do-or-die moment for the Ottoman dynasty, hardly the time to introduce liberalism or constitutionalism. Survival was what mattered, and it is clear that the imperative of the late Ottoman state was to acquire and mobilize the means to defend the remaining territories of the empire. By the late eighteenth century, in order to convince the population at home of the legitimacy of Ottoman power, the sultans had relinquished power to a growing bureaucracy, placating powerful Muslim and non-Muslim families who helped finance the dynasty. Provincial elites dominated the countryside by 1800, constructing social networks and trading circles in the far-flung port cities and peripheries of the empire.

When Selim III took the throne in 1789, his empire was at war with Russia on the northern frontier, and soon to face an invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte to the south. Portrayed as a Francophile, Selim III's international diplomacy has long puzzled European historians. He is best remembered as the initiator of the first round of Ottoman reforms, the New Order as it has come to be known, part of the global revolutionary age when the Marseillaise could be heard on the streets of Istanbul (Figure 3.1).

The evolution of the authority and legitimacy of Ottoman rule can be further traced to the reign of Mahmud II, who embodied the emerging ideal of the modern Ottoman monarch and exemplified the principles of the new Muslim autocrat. In order to justify the radical reordering of society, he insisted on reciprocity in international relations and recognition of Ottoman sovereignty. It cannot be denied that he accomplished much, and with great ferocity. Under Mahmud, the northern arc was refortified, and discussions about citizenship and obligations became part of public discourse. These discourses were amplified as a modern—if heavily censored—press first made its appearance.

In the mid 1800s, the Ottomans had just begun the social transformation of the Janissaries to a loyal modern-style army (*Nizamiye*). This shift was made possible by the cooperation of provincial households run by *ayans* (notables or warlords) allowing Ottomans to monopolize violence within imperial territories. It was in this context that revolutionary nationalism and constitutionalism—already circulating within the post-Napoleonic world—burst upon the scene of Europe in 1848. Trickle into the Ottoman Empire and finding fertile ground in disaffected and abused non-Muslim communities, new ethno-religious identities competed with the “Ottomanism” of the Tanzimat era (1839–1876), resulting in the authoritarianism of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1908).

The Napoleonic era is notable for the gradual reassertion of the Muslim identity of the army. The army that replaced the Janissaries in 1826 was re-fashioned on European models, but Mahmud II called them the “Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad.” One of the great turning points in Ottoman history was in 1828 when Mahmud II declared war on Russia and marched 40,000 new army troops to the mouth of the Danube. This display took place a mere two years after eliminating the Janissaries and just one year after France and Britain sank his entire fleet at Navarino as part of their intervention on behalf of the new Greek nation.

Chapter 3 introduces the reforms and reformers of Selim III, while Chapter 4 examines the reign of Mahmud II and his radical political and social changes.

3

SELIM III AND THE OTTOMAN REVOLUTION

The crisis deepens

Catherine II unilaterally annexed the Crimea in 1783, in violation of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, a fait accompli that the sultan was forced to accept in the Convention of Aynalıkavak of 1784. The Russian ambassador implemented their new treaty-based privilege of establishing consulates in Ottoman cities, especially at Varna on the Black Sea. The Ottomans remained hostile to such establishments, perceiving them as centers of provocation and aggression.¹ Catherine II's diplomatic correspondence of the period reveals a project to restore the Greek empire, envisioned as a vast Orthodox imperium. The empire was to be called Dacia, an ancient country and Roman province, roughly the territories of present-day Romania and Moldova. Inspired by her own ambitions, as well as by Grigory Potemkin (d. 1791), Russian Commander of the Second Russo-Turkish War, and favorite of the Empress, Catherine II engaged to tour the new Russian Black Sea ports in the Crimea. She embarked on the tour with Austrian Emperor Joseph II in the spring of 1787 (map 3.1). With an international diplomatic entourage, she visited the new Russian bases at Kherson on the Dnieper and Sebastopol, passing under archways erected in her honour inscribed with "the road to Byzantium."

In response to such provocations, the Ottomans requested mediation from the English, as their long-time allies, the French, were about to sign a commercial treaty with Russia. Franco-British rivalries influenced the course of negotiations in Istanbul. Real attempts at mediation were never seriously undertaken. British Ambassador Ainslie continued to thwart the French without offering any real backing from England, while Catherine II preferred to take the belligerent road with the Ottomans, rejecting all mediation. Public outrage and dishonor at the loss of the Crimea, and potentially of the Caucasus (Georgia), however, probably had a greater influence on the final decision in Istanbul. Catherine II's trip was the *coup de grâce*.



FIGURE 3.1 Istanbul chasing the British fleet, 1807. “Vue de Constantinople,” Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

The Ottomans declared war on Russia in August 1787. Austria, reluctant allies with the Russians since 1781, declared war in early 1788. Ochakov, situated at the junction of the rivers Bug and Dnieper on the northern Black Sea coast, was the key to the entire Russian Black Sea presence and the main focus of the war. Until this point it had remained in Ottoman hands, but that would soon change. In August 1787, hostilities began when an Ottoman naval detachment fired on Russian frigates off Ochakov, beginning a long confrontation in the northern Black Sea that ended with the Ottoman surrender of the fortress.

For the Ottomans, recovery of the Crimea was the main reason for the war. Border territories at each end of the northern Black Sea had become the site of significant transference of Muslim and Christian populations, causing the displacement and ethnoreligious conflicts better known in the nineteenth century. For the campaign against the Ottomans, the Habsburgs assembled the largest Austrian army to date. Some 245,000 troops, with 898 field guns and 252 siege guns, were initially deployed on the Ottoman frontier—a number which later rose to 294,000—approximating the Russian mobilization in the Principalities and the Crimea. The plan was to capture Belgrade and secure the left bank of the Danube River into Lesser Wallachia, while the Galician army pushed towards Hotin to meet with the Russian army in Moldavia.

Slow Russian war preparations meant the Ottomans could concentrate their force on Belgrade in 1788 once Joseph II begrudgingly declared war in February of that year. Austrian strategy depended on the Russian support in Moldavia, which



MAP 3.1 Carte de la partie septentrionale de l'Empire Otoman dédiée a Monseigneur le Comte de Vergennes, 1774, Lloyd Reeds Map Collection, McMaster University

failed to materialize until late in the 1788 campaign season. Joseph II seems to have been increasingly reluctant to confront the Ottoman army as the summer advanced. The old foes found their armies facing one another again in the Mehadia passage to Temeşvar as in the 1736–1739 war. Both sides were short of supplies, and by mid-July 200–300 men were falling ill every day in the Habsburg camp. In mid-September, the Ottomans forced the blockade of the Danube. However, by the end of the year, the Ottoman army had withdrawn into winter quarters in Sofia. Habsburg casualties, both military and civilian, were estimated at 80,000. The Austrians had more success in Moldavia: by September they had occupied Jassy, and with the help of the Russians, forced the surrender of Hotin that same month.

Potemkin, meanwhile, gradually encircled Ochakov by land. Ultimately, he chose to delay the final assault until mid-December. Because of the Ottoman army's surprising resilience on the Danube, the Russians understood that the war would not end with the taking of Ochakov, and were already making plans for the campaigns on the lower Danube the following year. Waiting took its toll on the besiegers, foreshadowing the better-known Crimean War some half a century later. Fresh water was scarce, and winter arrived early, with temperatures of -15° Celsius. 'The camp became "snow and shit,"' making life unbearable for the soldiers in the trenches. In spite of such poor conditions and significant illness, Potemkin appears not to have lost as many soldiers to disease and dysentery as Joseph II was losing daily on the upper Danube.² The final assault on 16 December 1788 occurred after a month of Russian shelling from the harbor, delayed due to the severity of the winter. The barbarity on both sides was unparalleled. The final confrontation was commemorated in a song: "Turkish blood flowed like rivers, and the Pasha fell to his knees before Potemkin."³

The new Triple Alliance of Britain, Prussia, and the United Provinces (the Dutch Republic) had offered mediation in August 1788, but Catherine II rejected it. Istanbul was in disarray from the defeats of the campaign season, and because of the continuing rivalry between Grand Admiral *Gazi* Hasan Pasha and Koca Yusuf Pasha, the latter was held responsible for the fall of Ochakov and Hotin. In April of 1789, a change in sultans further complicated the scene. The new sultan, Selim III, 1789–1807, was young, idealistic and a decided Francophile. He ascended to the throne at possibly the most critical moment in the entire history of the dynasty. Advised by his counsellors to settle with Austria and Russia, he instead chose to continue the war, with Koca Yusuf Pasha in charge. Koca Yusuf had the distinction of being universally despised by those he commanded.

In 1789, the Austrians stormed Belgrade with 62,000 troops against a garrison of 9,000 Ottomans, who capitulated in October 1789. By November, the Austrians had occupied Wallachia. The Russians meanwhile captured Akkirman in October and Bender in November. Cooperation between the two armies in Moldavia led to a defeat of the main Ottoman army on 22 September 1789. The Austrians, increasingly reluctant eastern frontier warriors, wanted out. Financial and human costs were high: sick and wounded for one year alone (1788–1789) numbered 172,000 soldiers, of whom 33,000 died.⁴ Public opinion in Vienna opposed the continuation of the war.

Once Prussia and Austria settled their differences in the Convention of Reichenbach in 1790, the Habsburgs were free to negotiate the Austro-Ottoman treaty of Sistova in August 1791, mediated by the Triple Alliance. Old Orsova—located on the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier and the subject of ongoing dispute since the 1739 Belgrade treaty—was the sole but important reward for Austrian efforts.

Relieved of the pressure on the western front, the Ottomans still had to face the Russians entrenched along the Prut River who were threatening the forts on the Danube basin. The campaign of 1790 was perhaps the worst year for Ottoman forces because of the catastrophic collapse of their mobilization and logistical systems. There were now essentially two fronts: one on the Black Sea to the east of the Crimean Peninsula at Anapa and Kerch—the latter of which the Ottoman navy aimed to recapture as part of the effort to regain the Crimea—and another focused on the forts of the Danube estuary, with Ottoman headquarters at Şumnu. By the end of 1790, the Ottomans finally had to acknowledge the loss of the Crimea. Kilya, Tulcea, and İsakçı had also fallen in October and November. İsmail, the strongest fortress of the Danubian system was, like Ochakov, essential to Ottoman military and naval operations. There were likely 35,000 men with 265 guns in the fortress, and it was well supplied. On 10 December, the attack began at dawn and by 11 a.m., a number of the gates were in Russian hands. The battle took to the streets, and both sides fought for with great ferocity, until four in the afternoon. The Ottoman Commander and 4,000 men defended the last bastion but were slaughtered to a man. Turkish losses stood at 26,000 dead and 9,000 prisoners. Austrian Field Marshal Laudon, victor at Belgrade, wrote:

It is beyond all human powers of comprehension to grasp just how strongly these places [Ottoman defensive works] are built, and just how obstinately the Turks defend them. As soon as one fortification is demolished, they merely dig themselves another one. It is easier to deal with any conventional fortress and with any other army than with the Turks when they are defending a stronghold.⁵

When the Ottomans finally capitulated, they arrived at peace with astonishing rapidity, as they had in 1774. Negotiations concluded at Jassy in December 1791. By the agreement with the Russians, the Ottomans ceded Ochakov but regained the Principalities and the strategic fortresses at the mouth of the Danube.

To survive the disasters of the second Russo-Turkish war, Sultan Selim III had relied almost exclusively on the Ottoman provincial elites to mobilize and supply the fortresses. This strategy set up serious expectations and pretensions among the provincial notables that a new political order was emerging, one with a more inclusive distribution of power and command. In stark contrast to the Russian use of irregulars, the Ottomans took up and discarded the irregular troops as need dictated, careless about the impact of such a policy on local populations. As a result, there was considerable blurring of peasant and soldier, and border territories were reduced to banditry and unrest.

Selim III is often characterized as indecisive and incompetent. In reality his agenda was very ambitious, but he lacked the financial resources to implement his reforms effectively. The years of his rule after 1791 constitute an Ottoman revolutionary moment, the prelude to the complete overhaul of the Ottoman system of governance under Mahmud II. The reforms by Peter the Great were generally the reference points for the Ottoman reformers who emerged after 1792. The understanding that such piecemeal military change alone did not produce the modern state came more slowly.

Selim III's immediate object was to secure the continuation of the dynasty, as he struggled throughout the Napoleonic period to maintain the territorial integrity and legal authority of the Ottoman Empire. His successor Mahmud II inherited Selim III's partial reforms, which had set the stage for restructuring the military and the elite system of the empire. As more and more territories bordering the empire succumbed to the colonial powers of France, Britain, and Russia, both sultans faced tremendous pressure externally and internally. Internally, a cacophony of imagined re-orderings of society along national and constitutional models circulated among the subjects of the empire.

The new critics

The task that lay before Selim III was daunting. The young sultan had to satisfy the demands of his new provincial elites while stabilizing the army and initiating significant military reforms. Creating a new culture of rule and financing system were necessitated by the collapse of the Ottoman traditional order in the two disastrous wars of the late eighteenth century. The need to create an army that could protect the security of the Ottoman borderlands involved a series of significant, often violent negotiations between the sultan and his subjects.

How was it possible for the Ottoman Empire to survive the conflicts between the center and the provinces and simultaneously withstand the increasing pressure of rival imperial powers who insisted on their own reform agendas? Part of the answer lies in the significant voices for change that emerged among bureaucrats in Selim III's court, who were invited by the young sultan to advise him on the economic and social crises threatening the capital. Koca Sekbanbaşı, thought actually to be Ahmed Vasîf Efendi, was one of the transitional voices:

Shall I give you some account of the troubles which occurred in the world before the Nizam-y Gedid existed? Such as ... the calamities inflicted by the unemployed Levendis, who turned the province of Anatolia upside down; and the continued bad success which attended the arms of the followers of Islam, for the space of seven years, during the Muscovite war, which began in the year 1182 [1768–69]; the defeats which our great armies suffered every year, with the loss of so many thousand tents, such abundance of camp equipage, treasure, artillery, bombs and military stores, sufficient for the consumption of many years, and so great a loss of our troops, either taken,

drowned or killed, and the capture as well of our small forts and retrenched posts, as of our large fortresses, some of which were reduced by famine, and others by force; and the impossibility of delivering so many thousand women and children whom they contained, and who, still remaining in captivity, pass their lives in tears. These are things, the bitter remembrance of which can never be erased from our hearts.⁶

Exhorting discontented troops resisting the military reforms of Selim III circa 1807, Ahmed Vasıf Efendi and other Ottoman officials were members of the sultan's "kitchen-cabinet," the group of close advisers responsible for engineering and implementing the military and administrative reforms of the period. They were a new breed of Ottoman administrators, many of whom were experienced veterans of the battlefield, and they understood the need for the overhaul of the defeated army. They emerged during this crucial period of empire, and in a desperate attempt to remedy some of the worst of the empire's excesses, began a process of reorganization that historians generally label the "New Order," from the Turkish *Nizâm-ı Cedid*.⁷

Another of the Selim's influential counselors was Süleyman Penah Efendi (d. 1785), a seasoned bureaucrat in the military accounting offices and author of *Mora İhtilâli Tarihi*, a description of the massive rebellion which broke out in 1770 in the Peloponnesus. Grand Vizier Muhsinzade Mehmed had been ordered to suppress the rebellion, which he did by diverting Albanian irregular recruits who were on their way to the Danubian front. The Albanians' disorder and ferocity caused untold suffering and flight. Süleyman Penah was an observer of these events, and his telling of the story is a fascinating glimpse into the period. Commenting on the state of the soldiery, he noted three things of interest: the ubiquity of so-called Janissaries; the widespread misuse of *esames* (ration tickets, indicating registration in the muster rolls) and the problem of raw Albanian recruits. To avoid being accused of neglecting their duties to undertake warfare on behalf of the sultan and empire, provincial administrators created Janissaries of inhabitants, peasant and intellectual alike, without distinction of rank. With such soldiers, wrote Süleyman Penah, all order had been overturned. There was no way to make them fight, or to keep them from flight. Such an army was worse than a rag-tag general call-to-arms. Secondly, for those with official entitlements, there was no indication where they were posted, so that a Janissary could claim his right to a posting anywhere. This, Süleyman Penah continued, would be easy to fix, if a proper registration were undertaken, and the number who should be in the fortresses was well established and maintained (Figure 3.2).

A further observation by Penah concerned Albanian (*Amavut*) irregulars. According to him, those sent to the Morea were nothing but scum who would obey no one. Furthermore, they spoke Albanian among themselves and did not understand Turkish, so they were untrustworthy and difficult to train. While this was a common complaint about Albanians, Penah's observations represent a different way of thinking about them. First, he compares the situation to the Spanish



FIGURE 3.2 Albanian soldier, 1835, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

and their American colonies, and how they spread the use of the Spanish language by educating select native individuals. Likening it again to the Spanish example, he recommended the bringing of small groups from Albanian *sancaks* like Delvine and Avlonya to Istanbul, to train and educate them properly, and then scatter them all

over the empire, with benefits both to the army and the outlying territories. In his view, the Morea was colonial territory, to be incorporated into the empire by an Ottoman–Albanian civilizing mission.⁸ This approach to irregulars would resurface when Abdülhamid II created the Albanian Imperial Guard in the 1890s.

A third veteran of the Russo–Turkish wars, Canikli Ali Pasha, was a seasoned soldier. He was recognized for his contribution to the war effort in 1768–1774, awarded much of the territory of Trabzon Province, especially the Canik *sancak* on the southern shore of the Black Sea. Likely written between 1780 and 1782, when he was Governor of Trabzon, Canikli Ali's *Nasayih al-Muluk* is an indictment of the *mubayaa* or provincial supply system, based on fixed prices and state purchase. The individuals involved, he claimed, had no stake in seeing their duties carried out properly. The state made requests for provisions based on historical lists, without checking on a region's current ability to provide the grains, animals and/or other types of supplies required for the army. When a state purchaser (*mubayaaci*) was appointed, local *ayans* were happy because they could collude on the enumeration of individual holdings. For example, a peasant had one ox; it was recorded and taxed as a pair. Furthermore, the *ayans* confiscated and hoarded the grain supplies in the hopes of a higher price and were not above selling rotten grain to the state. Even the captains of the grain transport ships in the Black Sea and on the Danube were involved: they shipped barley mixed with chaff, and wheat cut with sand. One of Canikli Ali's suggestions was to bypass the corruption, and institute a system of direct buying, half at fixed and half at market price. As with Süleyman Penah, Canikli Ali was calling on the sultan and his grand viziers to exert some leadership and to address the undue oppression of the peasantry.⁹ (*Ottoman House*)

Selim III's new order (*Nizâm-ı Cedid*)

We do not know if Selim III read these earlier works, but this significant group had created a climate for change in Istanbul as he took the throne. It is hard not to sympathize with Selim III, who has been likened to France's Louis XVI: an isolated, indecisive, and insolvent sultan, prey to the vicissitudes of internal and international politics.¹⁰ As recorded by historian Ahmed Cevdet, one of his very first acts was to order the rebuilding of the artillery corps after he realized the extent of the corruption represented by inaccurate muster rolls. Looking at a recent register of "active" artillerymen, in order to estimate the financing available for new artillerymen, Selim found that of 1,059 troops listed, 33 were wounded, 90 were assigned to the foundry, 90 to the rapid infantry corps, 76 to the fire brigade, and 770 handicapped, old, or retired, were assigned to guard duty. His advisers estimated that it would take 20 to 30 years to settle the claims and straighten out the rolls to find the salaries for the new artillerymen. Selim III is recorded as saying angrily:

My God! What kind of situation is this? Two of the barbers who shave me say they are members of the artillery corps! If we call for soldiers, we are told

‘What can we do? There are no salaried soldiers to go on campaign.’ Let others be enrolled, we say, and we are told ‘There is no money in the treasury.’ If we say, there must be a remedy, we are told ‘Now is not the time to interfere with the regiments.’ We are not saying remove them all; rather enroll them [new recruits] as others perish.

Selim then insisted that each battalion (*orta*) of the Janissaries be equipped with ten experienced artillerymen, to be paid from the vacancies in the rolls.¹¹

The Peace of Jassy gave Ottoman bureaucrats the opportunity to draw breath for the first time in more than two decades. Upon his accession, Selim III, in an unusual move, had called together his advisers for a large consultative assembly and solicited written recommendations about what to do. A number of these recommendations survive, giving historians particular insight into this crucial moment. Diplomats, soldiers, bureaucrats and judges alike contributed their ideas about the nature of the problem and the possible solutions, but the submission by Rumeli Kaziasker Tatarcıkzade Abdullah Efendi, chief Judge of the European territories of the Ottoman Empire, stands out.

Tatarcıkzade Abdullah’s recommendations were far more detailed and critical than those of his contemporaries, and probably exerted the greatest influence on Selim III. He noted Peter the Great’s success in turning the “beast-like tribes” (Kazakh, Kalmuk, etc., living under the hegemony of the Crimean Khanate) into well-ordered and trained soldiers. Peter had achieved this by staying abreast of all the arts of war, which the Ottomans and the Janissaries had neglected. Tatarcıkzade thought that it would be possible to build a new army by combining the best elements of the existing regiments with new recruits from outside the system, properly outfitted and regularly paid. The new troops ought likewise to be trained with help from expert English and French officers. Such disciplined soldiers could be spread across the territories of the empire in the course of five to ten years, reaching the number of 40,000–50,000, but the training had to start in the barracks in Istanbul. He also made other recommendations about the navy and the dockyards, pointing again to the reforms that Peter had undertaken in Russia.

Such military reforms could not be undertaken without similar efforts to reform the administration and the sources of revenues, continued Tatarcıkzade. Significantly, he felt that the ranks of the viziers and the judges ought to be scrutinized and thinned. He noted that Ottoman administrators, especially the governors of provinces, lacked the experience and knowledge of the countryside of their European counterparts. They also needed physical and financial security to carry out their duties effectively. He recommended longer appointments, and the abolition of official appointment fees as a means of eliminating bribery. Tatarcıkzade was not hesitant to address the problems even in his own religious class, advising Selim to curb the selling of offices, restricting the appointment of judges to those who were legitimate graduates of the religious schools, and requiring examinations to determine their qualifications.¹²

The period after 1793 saw the implementation of a number of those initiatives by the sultan. Effectively bankrupt upon his accession, Selim III first had to reorganize the treasury and taxation system in order to be able to finance the needs of the military in a systematic fashion. Hence, one of his first acts was the creation of the *İrad-i Cedid*, or New Revenue (Treasury), which was established to support the formation of a new army, the *Nizâm-ı Cedid*, or New Order, in March 1793. By 1798, the new revenues reached 32,250,000 *kuruş*, a considerable recovery based on some fairly simple fiscal reform. Mustafa Reşid was put in charge as Treasurer and Supervisor of the *Talimli Askerler*, or Trained Soldiers. The revenue of the life-term tax farms (*malikane*), and tribute from the Sacred Cities of Mecca and Medina, was assigned to the new Treasury. A serious and vigorous attempt was made to recover lost income from the essentially defunct *timariot* system, from the tax farms, and from the customs revenues, themselves very often configured as tax farms. However, Selim faced vigorous opposition from powerful landowners as time went on, which derailed his early successes (Figure 3.3).

In an ambitious program to modernize the military, Selim III acted on all the proposals enumerated by Tatarcıkzade Abdullah. The reforms were both restorative, as with the existing corps and administrative systems, and innovative, especially regarding the new model army. Selim first attempted to reform the Janissary organization by appointing a supervisor to each of the corps, weeding out incompetent officers, and setting the terms of their service at three years. He also created a hierarchy of command, dividing the troops into proper battalions and companies (*bölük*), with the companies assigned cannons or mortars and each manned by master gunners. New barracks were built with parade grounds and drilling with arms was ordered a minimum of two days a week for the Janissary regiments—a novelty at the time. An effort was made to bring order back to wages and daily rations and establish a climate of discipline within the Janissary system.

Selim also occupied himself with the question of supply. The grain trade and the widespread abuses—very often the subject of complaints by the reformers—



FIGURE 3.3 “Topçular [Artillery] Barracks on the outskirts of Pera, by an artist of the Greek studio or circle of Konstantin Kapidagli,” 1809, Victoria and Albert Museum

were inextricably linked to the success and failure of warfare in the Principalities. These problems became especially acute when Russia occupied the fortresses at the mouth of the Danube after 1800. Ottoman and Russian armies on the Danube, as well as French and British garrisons in the Mediterranean, all competed for grain for their men and horses. The majority of the grain and sheep that supplied Istanbul until the Treaty of Adrianople in 1829 was shipped down the Danube and via the Black Sea, or driven overland on execrable roads. Prices were generally fixed (*miri*) at untenably low levels. Adequate grain supplies were a constant preoccupation of the administration in Istanbul, as any shortages and potential famines were certain to result in riots.

Selim reorganized the essential grain supply system to Istanbul. He ordered the construction of granaries in the Principalities and spent some 12,500,000 *kuruş* on purchasing grain at market prices, in a deliberate attempt to restore confidence in the supply system. To oversee supply and delivery, Selim III created the Grain Administration, which regulated the cereal supply to Istanbul until 1807, when the *miri* system was reimposed after Selim III's fall from power.¹³

Selim also addressed munitions, especially gunpowder manufacture, which aggravated him considerably as the state was forced to rely on foreign purchases and corrupted shipments. He had the Istanbul factory re-equipped and established another plant at Azadlı (near Küçük Çekmece outside Istanbul). Together, these plants reputedly produced 10,000 *kantars* of gunpowder in 1798, of a quality equivalent to that supplied by the Netherlands and Great Britain. Azadlı's production proved sufficient for the supply, and replaced the older plants at Gallipoli, Salonika and Izmir. This signalled the beginning of the recovery of the production in war material, which brought the Ottomans level with the Russians within another generation. After 1793, Selim III also modernised the output of the cannon works: the Tophane foundry was expanded, and the Hasköy foundry revived. Machinery imported from Britain and France, coupled with French expertise and 70 master gunners, continued the modernisation begun under Mustafa III. Observers of the period noted that Selim III had ordered the manufacture of the small-calibre cannon (4, 8, and 12 bores), which became a standard component of the Ottoman arsenal.¹⁴

A similar but less successful process of modernization was begun to improve firearms. A new musket factory was established to serve both the Janissaries and new troops at Levend Çiftliği, under French supervision (1795–1798) until the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt. However, overall incompetence and the rivalry between the English and Swedish supervisors who followed meant less success in transforming local small firearms production. Nonetheless, by 1800 the Ottomans began “to fit into the general pattern of technical advances taking place in Europe.”¹⁵

A new army and navy

Selim III's greatest achievements were in the shipyards. With the help of French and Swedish experts, Küçük Hüseyin Pasha (Selim's Grand Admiral of the Fleet

from 1792 to 1803) built a modern navy in some 14 naval yards. They were built especially for the Black Sea and control of the Bosphorus Straits and the Dardanelles. A French report from 1806 noted that the Ottoman fleet had 20 ships of the line, some with 118-gun first guns, with more under construction, as well as 20 frigates and 14 corvettes.

Piracy, much stimulated by the Russo-Ottoman warfare, continued into peacetime. The renewed navy under Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin was quite successful at capturing some of the more egregious pirates, but was diverted to address the French threat in the Adriatic after 1797. This engagement would test the mettle of both the new navy and army and challenge the empire at its heart in Istanbul. Küçük Hüseyin Pasha, who served in the campaign against Napoleon, was generally admired for his ability to discipline his troops properly. He had two good regiments of *Nizâm-ı Cedid* troops under his command for the Anglo-Ottoman campaign against Napoleon in 1801.¹⁶

Selim III's vision was comprehensive and ambitious but deeply disturbing to the traditional army, Janissaries or otherwise. It was also troubling to the members of the court whose wealth and/or religious standing depended on maintaining the status quo. What the reforms did not effectively address was the autonomy of the Janissary forces, which remained, as was traditionally the right, outside any sultanic authority to interfere. Even the Janissary Agha, nominally appointed by the sultan, was incapable of bringing systematised order to the rank and file.

The hierarchy of military rank and the obligation of an officer class to obey orders, perform as instructed on the battlefield, and care for men under their command were alien to the traditional Ottoman military. Individual prowess was prized and bought; loyalty seldom went beyond fellow soldiers in a squad (*oda*). Command was dependent on negotiation, not automatic compliance. Admittedly, rigid discipline and rationalisation of command were not parts of military life inherent to European contexts either. However, these were integral developments of armies of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, without which they could not have facilitated the huge scale of military operations by the time of the Napoleonic Wars.

Resistance from the Janissaries in Istanbul was so dangerous that Selim's reformers were forced to isolate the new troops, in places far afield and in garrisons separated from the traditional corps. Once there, troops were to be organized and disciplined explicitly along European lines. By 1798, although 12,000 had been targeted as a proper starting figure, less than half were bivouacked at new barracks in Levend Çiftliği in the suburbs of the city. In order to avoid enrolling the fractious Janissaries and their brethren, recruits were commandeered from the streets of Istanbul and the provinces, but they proved untried and equally difficult to discipline.

After 1799, provincial governors were ordered to recruit men locally, to be trained after the new fashion. Simultaneously, a central regiment was created in Istanbul, with new barracks constructed at Üsküdar, on the Asian side of the Bosphorus (Figure 3.4).



FIGURE 3.4 Selimiye military barracks, Haydarpaşa, Istanbul, Turkey, Ian Robinson 2012 © Ian Robinson / Alamy Stock Photo D3HWNX

The orders for these troops were carefully constructed, all in line with the regulations of the regiments already in place in Istanbul. They detailed training, when and how troops would drill, daily roll call, the obligations of guard duty, maintaining the hierarchy of ranks, as well as the punishments to be meted out for dereliction of duty, failure to report, and minor infractions.

Nine governors responded to the call for provincial recruits, including Abdurrahman Pasha, the Governor of Karaman who in 1801 was appointed Colonel in command of the force, and Süleyman Pasha, the semi-independent Governor of Baghdad. By 1806, 22,685 men and 1,590 officers formed the new army. Its significance lies less in performance than in composition: most of the latter recruits were Anatolian peasants, largely of Turkic stock, and Muslim. Additionally, the mobilization of the provinces represented Selim III's attempt at establishing a relationship—what amounted to a slim coalition at best—between Istanbul and the countryside, in opposition to the entrenched Janissary force in Istanbul.

Spreading the word

Enacting these reforms required the buy-in of the empire's subjects, and Selim III and supporters of the reforms took deliberate steps to shape the public discourse as reformers attempted to inspire the population to adopt new attitudes about military cohesion and discipline. European technical works were translated and printed as the newly established army and navy engineering schools. Students at

the new schools learned French and Arabic, mathematics, surveying, and the art of warfare. Once educated, they became the officers and advisers of the new army, not the Janissaries. Küçük Seyyid Mustafa was a product of the new schooling. His *Diatribes de l'ingénieur Seid Moustapha sur l'état actuel de l'art militaire*, is an enthusiastic piece of propaganda on the need to learn from Europe, and to continue the success of the New Order. It was published twice in Paris as well as in Arabic in Beirut.

Mustafa began his text by considering European success in mastering military discipline and technology. He felt they had accomplished this success by competing with one another and by pursuing military problems with energy and a willingness to learn from their mistakes. By contrast, "our fathers, the Ottomans," he continued, were content to rest on their successes, and furthermore, viewed military discipline and drill as if it were child's play. "The idiotic and superstitious, of which no country is exempt," profited from this state of affairs. He added that they had persuaded the majority that it was wrong for a Muslim to attempt to equal one's enemies. Hence, they had left us no refuge except valor and courage, denuded of all art. Sultan Selim III was determined to remedy this, Seyyid Mustafa continued, and nothing would deter him from his task.

Such an encomium must have served much the same purpose as that of Ahmed Vasif's lecture to the Janissaries, quoted at the beginning of the chapter. It functioned as a means of responding to the critics of the reforms whose numbers increased in proportion to the loss of Ottoman territory, most notably after Catherine II annexed the Crimea in 1783. The tremendous demographic upheaval resulting from the Russo-Ottoman wars was evident on the frontiers of the empire in the Balkans and the Caucasus. Exile tribal populations, be they Georgian, Circassian, or Tatar, were viewed by reformers as generic mountain bandits (*dağlı eşkiyalar*), both uncivilized and resistant to change.

Some of these new immigrants found their way into the court as supporters of the reform environment; others operated from within religious organizations such as the *Naqshbandi* Sufis, who would have a considerable influence on court ideology over the next few decades. Selim III, for example, established a *Naqshbandi* convent in his new Selimiye Barracks at Üsküdar as part of setting a new orthodox standard for the modernised army. Among such new immigrants was Derviş Kuşmani, author of "Zebire-i kuşmani fi ta'rif-i nizâm-ı ilhami," a dervish from Abkhazia and likely a *Naqshbandi*. He visited Istanbul twice in 1798 and again 1805–1806, when his manuscript was produced. His work was probably the first to attack the Janissaries, not just as outmoded soldiers, but also as social pariahs because of their allegiance to the Bektashi Sufi order.

Mehmed Emin Behiç Efendi was a childhood friend and influential associate of Alemdar Mustafa Pasha, and one of the important provincial reformers. He grew up in Rusçuk on the Danube and his "Sevâniñ levâiyih'i," written in 1802–1803, is a remarkable critique of Selim III's reform agenda, with a far-sighted view of stimulating a national economy. He too emphasized the need to instill and spread a Muslim orthodoxy as part of the modernizing and centralizing reforms necessitated by the current crisis. His proposals addressed the ignorance of the palace

bureaucracy and the need to codify Islamic law and regulate the training of religious officers. Behiç Efendi also wrote about the need to broaden the consultation base of the sultan, an implicit criticism of the Selim III's inner circle, which ran affairs in secret.

His chief contribution to the reform debate was to emphasize the necessity of creating a native mercantile class. He argued that this would counteract what he saw as the domination of non-Muslims in the luxury trades who escaped major taxation and had little investment in the sultan's reform agenda. The treatises of Kuşmani and Behiç Efendi were never published, likely because the revolt that would bring about the fall of Selim III began shortly thereafter. Nevertheless, they prefigure the reform agenda and the changing religious climate which would unfold under Selim's successors. The tumult that exploded in 1807 delayed further implementation of reforms for two decades. (I am indebted to the work of Kemal Beydilli and Kahraman Şakul for this discussion of early reformers. See Further Reading.)

New order expansion beyond Istanbul

On most frontiers of the empire, Selim III faced significant challenges not just to his right to rule as head of the Ottoman dynasty, but equally to his role as the caliph of Islam. That was particularly true in the southern arc extending from Baghdad to Cairo, where newly emergent Wahhabi Puritanism and increasingly influential *Naqshbandi* Sufism stimulated debate over the legitimacy of the house of Osman. While Muslim heterodoxy was present on the Danubian frontiers, especially among Albanian Bektaşis, Russian Orthodox proselytizing and colonizing was a far more pressing problem, even more after the peace of Jassy. Pressure by French and Russian diplomats on Ottoman measures to protect their co-religionists had the unintended effect of consolidating Muslim orthodoxy within the dynasty.

The history of Mehmed Ali Pasha, first Governor and then semi-independent ruler of Khedival Egypt, is well known. As one of the consequences of the Napoleonic invasion in 1798, Mehmed Ali and his successors would pose the greatest challenges to Mahmud II when he almost brought down the Ottoman dynasty altogether as will be taken up in subsequent chapters.

While the problem of the great powers and the Greeks lay in the future, for most the length of Selim III's reign, lesser known Ottoman–Muslim notables such as Canikli Ali of Trabzon and Osman Pasvanoğlu of Vidin, Bulgaria, alternately challenged or allied with the Ottoman dynasty and generally disturbed the balance of power in the Balkans. If they were not themselves appointed as governors, which might be the case, because of the local militias they could assemble, they were in direct competition with the central appointees or their fellow warlords. This had become a precarious governing style that required negotiation each time a new governor was appointed.

In the districts surrounding Trabzon, for example, orders to mobilize troops for the 1787–1791 campaigns were addressed to 26 family names in 1788 and more than

40 in 1789. From 1807 to 1811, a period of intense political crisis in the empire, nine different governors were appointed to Trabzon, inevitably provoking anarchy in the province. Coalitions of local elites could by that time mobilize 10,000–20,000 men in arms to turn against the centrally appointed administrators. For example, when appointed Trabzon Governor in 1811, Hazinedaroğlu Süleyman Pasha, an imperial elite who amassed extraordinary wealth, tried once again to impose the New Order military reorganisation on the district.¹⁷ His efforts engendered a multi-year rebellion which involved regional power-broker Memiş Agha, requiring tens of thousands of government troops to suppress. What happened in Trabzon was replicated in smaller urban settings all over the empire (map 3.2).

The final and greatest challenge to Selim III's New Order came not from Paris, London, or Cairo, but from the northern frontier along the Danube and the Black Sea. In Bulgaria, Osman Pasvanoğlu, who like his father began his career as a member of the Janissaries, ruled a wide swathe of Balkan territory from his base in the Vidin fortress on the Danube. Pasvanoğlu engineered a rebellion that engaged Selim III and his government for almost a decade, ultimately requiring a massive mobilization and general call to arms to finally eliminate him. The call to arms stimulated Serbian nationalist sentiments, and Kara George (Petrovic, d. 1817), commander of the forces that eventually put Pasvanoğlu's challenge to rest, is celebrated as the founder of Serbian independence. Whether defined as freedom fighter for Bulgaria, or provoking Serbian nationalism, or as an Ottoman subject in open rebellion, Pasvanoğlu proved very costly to Selim III.



MAP 3.2 Provincial *ayans* eighteenth and nineteenth centuries © Gregory T. Woolston

Vidin had continued to trouble Ottoman authorities, largely because of its situation on the edge of Wallachia and Moldavia, themselves frontier territories. Vidin was also a cause for concern because of the excessive number of Janissaries in the area following the mobilization and demobilization of the army after more than two decades of war. It was here that Osman was born in 1758, son of a Christian mother and Ömer, a Bosnian who was then one of the wealthiest aghas of the area. As with Canikli Ali, however, Ömer's wealth attracted the attention of the Commander of the Vidin garrison, and hence, of Istanbul. His story is patchy, but he was expelled from Vidin and ended up stationed with the 31st Janissary regiment near Belgrade. In 1787, he and his son Osman were sentenced to death by Abdülhamid I for extortion and rebellion. Ömer was executed, but Osman escaped into Serbia. There he distinguished himself in the war against Austria (1787–1791) in Wallachia, having “turned” Albanian and gathered around him his own band of fighters. In gratitude, the sultan allowed him to return to Vidin and repossess part of his family's property. His personal army consisted of bandits, dissatisfied Janissaries, and local recruits (*yamaks*). Many of them had themselves been expelled from the Belgrade Pashalik by the then Ottoman commander Ebu Bekir Pasha when the Ottomans regained control of the province after the peace of Sistova in 1791.

Osman continued the pattern of raiding across the Danube into Wallachia, and eventually besieged Vidin itself, taking possession in 1792. He established an extensive and impenetrable power base in Vidin, and was pardoned at least twice by Selim III, with documents signed by all the notables of the area. The central government could do little to curb such power. By 1794, Pasvanoğlu had become the most powerful *ayan* of Rumeli, and particularly of western Bulgaria.

Shortly thereafter a battle began between the new Belgrade Commander, Mustafa Pasha, a committed New Order reformer who was appointed by Selim III, and Pasvanoğlu's army. Mustafa Pasha had brought order to Belgrade and attempted to appease his powerful rival in Vidin, but to no avail. Pasvanoğlu had considerable aid from the Janissary regiments stationed in Belgrade, but Mustafa Pasha repelled them in 1795. Many of the regiments joined Pasvanoğlu, who by that time had assembled a militia of 12,000 troops made up of Albanians, Bosnians, Bulgarians, and Turks. Briefly appointed Governor of Rumeli, Mustafa Pasha proved unable to resist the increasing raids by Pasvanoğlu and his troops. Ali Pasha (of Ioannina), *ayan* of Albania and Greece, was then called upon to rout Osman's army in 1797; incidentally, one of the ways in which Ali Pasha himself began his rise. Routed but unbowed, Osman continued to harass the region, until Selim III was forced to mobilize an immense force to put an end to his reign of destruction.

In February 1798, 40,000–50,000 (although some accounts suggest perhaps as many as 80,000) Ottoman troops marched against Vidin. They included Grand Admiral and Commander-in-Chief Küçük Hüseyin Pasha (1792–1803), Mustafa Pasha, reappointed as Governor of Rumeli, Ali Pasha himself, plus Tirsinklioğlu İsmail Agha, Adana *Mutasarrıf* Yusuf Pasha, and Tirhala *Mutasarrıf* Kürd Osman Pasha. They were accompanied by *ayans* from Bosnia, Şumnu, Hezargrad, Varna,

and Pravadi, among others such as then Aleppo Governor Mustafa Cebbarzade who joined the Commander-in-Chief's army in Edirne.

Hüseyin Pasha is generally considered one of the superior admirals and commanders of Ottoman forces of the period, in command of both the Danubian fleet and of the land forces. Still, the situation at Vidin was beyond his capacity to regulate. The *ayan* coalition had little control over their own forces and lacked the willingness to submit to a commander from Istanbul.

An eight-month siege failed to bring Pasvanoğlu to heel, and the troops were finally withdrawn at the end of 1798 after sustaining considerable casualties. Admiral Hüseyin Pasha's ships and soldiers were needed in the Mediterranean. Pasvanoğlu's power and prestige were enhanced with another pardon and more titles from Selim. Pasvanoğlu was irredeemable, however, and resumed his stimulation of local rebellion among the Janissaries in Vidin and the surrounding area. Local Serbian *knezes* (notables) appealed to Mustafa Pasha to bring order, and he did so in 1799–1800. He first tried to put a stop to Janissary raids, and when that failed, he allowed the Serbian population to arm itself. No help could be expected from Istanbul, which was preoccupied with the French invasions in Egypt and occupation of the Ionian Islands. Chaos consumed Vidin and Belgrade as the government in Istanbul not only refused to help but insisted on the re-instatement of the Janissaries almost as soon as the new Serbian militias were able to expel them. In December 1801, with Pasvanoğlu's assistance, the Janissaries wrested control of Belgrade from Mustafa Pasha and executed him. Thus began the brief Janissary dominance of the city, the so-called reign of the *days*. It was not until the winter of 1804–1805 that the Serbs and loyal Ottomans combined to force the *days* out of the city and captured both Belgrade and Vidin.¹⁸

This tale is most often told without accounting for the international context that surrounded it. Pasvanoğlu is said to have negotiated with both the Russians and the French. The Russians wished to establish a consulate in Vidin as they were already well entrenched in the area, having delayed the removal of troops from the region as dictated by the 1792 treaty of Jassy. They were prevented by order of the sultan. British and Russian consuls in Bucharest combined to thwart French ambitions, replicating the hothouse diplomacy of Istanbul. The French had consulates in Bucharest and Jassy after 1795, but they were closed by the Ottomans in 1798. Napoleon sent a mission to persuade Pasvanoğlu to side with France in 1801, but neither France nor Russia appears to have aided Pasvanoğlu in any substantial way.¹⁹

Nonetheless, when war finally broke out between the Russians and the Ottomans in 1806, Selim III ignored Osman Pasvanoğlu, whose wings had by that time been clipped. Instead he appointed Mustafa Alemdar Pasha (also known as Mustafa Bayraktar: both mean "Flag-Bearer"), based in Rusçuk as the Commander of the Ottoman forces. Alemdar proved to be a supporter of the New Order, or at least of Selim III.

Between 1760 and 1830, the provincial evolution described here was observable in Anatolia and Rumelia as well as in cities like Damascus, Aleppo, and

Baghdad, where other lineages of local Ottoman elites can also be traced. Selim III's New Order was an attempt to reimpose central control, which worked itself out in extended civil unrest across the empire. The Ottomans failed to forge significant new alliances, preferring an exclusive, absolutist model that bore fruit under Mahmud II but had unforeseen consequences for the well-being and security of the countryside. Perhaps they had little option, even less inclination.

The remarkable stories like those of Canikli Ali and Belgrade Commander Mustafa Pasha reveal that there were men who enabled the transformation. They would continue to articulate the need for reform from both province and center as the nineteenth century unfolded. While such leaders might have been amenable to a process of negotiation with Istanbul in 1800, a significant and well-trained officer and administrative class was still many decades away (Figure 3.5).

Osman Pasvanoğlu, however, represented the traditional order. He resolutely prohibited the imposition of the new economic and military reforms in the territories under his command, one of the chief reasons for his popularity among the peasants. Foreign observers noted that Christians (Bulgarians) as well as Muslims (Turks) sought refuge in his territories and fought in his garrison at Vidin. Until the Serbian revolt of 1804, Pasvanoğlu represented the downtrodden of all ethno-



FIGURE 3.5 (Osman Pasvanoğlu of Vidin) Baswand Oglu, Pascha von Widdin, Rebell gegen die Pforte, 1800, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

religious stripes in one of the most diverse corners of the empire. It was only after 1804 that the Christian/Muslim lines started to be more firmly drawn as the Orthodox Serbian communities struggled for autonomy from the Ottomans. Pasvanoğlu is also credited with creating a vibrant center of Islamic culture in Vidin, modernizing the fortress, repairing the roads, and erecting fountains, a mosque, a library, as well as a modern barracks, most of which is still standing.²⁰

For Selim III and his court in Istanbul, however, Pasvanoğlu represented a significant threat to dynastic and ideological claims. He had to be branded both as a rebel (*eşkıya*) and heretic (Bektaşî) in order to legitimize the attack on him as a usurper of the sultan's authority. It can be argued that the dynasty reasserted its Muslim orthodoxy here, not just as a response to the Russian and Austrian manipulation of religious identities in diplomatic instruments, but equally because challengers like Pasvanoğlu cloaked their aims in caliphal arguments. The very name Osman could be used to remind followers of the rightly guided caliph Uthman as well as founder of the dynasty. As a threat to the new order, Osman Pasvanoğlu could be likened to the 1773–1775 Pugachev rebellion in Russia, and the response to him as protecting the traditional order and restoring the legitimate dynasty. Pugachev, who had served in a Cossack regiment in Bender in 1770, derived support from rebellious Cossacks, and for a time threatened the social stability of Catherine II's Russia. It could also be argued that Pasvanoğlu succeeded where Pughachev did not in precipitating events which contributed to Selim III's downfall.

Radical diplomacy

Quite apart from his ongoing disputes with Pasvanoğlu, Selim III was also frustrated by the access his provincial elites had to international diplomacy in ways that alluded eluded him in Istanbul. Their autonomy and frequent treachery prevented the sultan from acquiring accurate and speedy information on frontier and external affairs and it had become increasingly difficult to do so in Istanbul itself. Ottoman officials had long relied on the couriers of friendly foreign consuls for correspondence to foreign capitals, and on the Greek Orthodox *dragomans* as translators in delicate negotiations in Istanbul.

Between 1703 and 1774, the Ottoman–European diplomatic system was regularized by the clauses of the Karlowitz Treaty (1699), based on reciprocal rather than unilateral agreements. Most Balkan treaties thereafter used the Karlowitz Treaty and the Küçük Kaynarca of 1774 as their basis for comparison. Each negotiated treaty required an exchange of diplomats, resulting in considerable (and expensive) traffic between the empire and its various trading partners and erstwhile enemies. Significantly, the Ottomans sent more special embassies and envoys to European courts in the eighteenth century than any previous era: thirty-four Ottoman reports and travelogs from European embassies have been identified.

Foreign occupation, a very real and frightening possibility after 1792, and even more so by the end of Russo–Ottoman hostilities in 1812, may have contributed

to Selim III's decision to establish permanent Ottoman embassies in Europe in 1793. The establishment of these embassies was perhaps the most significant innovation in diplomacy of the age. Deprived of the French military mission (recalled in 1788) and forced to break off relations with the French after the 1789 Revolution, the sultanate had struggled to maintain Ottoman autonomy. In 1791–1792, the sultan turned a normal exchange of ambassadors into a fact-finding mission.

The Ottoman embassy to Vienna in 1791–1792 was to acknowledge the newly signed Sistova Treaty ending Austria's involvement in the Russo-Austrian-Ottoman war. However, the ambassador was Ebubekir Ratib, Selim III's closest confidant, whose mandate appears to have been far broader than a mere exchange of treaty instruments. Ratib Efendi submitted a massive report to Selim III upon his return to Istanbul, almost 500 manuscript pages of description of Austrian military, bureaucratic and political affairs. He was present when Selim III convened his first council as sultan, and his report on Austria is acknowledged by historians as having contributed to the later reform agenda. The level of detail in the embassy report regarding a European court and its military secrets was unprecedented in Ottoman circles.²¹

Ratib Efendi's experience and advice likely precipitated Selim III's sudden decision to send permanent embassies to select capitals of Europe: London, Vienna, Berlin and later Paris (1806), in search of further such enlightenment. The first, permanent Ottoman embassy was in London, an initiative perhaps conceived by Ratib Efendi and discussed with Sir Robert Ainslie, long-time British ambassador to Istanbul. Britain's wealth and power, and potential for support against both France and Russia, surely must have swayed Selim III. The first London ambassador was Yusuf Agah Efendi, whose Chief Secretary, Mahmud Raif, wrote a report of the years in London (1793–1797) in French.²² Author of *Tableau des nouveaux règlements de l'Empire ottoman*, Raif was one of the first three men to be sent abroad by the sultan with specific instructions to undertake the study of a foreign language. He was 32 years old at the time of his appointment, and very anxious to learn French, the “universal language.”²³ Raif is representative of the new-style bureaucrat important to Ottoman reform in the mid-nineteenth century. His account includes a description of the House of Commons and Lords, and the English army and navy, with special emphasis on the ships, arsenals and docks. Also included is an extensive description of the English economy and of the city of London. Raif served as *Reis* from 1800–1805 and was on campaign in Egypt in 1801 as part of the Ottoman–British coalition army organized to combat the French occupation. In 1803, he published the *Cedid Atlas Tercumesi*, a much modified translation of William Faden's *General Atlas* which had become a European standard.

Ambassador Yusuf Agah's correspondence with Sultan Selim III, preserved in manuscript with the sultan's notes in the margin, is evidence of his keen interest in refashioning the Ottoman state on foreign models.²⁴ The ambassador Yusuf sought British friendship and loans, but his official reception did not bode well for

the success of the enterprise. British Prime Minister Grenville reacted indifferently to the ambassador, failing to appreciate the significance of Selim III's decision.²⁵

The second and third permanent ambassadors were sent to Vienna (İbrahim Afif Efendi) and Berlin (Ali Aziz Efendi) in 1797. Like Yusuf Agah, and his successor in London, İsmail Ferruh Efendi, these pioneers are generally portrayed in western sources as naïve at best; at worst, as dupes of the host governments. Generally unskilled in the languages of the country to which they were appointed, adept at ceremony but untrained in the intricacies of European diplomacy, the ambassadors were often lesser bureaucrats of the court in Istanbul. They still had to rely on a staff of translators, drawn from the Greek community of Istanbul, the increasingly mistrusted "*dragomans*" of all foreign observers.

Selim III's diplomatic initiative annoyed Catherine II and angered the French, the latter long considered the oldest "friends" of the Ottomans. The Ottomans did not send a permanent ambassador to St. Petersburg until 1857, a measure of the long years of hostility between the two courts. Selim III had corresponded with the French court before becoming sultan and remained a Francophile throughout the period. Vergennes, former ambassador to Istanbul and French Foreign Minister, was an ally of the Ottomans. When he died in 1787 the putative friendship collapsed, and "the French barrier around the Ottomans fell."²⁶

Vergennes had been responsible for the operation of the French military mission in Istanbul, which was recalled just before the events in Paris in 1789. It was unclear in the 1790s if Great Britain would step into the void. Britain's Levant Company was close to dissolution (it would be taken over by the British government in 1821), and British officials were more engaged with India and Europe than with the Ottomans. At most, the British ambassador in Istanbul heard from his government in London ten times a year. By contrast, French Ambassador Choiseul-Gouffier (1784–1792) received special dispatches from Izmir on a regular basis and was a particular source of information on international affairs for Selim III.²⁷ The French dominated eastern Mediterranean trade between Marseilles and the Ottoman ports, particularly Izmir. After the French Revolution forced a breach in Ottoman–French relations, Selim III's political maneuvering in the period 1798–1807 can be interpreted as his continued desire to re-establish the French connection. This was one of the significant reasons for his downfall.

Ambassador Raymond Verinac (1795–1797), the first fully accredited French Republican representative in Istanbul, persuaded Selim III to appoint Seyyid (Moralı) Ali Efendi as the first permanent Ambassador to Paris in 1797. Ali Efendi was well received in Paris, in the style of Molière's "Bourgeois Gentilhomme" as described by one account.²⁸ Europeans were avid readers of the *Arabian Nights* and *The Turkish Spy*, and must have delighted in the virtualization of their fantasies in the new ambassador.²⁹ Ali was accompanied by one of the more notorious of *dragomans*, Pangiotis Codrika, who served Talleyrand in keeping Ambassador Ali Efendi ignorant of French intentions in Alexandria. Ali Efendi was maintained as a virtual prisoner until 1801, much like his counterpart in Istanbul the French chargé d'affaires Pierre Ruffin. As part of an Ottoman declaration of war, Ruffin

was one of the last European diplomats to be locked up in the Seven Towers castle. He later became one of France's most influential Orientalists.

Undeterred by British and Russian opposition to his moves to reconnect with France, Selim III continued to appoint ambassadors to Paris: Halet Efendi (1803–1806) and Muhib Efendi (1806–1811). In spite of that continued representation, Selim III was compelled, on at least three occasions, to send special plenipotentiaries to resolve some delicate negotiations. One of note is Mehmed Said Galib Efendi, sent to negotiate the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 25 June 1802, re-establishing Ottoman–French relations ruptured in 1799. Of most interest is the fact that Galib Efendi and Halet Efendi survived the rebellions around Selim III's demise to serve as rivals in the court of Mahmud II. Galib Efendi has since acquired the title of “father of modern Turkish diplomacy” for negotiating the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, while Halet has been dismissed by Bernard Lewis as “a convinced reactionary and hater of all things Western.”³⁰

While the diplomatic record of these first permanent Ottoman representatives abroad is undistinguished, their exposure to western style and culture was more significant. It added to the information circulating among the ruling elite in Istanbul, already apparent on the streets of Ottoman cities, where a craze for all things European was underway.³¹ Their experiences at foreign courts may also have contributed to Mahmud II's abandonment of Selim's embassy project until he had created a reliable diplomatic corps and trustworthy translators in Istanbul itself. Permanent representatives to the courts of Europe began again in 1835.

European governments preferred to acquire their information on the Ottomans from the hotbed of Istanbul itself, probably the last European capital where members of all states met on more or less the same terms, even as they complained of the rapacity of the system of ‘gifts’ required to influence Ottoman court politics.

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt

That would change with Napoleon's invasion of Alexandria. The invasion inaugurated the colonial age in the Middle East, a period when spies, diplomats and translators alike were caught up in the new age of persuasion and ideology. It also forced the Ottomans to address their southern frontier seriously, as the struggle for survival became a preoccupation on all frontiers of the empire.

Egypt and Syria had experienced much the same emergence of *ayan*/warlord/semi-autonomous households as elsewhere. In Syria, as in the Balkans, the line between mercenary and bandit was almost non-existent, and the region had existed for centuries under nominal Ottoman aegis, with private armies and local recruitment. Clan-based, communal warriors characterized Nablus, for example, and the Hawran of the Druze. Nomadic groups of Turcoman or Bedouins might serve as temporary local combatants, or protectors of the caravan routes. Inter-tribal warfare made that kind of force problematic for the Ottomans, and the centrally appointed governors often found themselves pawns of local events. A third kind of local force commonly seen elsewhere were the *levends*: militia of

mostly Anatolian and Balkan origin, they essentially became soldiers-for-hire when they were demobilized by the Ottoman army itself. *Levends* could be Albanians, Kurds, or even Maghrebins, the latter also known as *delis*, or even the later *bashibozuksno* cavalry mostly from the Caucasus region. Cezzar Pasha, for example, the commander of Acre who defeated Napoleon, made extensive use of the *levends* alongside independent groups of Bosnians and Albanians.

The city of Damascus, situated on the pilgrimage route to Mecca, enjoyed moments of stability under the al-‘Azm family. Members of this family were also Ottoman governors of the province at least nine times between 1725 and 1808. Abdullah Pasha, one of the last of the family, ruled intermittently from 1795–1807, and assisted then-Governor Cezzar Pasha in the struggle against Napoleon at Acre. He was subsequently dismissed when he could no longer control the local military tribal factions who attacked the annual hajj caravan more or less at will. A period of undeniable strife and chaos unfolded in the first half of the nineteenth century in greater Syria, as in Egypt in the first decade.³²

For the Ottomans, the Egyptian province was largely a colonial enterprise. It was governed by the *vali*, an Istanbul appointee, and controlled by the Janissary regiments established in Cairo after the original occupation in 1517. The chief task of the governor was to maintain order, secure the annual tribute to the sultan from Egypt and supply 3,000 troops to imperial campaigns when called on by Istanbul. By the eighteenth century, most of the Cairo regiments had come under the control of *sancak beys*, heads of *Mamluk* households, and formerly enslaved people from the Caucasus. They were also packed with local residents seeking to benefit from the salaries and protection of the corps. As a result, Istanbul governors found themselves eclipsed and subject to the rivalry among the great households for control of the highest of the *mamluk* offices, including the appointment to the lucrative position as amir al-hajj, commander of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. It is this context that made Bonaparte’s landing and victory so deceptively easy (Figure 3.6). That the Ottomans maintained “a modicum of authority in Egypt and the flow of taxes from that province throughout most of the eighteenth century is a remarkable achievement.”³³

In 1786, an Ottoman expeditionary force was sent to restore the sultan’s control over Egypt when disorder became serious enough to alarm the distant metropole. Commanding the force was the well-known Grand Admiral Gazi Hasan Pasha, who had advanced as far as Cairo when he was recalled to Istanbul in order to prepare for the war against Russia in 1787. Defence of the northern arc against Russian incursions continued to obsess the inner circle in Istanbul. Opinion in Paris—including that of Constantine Volney, an ideologue much read by Napoleon—was that Egypt resembled a plum ripe for the plucking, both militarily and economically. Volney noted of the *mamluk* warriors:

their armies are mobs, their marches ravages, their campaigns mere inroads, and their battles, bloody frays; the strongest or the most adventurous party goes in search of the other, which not unfrequently flies without offering



FIGURE 3.6 Egypt in 1804. British Library

resistance; if they stand their ground, they engage pell-mell, discharge their carbines, break their spears, and hack each other with their sabres. A panic frequently diffuses itself without cause; one party flies, the other pursues and shouts victory; the vanquished submit to the will of the conqueror, and the campaign often terminates without a battle.³⁴

The French Revolutionary Wars had their beginning in the rebellions that launched the age of liberation and constitutionalism, first in British-America in 1776 and then in Paris in 1789. The fervor spread into the Mediterranean when Napoleon Bonaparte and his army marched into Dalmatia and the Adriatic region in 1797. Napoleon's entry forced the Habsburgs to abandon their allies Russia and Great Britain into signing the Treaty of Campoformio with France. The treaty dismembered the Republic of Venice and gave France the Ionian Islands, making France a neighbor of the Ottoman Empire for the first time.

In July 1798, largely on his own initiative, General Napoleon Bonaparte sailed for Egypt with 35,000 troops and a 500-strong team of scientists, archaeologists, linguists and scholars. Landing at Alexandria without much resistance, he marched to Cairo, where he defeated a *Mamluk* army twice the size of his at the Battle of the Pyramids. On 25 July, Bonaparte entered Cairo, but remained precariously perched on the mouth of the Nile River. In the annals of military history, the battle stands as the great east-west encounter, with Bonaparte's disciplined infantry

cutting down the *Mamluk* cavalry that was armed largely with swords and bows and arrows (Figure 3.7).

Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Egyptian Muslim intellectual and eyewitness to the French invasion, noted that the *Mamluks* were

irresolute, and ... at odds with one another, being divided in opinion, envious of each other, frightened for their lives, their well-being, and their comforts; immersed in their ignorance and self-delusion; arrogant and haughty in their attire and presumptuousness; afraid of decreasing in number, and pompous in their finery, heedless of the results of their action; contemptuous of their enemy, unbalanced in their reasoning and judgement.

By contrast, the French acted:

... as if they were fighters in a holy war. They never considered the number of their enemy as too high, nor did they care who among them was killed. Indeed, they considered anyone who fled a traitor to his community, and an apostate to his faith and creed. They follow the orders of their commander and faithfully obey their leader.³⁵ (*Ottoman House*)



FIGURE 3.7 “Napoleon addressing captives in Egypt,” Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

Jabarti's likening of the French invasion to a jihad is not far off the mark. Imbued with the zeal of the revolution, which championed liberty and tolerance, Bonaparte professed friendship and brotherhood with the Muslims of Egypt. Furthermore, he declared his wish to continue his good relationship with Selim III, and his desire to eliminate the tyranny of the *Mamluks*. He also asserted that his landing represented a blow against British power in India, which had initially persuaded his masters in Paris.

Selim III prepared his own propaganda for circulation. While the Ottomans, he began, had at first hesitated to condemn the revolution in France out of respect for an old friendship, those the revolution brought to power have subverted

under an illusive idea of liberty ... every established government, ... the abolishment of all religions, the destruction of every country, the plunder of property, and the dissolution of all human society—to occupy themselves in nothing but in misleading and imposing upon the ignorant amongst the people ... and render the government permanent in their hands ... the French planned to divide Arabia into various Republics; to attack the whole Mahometan sect, in its religion and country; and by a gradual progression, to extirpate all Mussulmans from the face of the Earth.

Sultan Selim warned Egyptians that once the French were in control, they would “spread hatred and excite the people to revolt; ultimately to destroy the Holy Places and all the Muslims.”³⁶ That prediction was borne out when Bonaparte fired on rebels in Cairo in 1798, destroying parts of the al-Azhar mosque and university complex, an uprising that left 2,000–3,000 Egyptians and 300 French troops dead.³⁷

Bonaparte's thrust would be short-lived, however. The British navy under Admiral Nelson dispatched the French navy at the Battle of the Nile on 1 August 1798, surrounding and destroying most of the fleet off Aboukir. The destruction of the ships and supplies crippled the Bonaparte enterprise. Great Britain signed the Anglo-Ottoman Defensive Alliance in January 1799. The alliance contained mutual guarantees for their respective territories, joining the already agreed-upon Russo-Ottoman alliance, in order to remove the remaining French from the region.

Bonaparte marched into Syria in February of 1799, defeating the Ottoman garrison at Jaffa, where the French army executed 4,000 prisoners. He faced stiff resistance at Acre, where the local troops were supported by British ships, and withdrew by the end of May, having failed to breach the fortress.³⁸ By October 1800, Bonaparte had slipped from Egypt to head for greater adventures in France, but left his remaining French troops in occupation of Cairo. In a joint military effort beginning in March 1801, the British and Ottomans landed their troops in Aboukir where they were joined by an Ottoman imperial army that marched overland from Palestine to Alexandria.³⁹ The combined forces roused the French, and the last French troops embarked from Alexandria in September 1801 on British ships. Franco-Ottoman hostilities officially ceased with the Treaty of Paris

in June 1802. The treaty renewed all French commercial contracts and re-established their diplomatic predominance in Istanbul, much to the chagrin of the British who would shortly resume the fight against Napoleon Bonaparte. Selim III preferred neutrality to breaking the treaty. After much wrangling, the last of the British troops left Egypt in March 1803 in order to restore good relations with the sultan. The first colonial thrust into the Middle East was over in a brief three years; the consequences reverberated for another hundred.

However, the British were not finished with Egypt or Istanbul. Europe took up its battle with Napoleon once more, in the War of the Third Coalition. After the massive French victory at Austerlitz (December 1805), Selim III was emboldened to recognize Bonaparte as emperor and closed the Dardanelles to Russian warships. The Russians immediately declared war on the Ottomans and occupied Moldavia by December 1806. The Russians were significantly more worried by French proximity and influence on Selim III than by potential Ottoman belligerence. Rusçuk Alemdar Mustafa Pasha mobilized the countryside along the Danube and successfully prevented the Russians from crossing the Danube in that first thrust.

In February 1807 the British broke the Dardanelles blockade and sailed into Istanbul with warships in support of Russia. Much to their dismay, they found the French fortifying the population and enabling their resistance of the British (Figure 3.1). French Ambassador Sébastiani had rounded up some 200 French officers and aides to man the batteries alongside the Ottoman artillerymen. Every available weapon was mobilized, and within a few days, the shores of the city were bristling with cannons. Crowds of the city's young men volunteered for service against British and Russian alike. Diplomatic dithering and adverse weather forced a British withdrawal. It was perhaps the last moment that Selim III enjoyed the approbation of the streets of Istanbul, as the population waved goodbye to the British fleet on 3 March and celebrated as the warships sailed back through the Dardanelles. Despite this setback, the British were still worried about possible French control of Egypt. In a fruitless effort to oust Mehmed Ali, survivor of both the French and *Mamluks* and firmly entrenched as the Governor of Egypt, the British made one more attempt to land at Alexandria in March 1807 but were repelled by the Ottoman garrison at Rosetta.

On the surface, the Ottoman Empire—though not Selim III—emerged with little damage, or at least no more than the usual destruction inflicted on local populations by warfare and local oppressors. Selim III's preference for the French connection, as well as Anglo-Russian vulnerability to Napoleonic ambitions elsewhere, restored Ottoman sovereignty to Egypt, however tenuously. Selim III was grateful for this and established a medal called the Order of the Crescent, which he bestowed on the British officers "to perpetuate the signal services rendered."⁴⁰

What ensued in Egypt, however, was further civil war among the *Mamluk* households, the Ottoman governors, and the remnants of the Ottoman liberation army, mostly Albanians, who caused considerable unrest and widespread misery. Mehmed Ali would bide his time and return to threaten the new sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839) in his own home territory of Anatolia. To build his modern army,

Mehmed Ali relied, as we shall see, not on the British but on French ideas, technology, military models and advisers. This was the primary consequence of the Napoleonic invasion, which produced not only Mehmed Ali but also the chief architect of Mahmud II's reform agenda, Hüsrev Pasha, commander of the New Troops with his mentor Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyn at Alexandria.

The revolutionary moment: The final challenge to Selim III

The massive rebellion that exploded in the streets of Istanbul in May 1807 followed the sultan's ongoing attempts to deploy the New Order soldiers in place of the Janissaries in Rumelia, specifically in Edirne. Selim III's efforts provoked an uprising that he hesitated to counter with his new army, and it developed into what would amount to a civil war. His vacillation clearly played a large role in his own demise. Unwilling to confront the traditional forces, Selim III undermined his own policies by betraying those loyal to him. The reputation of the new soldiers was significantly tarnished and contributed to the increasing discontent in Istanbul. An *alafranga* [from the Italian *alla franga*] mode had begun in Istanbul. The city was seething with strangers and discontent. Economic reforms were not fully applied and caused inflation and shortages. Rumours started to circulate about Selim III's sanity, but especially about corruption and about the sultan's credentials as a Muslim leader. The revolt, which began as a factional palace coup, erupted ostensibly against the imposition of new-style military uniforms. It quickly outgrew its original cause, stimulated by socio-economic conditions, migrant populations and foreign soldiers sporting revolutionary cockades and singing the Marseillaise. The rebellion can be imagined as the "Ottoman revolution," which aimed to restore the traditional relationship between sultan and subject, at least as it was championed by commoners, Janissaries and military contractors who saw their privileges disappearing.

Meanwhile, in Rusçuk, on the Danube, Selim III loyalists assembled a new generation of reformers and provincial *ayans* under Alemdar Mustafa Pasha. In mid-July 1808, 15,000 troops consisting of Alemdar Mustafa's army and the Grand Vizier's imperial army marched on Istanbul in an attempt to restore order and rescue Selim III. By the end of July, order had returned to the city, and Alemdar imposed strict discipline among his soldiers to restore confidence in the population. However, he had been unable to save Selim III, who had been hastily executed by his cousin and successor Sultan Mustafa IV (1807–1808) who was cooperating with the rebels. Mustafa IV had also ordered the execution of his brother, the young prince Mahmud, but his courtiers disobeyed him and hid Mahmud, the very last heir to the throne.

Shown Selim III's body, Alemdar was overcome with grief, crying: "Unhappy prince, what have I done? I wanted to restore you to the throne of your ancestors, and I am the cause of your death. Is this the fate reserved for one with your virtues?" His fellow officers exhorted him: "Is it proper for the Pasha of Rusçuk to weep like a woman? It is vengeance and not tears that Sultan Selim III requires of us. Let us

punish his assassins. Let us especially not allow a bloody tyrant to profit from his crime, and to assure his reign by the death of Sultan Mahmud.” Messengers were sent to find Mahmud, who climbed down from the roof where the Chief Imam Ahmed Efendi had hidden him. The Imam declared, “This is Sultan Mahmud. He is next in line as caliph. I have sworn allegiance to him.” Alemdar pledged his loyalty and enthroned him as Sultan Mahmud II (1808–1839).

Half a century later, nineteenth century historian Ahmed Cevdet told the next part of the story this way: Alemdar Mustafa swore vengeance on those traitorous members of sultan’s inner household that he held responsible for the murder of Selim III. Mahmud II, newly made sultan, replied with his first order: “Pasha, I will find them and send them to you. Dismiss your soldiers and have them remove their weapons. Let us then retire to the precincts of the Mantle of the Prophet.” Alemdar asked if he could continue to wear the scimitar he had at his side, as it had been a gift of Selim III. Mahmud II allowed him the privilege, an extraordinary gesture for a ruler who had just been saved from execution. As if the point was not clear enough, Cevdet continued: “Mahmud II was just twenty-four, and had never been in such a crowd, except of his own servants.” Alemdar later commented: “That first order of the Padishah frightened me more than any other time in my life.” Here, concluded Cevdet in hindsight, was the type of brave sultan the Ottoman Empire desperately needed at that moment.⁴¹

So ended a revolution unprecedented in Ottoman history: an occupying army from the provinces replaced the ruling sultan, disregarding the will of the Janissaries. The death of Sultan Selim III may have temporarily halted the reforms, but it is impossible not to see the 1793–1826 period as a continuum, with the rise and fall of sultans and grand viziers just one of the threads running through the narrative. Selim III was represented in contemporary histories as fostering decadence in Istanbul, preferring entertainment and excursions on the Bosphorus to a serious dedication to his reform program. His reluctance to press on in the face of opposition undermined his initiatives. Observers commented that Selim III had squandered the good will of his Istanbul subjects, who had proved more than capable of saving a nation in moments of extreme crisis. An immense task awaited the young Mahmud II.

Challenging the Ottoman House: Ahmed Vasif Efendi, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti, Canikli Ali Pasha

Ahmed Vasif Efendi⁴²

Ahmed Vasif Efendi (d. 1806) has recently been dubbed the first of the modern Ottomans by his biographer Ethan Menchinger, who uses the term to label the generation of Ottoman administrators facing a rapidly changing external order

after 1750 and serving a government particularly ill equipped to face the challenges. Vasif served the Ottoman dynasty as historian, statesman and diplomat for most of the traumatic post-1750 period. He was born into an ulema family in Baghdad in 1735, which guaranteed his learning, but he preferred to pursue a career in the scribal profession. Vasif quickly earned the reputation as a talented stylist and acquired the pen name Vasif, or “wordsmith.” Typical for his era, the young scholar traveled for his education and spiritual knowledge, to Aleppo, Kars and Sivas, where he joined the household of a provincial governor whose patronage began his service to the dynasty.

As provincial governors were required to muster men and supplies for major Ottoman campaigns, at age 34 Vasif found himself on the battlefields of the 1768–1774 war with Russia. So began his education in the complete unreadiness of the Ottoman military for a confrontation with the armies of Peter and Catherine the Great. His adventures from then on are striking, including a period as a Russian POW, and personal knowledge of Field Marshal Rumiantsev, who entrusted him on his release with a letter to the Grand Vizier as part of peace negotiations. He would continue to serve off and on in that capacity until the treaty was finally signed in early 1775.

Vasif’s long career and prodigious output is the testament to the period historians call the New Order. He began his appointment as court historian in 1783, a post which served both as recorder and perhaps influencer of court opinion. That assignment lasted off and on until just before his death in 1806. He spoke for a particular group of like-minded elites, largely bureaucrats who had deep experience of the Russo-Ottoman wars. These bureaucrats would offer Selim III a more coherent agenda for reform that was both rooted in a Muslim worldview that affirmed the need to restore moral and social order as well as poised to use the tools and tactics of the enemy against him. The debates between the view that legitimate reform was exclusively restorative (the Golden Age model) and the view that learning and adopting new forms of warfare was a legitimate innovation came to a head in the controversy surrounding the Russian occupation of the Crimea in 1783 under Sultan Abdülhamid I. For a brief moment, the peace party prevailed, but the decision not to go to war proved very unpopular in Istanbul and brought down the fragile reform coalition. The coalition later regrouped and argued more forcibly in the context of the disastrous Russo-Ottoman War of 1787–1791 and the accession of Selim III in that same year.

Vasif’s trials and rivalries are well documented in the various works he produced, but it appears that after 1793, with his position as court historian restored, he was able to concentrate on the ethics and philosophy of history as well as the practicalities of the Ottoman predicament. Moral order upheld by a just ruler—in this case Selim III—would enable a new Ottoman order to emerge. The modern war of words had begun.

Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti⁴³

Son of Shaykh Hasan al-Jabarti, a renowned scholar of the Ottoman world, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti was born in Cairo in 1753. He inherited significant wealth and established himself in the neighborhood near the mosque/university complex of al-Azhar. Al-Jabarti married three times and had two sons and a daughter. He was an active intellectual and served in many public capacities, but he is best known for his four-volume history 'Ajai'ib al-Athar (The Marvelous Compositions). He also authored two histories of Bonaparte's occupation of Egypt and was a vocal critic of Mehmed Ali's oppressive regime. His son is said to have been murdered by Mehmed Ali's agents in 1822 because of al-Jabarti's criticism, which led the author to withdraw from public life. He died, blind, in 1825.

Al-Jabarti initially wrote with admiration of the scientific and intellectual achievements of the French occupiers. It is also in the first of the two memoirs (History of the French Period in Egypt 1799) that Al-Jabarti's famous criticism of Bonaparte's propaganda, claiming that the French had been sent by Selim III to punish the rebellious Mamluks [fake news] first appears. Written in execrable Arabic, it attempted to persuade Egyptians that they were brothers; that is, that they had submitted to the one god (Muslim—deist Unitarians). Napoleon arrived in Cairo with printing presses that could produce French, Arabic and Greek, so he plastered Cairo with the proclamations, a French republican spin of an earlier age.

Al-Jabarti finished the second memoir of the occupation after the Ottoman and British armies forced the capitulation of the remaining French in 1801 (The Manifestation of Holiness: The End of French Rule). That work demonstrates his admiration for Selim III and his reforms as the enlightened leader of a reformed Muslim community.

Al-Jabarti was witness to the three-day rebellion in Cairo in October 1798, which was met with a ferocious response by Bonaparte and his French soldiers. Al-Jabarti comments on the ransacking of al-Azhar mosque by enraged French infantrymen; It is estimated that as many as 800 Frenchmen and 3,000 Egyptians died, 300 of them brutally executed once the unrest was quelled.

They entered on horseback with some infantry like wild goats. They created havoc, smashing the lamps and night lights, breaking open the bookcases ... plundered all the possessions they found. They threw books and copies of the Koran as refuse on the ground, trampling on them with their feet and shoes. They defecated and pissed on them and blew their noses over them.

al-Jabarti is equally scathing of the destruction caused by the Ottoman army that occupied Cairo in 1801. But the criticisms of Mehmed Ali and his policies are reserved for his Marvelous Compositions. An example appears in a description of

an incident from 1809, when the Secretary of the Governing Council agrees to take a petition of numerous ulema to his master:

You must go and speak to him and tell him what you want. He will not oppose what you want or reject your intercession. But you must speak to him softly because he is a conceited, ignorant and tyrannical young man and will not accept being governed. Perhaps his vanity will lead him to harm you and your goal will not be achieved.

As time goes on, the details of Mehmed Ali's massive development projects are recorded, capturing the rapaciousness of the reforms and their impact on ordinary Egyptians. It remains one of the most informative contemporary accounts of the early seizure of power by Mehmed Ali.

Canikli Ali Pasha

Canikli Ali was born in Istanbul in 1720–1721. He established his power base by becoming the tax collector (*muhasıl*) of Canik, a district stretching along the southern coast of the Black Sea. The Caniklizades controlled the life-term tax farm (*malikane*) of the *Muhasıl* of Canik from 1737 to 1808. By the end of their reign over northern Anatolia, they controlled tax-farm and custom revenues in Amasya, Trabzon, Tokat, Gümüşhane, Kastamonu, Sivas and Erzurum.

His distinguished service and the recognition for raising local troops in the 1768–1774 Russo-Ottoman War guaranteed his status as a vizier. They also secured additional tax farms ostensibly for having suppressed an uprising of 'kapısız levendat', maintaining stability in the area as well as facilitating and policing passage to the Crimea on the Black Sea. Canikli Ali was commended for his ability to raise troops in the area to protect the Black Sea coast. By 1772, as *Mutasarrif* of Amasya, he was entitled to the tax revenues called *imdadiye*, specifically tagged for supporting war efforts.

Canikli Ali was appointed Commander of the Crimea and Governor of Trabzon in 1773, following the Russian occupation of the Peninsula in 1771. He raised troops and supplies for the many—but ultimately futile—thrusts into the Crimea. He was recognised for his ability to mobilize and command armies, and for his adroitness in making astute alliances, maintaining open communication and sympathies with the Crimean Tatars. Canikli Ali's next assignment was the defence of Kars and Erzurum, as Commander of Kars and Governor respectively (1774–1776). In March of 1774, he was ordered to mobilize some 15,000 soldiers that he was to recruit from the entire north-eastern sector of Anatolia. That campaign year ended in failure, which led to the final capitulation of the Ottomans to the Russians. In the five to ten years that followed, Canikli Ali was ordered twice more to the Crimea as *Serasker* to engage in the struggles that continued with Russia until Catherine II's unilateral

occupation of the region in 1783. Throughout the period, he and his sons were repeatedly credited with preventing rebellions, re-establishing order and putting down banditry in much of north-eastern Anatolia. Here, it would seem, was a dedicated, loyal subject of the sultan, whose service was exemplary.

Things began to go wrong when state demands exceeded Canikli Ali's ability to fulfil them. A rivalry developed with Mustafa Çapanoğlu (also known as Cebbarzade), also based in Sivas and Tokat. Canikli Ali's apparently insufficient response to orders, coupled with his independence and his extensive, wealthy power base made him an automatic candidate for suspicion in Istanbul. His slow response to demands was of particular concern regarding supplies, as grain and animals were desperately needed by the state for campaigns in the Danube and Caucasus regions. Complaints about his injustice from residents of Amasya started to make their way into the courts, and after 1779 he was declared a rebel, accused of extortion and injustice. Canikli Ali marched on Çapanoğlu Mustafa in an effort to defeat his rival, declaring "either you execute him, or I'll remove him myself" but found himself an outlaw instead. While Canikli Ali remained on the run in his strongholds of Canik and Trabzon, by 1780 the state had managed to confiscate many of the supplies (tents, camp equipment and various other stuffs) he had reputedly stockpiled. The loot was so significant that, according to one document, its transport required 422 hammals (porters) to disembark from Istanbul. Confiscation, although no longer a standard punishment, could still be imposed as one of the routine ways the Ottomans attempted to maintain control over upstart provincial appointees. Canikli Ali, who had taken refuge in 1781 with Şahin Giray in the Crimea, proved necessary to the state, however, and was officially forgiven in 1781. He was reappointed as Governor of Trabzon. Orders from Grand Vizier Halil Hamid (1782–1785) to Canikli Ali commended him for his defence of the coastline of the Black Sea and asked for further intelligence about the Crimea and the Caucasus. He appears to have supplied this information, as it appears in his *Nasayih al-Muluk*. It may have been written for Halil Hamid, although it is more likely that he wrote it earlier while he was in hiding. He died in mid-1785.

Of particular concern to Canikli Ali was the corruption of the Janissary corps, the buying and selling of appointments, and pay tickets [*esame*] to the highest bidders—state servants, ulema, artisans. He wondered why it would not be possible to establish the eligibility of each *esame*-holder on payday by asking particular questions about the last campaign and aspects of the enemy that only a seasoned soldier could answer. His aside is particularly revelatory concerning the complete lack of control over individual soldiers at the time. Canikli Ali was equally critical of the lack of order in the artillery corps. Present-day warfare, he asserted, was less a matter of raiding and swords than cannon to cannon.

His is a remarkable story, especially because it demonstrates the degree to which the state "tolerated" such autonomy on the one hand, but persecuted

emerging wealth and power on the other. Canikli Ali's story may be unique because he left us a record, but all signs indicate he was a faithful Ottoman subject, and a loyal servant to the dynasty for over a decade.

Notes

- 1 A.I. Bağış, *Britain and the Struggle for the Integrity of the Ottoman Empire: Sir Robert Ainslie's Embassy to Istanbul, 1776–94* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1984), 9.
- 2 Matthew Z. Mayer, "Joseph II and the Campaign of 1788 Against the Ottoman Turks." (MA thesis, McGill University, 1997), is the source of much of the information in these paragraphs.
- 3 Edward S. Creasy, *History of the Ottoman Turks* (London: R. Bentley, 1878), 432. The garrison was indeed slaughtered, although Creasy's description is likely hyperbolic, operating by his time on the then common assumption that Eurasian warfare was somehow more barbaric than other kinds.
- 4 Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Army of Emergence: War, State and Society in the Habsburg Monarchy 1683–1797* (London: Longman, 2003), 382–85.
- 5 Mayer, "Joseph II and the Campaign of 1788," 88–89.
- 6 William A. Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (London, 1820ed; New York: Arno Reprint, 1971), 222–33.
- 7 Ethan L. Menchinger and Aysel Yıldız, "On the Identity of a Reformist Intellectual: The Koca Sekbanbaşı Debate Revisited," in *Ottoman War and Peace: Studies in Honor of Virginia H. Aksan*, eds. Frank Castiglione, Ethan L. Menchinger, and Veysel Şimşek (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 208–33.
- 8 Birol Gündoğdu, "A Boiling Cauldron of Conflicts and Cooperation: The Question of Two Distinct Societies During and After the Morea Rebellion of 1770," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 20, no. 1/2 (2014): 67–68.
- 9 *Canikli Ali, Nasayih al-Muluk*, Süleymaniye Library, Esad Efendi MS 1855, dated 1782. This summary is derived from a number of pages of a rather lengthy manuscript of 70 folio.
- 10 Aysel Yıldız, "'The Louis XVI of the Turks': The Character of a Sultan," *Middle Eastern Studies* 50, no. 2 (2014): 272–90, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2013.870898>.
- 11 Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih* (1st ed., Vol. 4). (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1858), 265–6.
- 12 Besim Özcan, "Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi ve islahatlarla ilgili lâiyhası." *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları* 25 (1987), 55–64.
- 13 Güran, Tevfik. "The State Role in the Grain Supply of Istanbul: The Grain Administration, 1793–1839." *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 3 (1984), 27–41.
- 14 A. Juchereau de Saint-Denys, *Révolutions de Constantinople en 1807 et 1808* (Vol. 1) (Paris: Librairie de Brissot-Thivars, 1819), 66; Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire Under Sultan Selim III, 1789–1807* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 131.
- 15 Jonathan Grant, "Rethinking the Ottoman 'Decline': Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," *Journal of World History* 10 (1999): 184, 194–8.
- 16 Svat Soucek, *Ottoman Maritime Wars 1700–1914* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2013), 74.
- 17 Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Berkeley, CA: UC Press), 203, 216–17.
- 18 Robert Zens, "Pasvanoğlu Osman Pasha and the Pashalık of Belgrade, 1791–1807," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (2002): 89–104.

- 19 Robert F. Frost, "Napoleon's Diplomats in the Danubian Principalities: Revolutionaries, Opportunists, and Spies," *Proceedings: Consortium on Revolutionary Europe* 20 (1990), 853–60.
- 20 Rossitsa Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin: Between Old and New," in *The Ottoman Balkans*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2006), 115–61.
- 21 Carter Vaughan Findley, "Ebu Bekir Ratib Efendi's Vienna Embassy Narrative: Discovering Austria or Propagandizing for Reform in Istanbul?" *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Morganlandes* 85 (1995): 40–80. Much of the report was likely a translation from German.
- 22 Mehmet Alaaddin Yalçinkaya, "Mahmud Raif Efendi as the Chief Secretary of Yusuf [sic] Agah Efendi, the First Permanent Ottoman-Turkish Ambassador to London (1793–1799)," *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarih Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 5 (1994): 385–434.
- 23 Mahmud Raif Efendi, *Tableau des nouveaux reglemens de l'Empire Ottoman* [facsimile], preface 296, included in Kemal Beydilli and İlhan Şahin, eds., *Mahmud Raif Efendi ve Nizâm-ı Cedîd'e Dâir Eseri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001). The use of French in this publication to describe Selim III's ambitious plans represents a deliberate gesture of propaganda aimed at European diplomats. Mahmud Raif Efendi had it translated into French and printed on the press of the Imperial School of Engineering in 1798 or 1799.
- 24 Yalçinkaya, "Mahmud Raif Efendi," 420–22.
- 25 Allan Cunningham, "Robert Liston at Constantinople," in *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters in the Age of Revolution: Collected Essays* (Vol. 1), ed. Edward Ingram (London: Frank Cass, 1993), 58. Yalçinkaya's account suggests that all protocols were followed, but does not suggest any serious foreign policy exchanges took place between Grenville and Yusuf Agah ("Mahmud Raif Efendi," 410ff.).
- 26 Cunningham, "The Ochakov Debate," in *Anglo-Ottoman Encounters*, 3.
- 27 Cunningham, "The Ochakov Debate," 5–6, notes 11 and 20; Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 91.
- 28 Shafik Ghorbal, "The Missions of Ali Effendi in Paris and of Sedki Effendi in London, 1797–1811," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, University of Egypt* 1 (1933): 114–29. See also Bernard Lewis, *Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York: Norton, 1982), Ch. 1.
- 29 The first translations of the 1001 Arabian Nights by Galland appeared in 1797, Tott's *Memoirs* were a bestseller of the age, and *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy*, to name just a few, had fashioned an oriental mania in the reading public. On Seyyid Morali Ali and Muhib Efendis, see Stéphane Yerusimos, *Deux Ottomans à Paris sous le Directoire et l'empire* (Paris: Sindbad, 1998).
- 30 Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 189; E. Kuran, "Mehmed Şa'îd Ghâlib Pasha," *EI2* v. 6, 1003b, CD edition; Lewis, *Muslim Discovery*, 57.
- 31 Ambassador Robert Liston reported a craze for all things European in the largest cities of the empire in 1796. Shaw, *Between Old and New*, 194.
- 32 Dick Dowdes, "Reorganizing Violence: Traditional Recruitment Patterns and Resistance Against Conscription in Ottoman Syria," in *Arming the State*, ed. Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 110–27.
- 33 Daniel Crecelius, *The Roots of Modern Egypt: A Study of the Regimes of 'Ali Bey al-Kabir and Muhammad Bey Abu al-Dhahab, 1760–1775* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1981), 28.
- 34 As explored by H. Laurens, *Les origines intellectuelles de l'expédition d'Égypte: L'orientalisme Islamisant en France (1698–1798)* (Istanbul: ISIS, 1987), 180–82. C.F.C. Volney's *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie pendant les années 1783, 1784, 1785* (Paris: Volland, Dessne, 1787).
- 35 Norman Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire* (Edinburgh: EUP, 1966), 146–47.
- 36 Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire*, 91–92.
- 37 Darrell Dykstra, "The French Occupation of Egypt, 1798–1801," in *Cambridge History of Egypt* (Vol. 2), ed. M.W. Daly (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), 123.

- 38 Of 13,000 troops under Bonaparte's command at that time, 2,000 died and another 3,000 were wounded, heavy casualties even for the period. See P.M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516–1922* (London: Longman, 1966) for the standard account.
- 39 The first of 6,000 sepoys from British India, who had left Bombay in December, arrived in Qusayr on the Red Sea in May, and with great difficulty marched down the Nile, reaching Rosetta in time for the final French capitulation. Thomas Walsh, *Journal of the Late Campaign in Egypt, Including Descriptions of that Country, and of Gibraltar, Minorca, Malta, Marmorice, and Macri: With an Appendix Containing Official Papers and Documents* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1803). The East India Company used the opportunity to promote further trade in the Red Sea and the Gulf.
- 40 Walsh, *Journal of the Late Campaign in Egypt*, Appendix no. 35.
- 41 Cevdet, *Tarih* (Vol. 8), 310–20.
- 42 Ethan Menchinger, *The First of the Ottoman Moderns: The Intellectual History of Ahmed Vâsîf* (Cambridge, UK: CUP), 2017.
- 43 Jane Hathaway, ed., *Al-Jabartî's History of Egypt* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2009).

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4

MAHMUD II: AN OTTOMAN “REIGN OF TERROR”

The problem

Thrust on the throne by Mustafa Alemdar Pasha in 1808, Mahmud II was about to face three significant crises that would determine whether or not the empire survived. First, the resumption of the Russo-Turkish war, which would not end until the treaty of Bucharest in 1812; second, the Greek and Serbian revolts, which extended to 1830; and third, the invasion of greater Syria and Anatolia by Mehmed Ali Pasha and his son İbrahim, 1831–1840. The Ottoman House was under siege, not just by external imperial and colonial powers but also by its own populations. It was also a great religious age, with foreign missionaries seeking control over the souls of Ottoman Christian subjects, both Orthodox and Catholic. Ethno-religious nationalist movements sprang up in territories with divided populations, such as Bulgaria, Romania and Syria. Wahhabi fundamentalism and *Naqshbandi* Sufism also emerged as two very important forces that challenged Ottoman legitimacy in majority Muslim territories (Figure 4.1).

The young sultan inherited an empire whose terminal illness (The Sick Man of Europe) became the cliché of European diplomacy after the Crimean War, and his own grip on power was indeed tenuous. The geopolitics of the northern defensive border had been altered permanently by two Russo-Ottoman wars, with Russia in possession of the entire northern littoral of the Black Sea and a large part of the Caucasus. With Napoleon’s arrival in Cairo, the southern tier—especially the Egyptian–Levantine coast—had achieved virtual autonomy that overturned the traditional Ottoman–*Mamluk* balance and carried Egypt into the world economy. The sultan was in control of very little territory except Anatolia, Bulgaria and Thrace. This too would soon be challenged.

Selim III had reorganized his court, instating regular meetings with his advisers who counselled him on foreign affairs and the need for reform. He had attempted



FIGURE 4.1 “Sultan Mahmud II riding in procession at Friday prayers, by an artist of the Greek studio or circle of Konstantin Kipidagli,” 1809, Victoria and Albert Museum

to extend his reform initiatives into the provinces, with some success but considerable opposition. Discussions concerning the future of the Ottoman Empire dominated international relations. Intervention by Britain, France and Russia in the civil wars and rebellions within the empire often determined the outcome (Figure 4.2).

Like Selim III, Mahmud II was resilient in manipulating the demands of Great Britain and Russia, but just as often had to concede in order to survive. Mahmud II, however, proved more successful than his predecessor at dealing with the two major obstacles to a reconsolidation and transformation of Ottoman sovereignty. The first hurdle was the power of the *ayan*, the provincial political household described in the previous chapter, necessary to the survival of both Selim III and Mahmud II. The second, of course, was the Janissaries.

Ruşçuk *ayan* Alemdar Pasha makes a curious figure as a counterrevolutionary. Claimed by some observers to be opposed to the military reforms, Alemdar was welcomed to Istanbul by many (including the Janissaries) as a restorer of the traditional order. He championed Selim III's and Mahmud II's reforms when it served his interests. Forming part of the ceremonial coronation parade of Mahmud II, Alemdar Pasha continued to flaunt tradition by surrounding himself with an entourage of 300 Albanians bristling with muskets and sabres. The challenge to the



FIGURE 4.2 “Tough on Turkey,” Gillam © Alpha Stock / Alamy Stock Photo 2A4FKTX

new sultan did not go unnoticed by Alemdar's enemies, who characterized him as an insolent adventurer who violated the traditional laws.¹

Alemdar Pasha, installed as Grand Vizier, assembled a large council of notables to support a reform agenda to convince Mahmud II to undertake the changes that they considered necessary. A call was sent out to the provinces and in September–October 1808 the chiefs of many of the great houses of Anatolia—such as the Karaosmanoğlu and Çapanoğlu families—convened in Istanbul. Many of the family chieftains were accompanied by large numbers of their own troops, so perhaps as many as 70,000 assembled in total.² Notably absent were Grand Vizier Alemdar's rivals from Bulgaria, and Ali Pasha of Ioannina, although the latter sent a delegation. The governors of Kars, Erzurum, as well as the Arab provinces in Mosul, Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo, were too far away to make the meeting in time. In effect, the notables who gathered in 1808 represented the major regional forces whose territories would make up the rump of the empire by the end of the nineteenth century.

Sened-i ittifak: The Deed of Agreement

Twenty-five of those present at the meeting, including Chief Judge Esad Efendi and Grand Vizier Alemdar, signed the *Sened-i İttifak*, or Deed of Agreement. The assembled notables pledged to preserve the authority of the state by maintaining good relations with one another and with the central state authorities. In return they were confirmed in the possession of their lands and the rights of their heirs. They signed in recognition of the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic sultanate, with absolute sovereignty as governed by Islamic law connecting the dynasty and its subjects.³

The notables pledged to not oppose the sultan and to come to his aid when necessary. They promised that they would continue to provide troops for the benefit of the survival of the empire, and to assist the sultan against foreign and domestic enemies when required. In return, the sultan affirmed the continuation of tax farming. The *ayans* also pledged to protect the empire's subjects from abuse and oppression in both cities and countryside.

Though subsequently ignored by Mahmud II, this is still an extraordinary document, sometimes called the Ottoman Magna Carta and elsewhere described as the origin of public law in modern Turkey. The deed echoes the bargain made by the Janissaries with Mustafa II in 1703. It was innovative in striking a balance between the sultan and his noble, provincial subjects. By all accounts, the real opposition to the document lay with the sultan himself, who found his power circumscribed by an agreement negotiated first between the grand vizier and the *ayans*, which he was invited to ratify.

A new revolt interrupted the negotiations. This one appears to have been a genuine protest against the changes to the system, and Alemdar Pasha accelerated the creation of a new force called the *Sekban*. The revolt also represented the anger of the Istanbul population against the occupation of the city by the provincial troops. By early November, when violence erupted, most of the provincial *ayans*

had left for their own territories, leaving only about 400 of their own men to form part of the new troops. The insurrection began among junior officers of the Janissary corps. They first attempted to enlist their commander, the Janissary Agha, but killed him when he refused to join the violence. Alemdar was caught at his residence, the *Sublime Porte*, grand vizierial headquarters at the centre of the city. An internal explosion of an ammunition cache occurred during the Janissary attack, resulting in a fire that killed Alemdar. In the chaotic days that followed, the rebels' target remained Mahmud II's entourage, as ordinary soldiers went unpunished and much of Alemdar's army vanished into thin air. The Janissaries demanded concessions from the sultan in the traditional fashion. Faced with his predecessor's fate, Mahmud II turned to the assembled reformed army for aid. On 15 November, 4,000–5,000 troops from Üsküdar and Galata were transported to Topkapı Sarayı. The new sultan had made his choice in favor of the reformed troops. As the rebellion continued, Mahmud II was reluctantly persuaded to execute the deposed Sultan Mustafa IV, who was supported by the rebels and his only dynastic challenger to the throne.

The sultan reached an accommodation with the Janissary commanders, who were ready to pledge obedience if the *Sekban* corps was dissolved and any of the reformers who escaped were punished. The Janissaries did not demand the head of those who remained in the palace as they would have in the past. Mahmud II was the last of the Ottoman line. His death would have created even greater upheaval on the streets of Istanbul. Under pressure, Mahmud II declared the New Order abolished. The Janissaries, backed by the residents of Istanbul, had won a brief reprieve.

Mahmud II was still sultan, but the *Sened-i İttifak* experiment lay in ruins. The success of the Janissary revolt in 1808 indicates the spontaneous and fragile nature of the reform "party," a cobbled-together set of ideas that attracted adherents according to their self-interests. The confrontations in the streets left an indelible mark on Mahmud II: for the next ten years, he vigorously pursued his own program of suppression of independent-minded governors, such as those in Damascus, Baghdad, Vidin and Belgrade.

More astutely than Selim III, Mahmud understood that popular politics had to be manipulated in order to effect major changes. The best way to do so was to establish successful relations with the large and influential religious class (ulema), while simultaneously curbing their claims on the minds and lands of Ottoman subjects. In these ways, Mahmud II was more "modern" than his predecessor, perhaps more "western" as well. The nineteenth century is not only the great Imperial Age, but also a time when hitherto unregulated populations came under considerable central control. This shift involved the significant development of police forces to establish and maintain urban security while state armies were enlarged and disciplined in the move to conscription. As an extended arena of the Napoleonic Wars, events in Greece and Egypt are immensely better-known histories. Those histories have dictated a view of Mahmud II's reign that underestimates the extent to which he managed to redraw the course of the empire long before the final confrontation with the Janissaries in the streets of Istanbul in 1826.

The Treaty of Bucharest

The real test of Mahmud II's early years lay in the war with Russia over the Principalities. Begun in 1806 and halted briefly in 1808, it had resumed once again in 1809 when Franco-Russian relations grew frosty and negotiations over a possible treaty broke down. Uncertainties about Napoleon's potential attack on Moscow as well as the disorder in Istanbul delayed a resolution. Mahmud II would not entertain the surrender of all of Wallachia and Moldavia to Russia. Tsar Alexander I, similarly, required something to compensate for years of campaigns and occupation that had yielded little. Given the degree of destruction to the military institutions in Istanbul, the Ottoman army that was called upon to defend the Danubian fortresses in 1809–1810 was disorganized and ill-equipped. 1806–1812 was not a brilliant war for the Russians, as noted by one of the field commanders, Langeron: "Never was there a war so poorly fought with such a lucky end."⁴ Considering the instability and the disarray in command in these early years of Mahmud II's reign, it was lucky they escaped at all. Events in Europe and relations between France and Russia continued to dictate the terms and length of engagement. A final push across the Danube was ordered for 1811 precisely because the tsar expected Napoleon's attack on Moscow in 1812.

In 1811 the sultan, encouraged by deteriorating Franco-Russian relations, decided to go on the offensive against the Russians. Sofia became a strategic center for the remainder of the war, later serving as command headquarters for the sustained offensive against both the Serbs and Ali Pasha of Ioannina. Thus, there were two command centers in the Balkans, an unusual occurrence in Ottoman military history. Negotiations were restarted at Şumnu and in Bucharest as well, where the representatives had moved at Kutuzov's invitation.

Points of conflict stretched up and down the Danube River from Vidin to Silistre. However, the main event was at Rusçuk in the fall of 1811 when the two imperial armies faced one another across the Danube, the Ottomans on the left (southern) bank and the Russians on the right (northern) bank at Giurgiu. By October, the Grand Vizier's army of 36,000 men and 56 guns was stranded on the northern bank of the Danube. It broke the resolve of the Ottoman army. After a spirited defense of Silistre, which fell to the Russians at the end of October, Ottoman troops on the southern bank fled in all directions. Napoleon was following the movement of the two armies from detailed reports. Learning of the Grand Vizier's blunder in crossing the Danube, he is reported as yelling: "Can you understand these dogs, these stupid Turks? They have a talent to be beaten." Worse was yet to come: the Grand Vizier's army suffered under complete blockade. Hunger and bad weather (sleet and frost) spread diseases among the Turks and increased the death rate. Horses were either dead or eaten. The poor Turks had to eat rotten meat and had no salt. They cropped and ate the grass and roots on the territory of the camp, often paying with their lives for such terrible food and dying under the Russian artillery and musket fire. The cold October night worsened their conditions because the Turks did not have wood to

warm themselves.”⁵ The grand vizier himself escaped to the right bank and pressed for an armistice with Russian Commander Kutuzov in order to save his isolated troops. By 25 October they agreed upon a ceasefire, which included biscuit and salt for the trapped troops.

The Russian negotiators began by continuing to demand the acquisition of Moldavia and Wallachia and insisting on some concession of the eastern Black Sea ports they had occupied in Kuban. The aim was to consolidate their holdings in the northern Caucasus. The Russians also demanded the settlement of the Serbian problem by insisting on an amnesty for the rebels and a guarantee of internal autonomy, which the Serbs had not previously had. In spite of the humiliating position the army was in, the Ottoman negotiators would consider neither the secession of Moldavia and Wallachia nor the recent Russian acquisitions in the Caucasus. Furthermore, they consistently argued against any discussion concerning the Serbians, whom they considered part of the Ottoman *reaya* and not tributary subject peoples like those of the Principalities.

Both sides were anxious to conclude peace, however, fearing that a Russo-French war would protract negotiations and even renew the conflict, which Russia could ill afford. By the end of May 1812, a treaty was drawn up with 16 articles, as was a separate, secret treaty with two articles: one regarding the demolition of the fortresses of İsmail and Kilya, and the second allowing Russian access to the eastern Black Sea ports. Article VIII of the official treaty stipulated that the Serbians acquire internal autonomy, as well as a fixed tax rate that they themselves would collect as part of their reconciliation with the sultan.

Mahmud II remained adamant. First, he refused to accept the secret articles, even at the risk of going back to war. Secondly, he and his advisers understood that having access to a port and passage at the eastern end of the Black Sea meant that the Russians could supply weapons to the area as part of their aim to conquer Georgia, Iran, Abkhazia and Circassia. Furthermore, Article VIII was tantamount to accepting future Russian interference in Serbia. The Treaty of Bucharest was signed on 28 May 1812. The two secret articles, never ratified by the Ottomans, were dropped from Russian demands.

The Ottomans may have emerged relatively unscathed, but the Principalities did not. Six years of Russian occupation and the fighting up and down the Danube reduced Wallachia and Moldavia to dire straits. Initially, the Russians dealt with the local councils (*divans*) and the *hospodar* Constantin Ypsilanti. In March 1808, they appointed Sergei S. Kushnikov as President of the *divans*, whose first priority was the supplying of the army on the Danube. Kushnikov pressed for order in the army supply system and demanded such immense amounts from the countryside that it provoked much discontent and peasant flight increased.⁶

In the territory bounded by the Prut and Dniepr rivers—ceded to Russia in 1812 and henceforth known as Bessarabia—the Russians expelled the entire population of Tatars and sent them to the Crimea. The new Russian acquisition was some 26,000 square miles with 700,000 inhabitants. With it, Russia acquired five of the best Ottoman border fortresses: Ismail, Kilya, Bender, Hotin and Akkirman.

Most importantly, the treaty included the acquisition of some 86 miles of the Danube, considerably enlarging Russian access to the Black Sea. The inhabitants of Turkish-speaking areas were sent into Russia as prisoners of war, and the land was designated crown land. Refugees from across the Danube (Bulgarians) and many orthodox Greeks from across the empire were encouraged to settle into the emptied lands. Odessa, the former Ottoman fortress of Hacıbey, had been founded by Catherine the Great in 1794. It became the fourth-largest Russian city in the nineteenth century, a free port populated by extremely diverse colonies of Greeks, Armenians, Tatars, Albanians and Jews.

The unfortunate legacies of the Russian occupation and use of the Principalities as a logistics base were ill-will and impoverishment. For those in Bessarabia, it meant becoming part of the Russian empire. For the rest, reverting to Ottoman tributary status did not promise a better future. Movements of populations, voluntary or forced, became a regular feature of the nineteenth-century landscape not just on the northern Danube shores but in all remaining Ottoman territories, and proved to be a huge problem in settlement and integration by 1900.

Confronting rebellion: Serbia

European preoccupation with Napoleon, and the studied neutrality on the part of Mahmud II gave the Ottomans a respite from European affairs. For the period between 1812 and 1826, Mahmud II's determination to pacify the countryside and rid himself of his provincial rivals eventually bore fruit. But first he faced resistance in Serbia, Iraq, Greece and Albania, as well as Egypt.

In Serbia, Kara George continued as leader of the Serbian revolt, which had erupted in February 1804. Initially the revolt aimed at protecting the population of Belgrade and restoring the privileges the Serbian population had gained under reformers like Mustafa Pasha, who had been killed in the 1801 *coup d'état*. Limited autonomy concerning bearing arms and the right to oversee the tax regime were also part of the demands. By January 1811, Kara George had acquired the title of Supreme Leader and ruled Belgrade in conjunction with a Legislative Council. Article VIII of the Treaty of Bucharest had recognized these developments without committing either side to full Serbian independence.

There is considerable evidence that Mahmud II ordered the commanders stationed in the Danube fortresses to implement Article VIII of the treaty by declaring a general amnesty and peaceful takeover of the Serbian garrisons. Deserted by Russia in 1812, the Serbians resisted the overtures and continued fighting, with disastrous consequences. Grand Vizier Hurşid Pasha (September 1812–April 1815), stationed in Sofia during the recently completed hostilities, attacked and defeated the Serbian rebels. By October of the following year, the Ottomans had retaken control of Belgrade. Hurşid Pasha declared a general amnesty and called on Serbians to return home. Some 30,000 reputedly did so. The new governor of Belgrade appointed many Serbian leaders, among them Milos Obrenovic (1780–1860), to local administrative offices. This was accompanied by

an attempt to pacify the region by eliminating many of the powerful local leaders. Harsh imposition of order had the opposite effect creating more chaos and precipitating the Second Serbian Uprising in 1815. The uprising forced the Ottomans to recognize part of Article VIII concerning Serbian internal administration of the Paşalık of Belgrade under Supreme Leader Milos Obrenovic, rival and murderer of Kara George in July 1817.

Continued Russian pressure to implement Article VIII of the Bucharest Treaty resulted in the Convention of Akkirmán in 1826. It specified the limits of Serbian autonomy and would be reiterated in the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of Adrianople only after another defeat in 1829. By August 1830, Serbia was a principality with Ottoman suzerainty. Obrenovic was confirmed as Hereditary Prince. In 1833, the remaining fiscal obligations to the Ottomans as well as the stationing of troops along the frontier were negotiated, but it was not until April 1867 that all Ottoman troops were withdrawn from Serbian soil. Full Serbian independence was only finally enshrined in the Treaty of San Stefano in 1878.

From the point of view of Istanbul, concessions to the Serbians resulting from foreign mediation were simply unacceptable. Istanbul had swallowed the annexation of the Crimea by Catherine II in 1783 with great difficulty. That unilateral occupation was perceived to be a humiliating loss of a Muslim frontier zone. Any further concession concerning the Black Sea frontier remained unthinkable. The condemnation of outside interference in Serbian negotiations reflected the sultan's deep-seated commitment to the preservation of Ottoman sovereignty on the northern edges of Europe. In 1807, 1808 and again in April 1809, the Serbian rebels had been offered amnesty and limited internal autonomy by successive Ottoman sultans. The stumbling block appeared to be the Serbian refusal to accept the offer without foreign guarantees. Preservation of Ottoman territorial sovereignty without international intervention is but one explanation for the decades-long, violent contestation of Serbian rights and privileges during the first half of the nineteenth century. It set a precedent that became the rule in eastern question politics.

A second explanation is the geopolitical position of Serbia. Belgrade remained the pivotal end of a garrison line that stretched to the mouth of the Danube. Its loss would arguably leave much of Bulgarian territory vulnerable, even though the real weaknesses in the line were the fortresses downriver, as we have seen—at Rusçuk, for example. The Danube had become a lively commercial waterway, integral to the feeding of Istanbul, but also since 1699, a waterway open to the markets of Europe. Loss of the Principalities threatened to cut off supplies to Istanbul, as the occupation of Bucharest by the Russians demonstrated.

The Serbian rebellion crystallized for Mahmud II the problem of the *ayans* in general. Bringing them to heel would be his chief target over the next decade. There was a consistent Ottoman policy towards the empire's Balkan subjects from 1792 to 1822, and Ottoman tradition deemed the solution to rebellion was re-asserting central control over unruly provinces. Mahmud II was ferocious in his pursuit of that end. By eliminating the local notables, he uprooted and destroyed the regional networks and organizations that underwrote sultanic power in 1800.

The consequences of this fiercely fought recentralization of power would play themselves out over the rest of the nineteenth century.⁷ What is clear at this juncture is the sultan's alarm at the influence of Russian orthodoxy on his subjects, and the gradual sorting out of those Christians who were loyal from those who were not. With the Greek revolt in 1820, public attitudes in general, and the sultan's reaction in particular, responded to such challenges by further drawing ethnic and religious boundaries.

The Reign of Terror

Mahmud II continued his policy of containing the provincial notables throughout the second decade of the century. The instrument of his will was Halet Efendi, former Ambassador to Paris (1802–1806), a man of widespread experience of the provinces. He was immediately sent to Baghdad to confront semi-independent Governor Küçük Süleyman Pasha, who had seized power in 1808 and who was refusing to pay tribute to Istanbul. Halet, writing to Mahmud II from Baghdad at the time, presages the problems that would await the Ottomans two decades later. Iraq had become a stronghold for *Mamluks*, and their influence had extended to Mardin, Basra and Shahrizur. The mixture of populations and mentalities—Arab/Kurdish, Sunni/Shiite—and their proximity to Iran made it imperative to install a strong governor.⁸ Rebuffed, Halet Efendi recruited the militias of Abdülcelilzade Pasha, *Mutasarrıf* of Mosul and Abdurrahman Pasha, *Mutasarrıf* of Baban, and marched on Baghdad in June of 1810 with 10,000 men to overthrow Süleyman.

His success in securing the deposition and death of Süleyman gave Halet Efendi considerable cachet in Istanbul. Upon his return, he was appointed to the sultan's inner circle, as the equivalent of the minister of domestic or internal affairs. For more than a decade, he exercised extraordinary influence at court. His hand seems to have been everywhere, from securing the appointment of his favorite Phanariotes as the *hospodars* of Wallachia and Moldavia, to the sabotaging of all efforts by the young sultan to reform the Janissary corps. Halet Efendi concentrated instead on subduing a large number of the local dynasties of Rumeli and Anatolia at the behest of the sultan.

The result was that by 1820, much of the territory in Anatolia and Rumeli and the north Syrian territories had reverted to central government control. One exception was Ali Pasha of Ioannina (1744–1823), whose life and adventures have influenced all accounts of Greek and Albanian national narratives (*Ottoman House*). Ali Pasha was adroit at manipulating the international context, especially during the confusion in the Adriatic following Napoleon's occupation of Venetian Corfu and the Ionian islands in 1797, and the attack on Egypt in 1798. Ali Pasha was more comfortable in his dealings with his potential allies Britain and France than with the Russians or with his sovereign, Mahmud II. He proved implacable against any and all who rebelled against him in his own lands, whether Greek, Albanian, or Ottoman forces (Figure 4.3).



FIGURE 4.3 Louis Dupré (1789–1837), Ali Pasha of Ioannina © Darling Archive/Alamy Stock Photo WB56HR

By July 1820, Ali Pasha controlled most of Greece and southern Albania, and had his sons, Mukhtar and Veli Pasha, installed as governors of Avlonya and Morea in the Peloponnesus respectively. He had served the sultan when he joined the Danubian military coalition against rival Osman Pasvanoğlu, and against the Russians in the 1806–1812 war, where the performance of his troops was effective and distinguished. By such service, Ali accrued coveted tax-collecting offices and extended his power, often brutally, over much of the fiercely independent Albanian and Greek territories. Such was the state of affairs when Ali Pasha fell afoul of Halet Efendi, who turned the sultan's attention to Ali Pasha's disloyalty. By that time, Mahmud II had succeeded in removing or defanging most of the lesser *ayans* of the Balkans, replacing them with more amenable local governors or central appointees. Dismissed from his position in early 1820, Ali Pasha was ordered to withdraw all troops to his seat of power, the *sancak* and city of Ioannina. Hurşid Pasha, veteran of the Sofia command and the Serbian rebellion, was appointed Governor of Morea, and ordered to march against Ali Pasha with the pashas of adjacent provinces and their personal armies. Besieged in Ioannina, Ali Pasha held out for two years, but was fatally wounded in fighting with the Ottoman troops and died on 24 January 1822. Halet Efendi was blamed for the Greek rebellion that subsequently broke out and engulfed Greece, Moldavia, and

much of the rest of Rumeli. He was himself dismissed, sent into exile and finally beheaded in Konya in November 1822.

The Greek revolt 1821–1827

The decision to confront Ali Pasha had not been taken easily. Opponents to Halet Efendi's influence over the sultan were fully aware of the potential for rebellion in the Peloponnesus. Ironically, by subduing the strongest of the *ayans* in the Balkans, perhaps the only one who might have prevented the revolt, Mahmud II unleashed the greatest threat to the dynasty to date. The Greek uprising that began in Moldavia in March 1821 had its antecedents in Ali Pasha's resistance after 1820, and more importantly, went largely unchecked for more than a year while the Ottoman army was engaged in the siege of Ioannina.

Furthermore, the ethno-religious group that rebelled against the Ottoman state was significantly embedded in the central administration of the dynasty, in both commercial and diplomatic spheres. There was not, however, unanimity of aims among the various Greek populations of the empire (perhaps as much as one-quarter of the inhabitants of Ottoman territories) who found themselves caught up in the rebellion.

Four distinct regions constituted areas of great concentrations of Greek-speaking Orthodox Christians: the Peloponnesus and the Greek islands of the Adriatic and the Aegean; Wallachia and Moldavia; Bessarabia and the new Russian city of Odessa; and Istanbul itself. The Peloponnesus was largely self-governing, but also split among the educated classes: priests, large landowners and merchants, and a large peasant population, the latter slow to respond to the call to revolt. Inhabitants of the area were well acquainted with Ottoman retaliatory measures, such as the crushing of the previous uprising in 1770–1771, and more recently the heavy hand of Ali Pasha. The Principalities were administered by Ottoman–Greek *boyars* with attachments to the Phanariot families of Istanbul, who had a stake in continuing as Ottoman clients. In Bessarabia, a policy of resettlement was instituted by the Russians after its acquisition by treaty in 1812. Greeks were numerous among the new settlers, enticed by the commercial possibilities of the frontier territory, the Danube and Odessa.

The *Philike Hetairia* Greek liberation secret society was established in 1814 in Odessa. Its members originally envisioned the restoration of a greater Byzantium, with Istanbul as its capital, rather than the establishment of a modern nation-state. In its first two years the society attracted 30 members, but by 1821 it numbered closer to 1,000. The leadership of the organization eventually fell to Alexander Ypsilanti, son of former Wallachian *Hospodar* Constantine Ypsilanti. The son was a general in the Russian army and aide-de-camp of Tsar Alexander I. Ypsilanti may or may not have had the tacit approval of Alexander I for his activities, but he hinted at the tsar's support and attracted important members of Greek elite groups to the fledgling society. More than half of the membership was of the merchant class. Plans for an uprising continued, with the Peloponnesus and the Principalities

targeted as strategic centers. Serbian leader Milos Obrenovic, having established his own peace with the Ottomans, maintained neutrality throughout.

In Wallachia, Tudor Vladimirescu—a former member of the Ottoman-sanctioned Serbian militia, the *pandours*—was simultaneously organising a Romanian revolt in Oltenia, believing that Russian support would follow. In January 1821, Vladimirescu inaugurated a social revolution in Oltenia, with the following declaration:

Brothers living in Wallachia, whatever your nationality, no law prevents a man from meeting evil with evil.... How long shall we suffer the dragons that swallow us alive, those above us, both clergy and politicians, to suck our blood? How long shall we be enslaved?... Neither God nor the Sultan approves of such treatment of their faithful.

Vladimirescu's call to arms and the promise of Russian support set off a peasant uprising against local landowners, not against the Ottoman dynasty. Importantly, those who joined Vladimirescu called on Istanbul to investigate the injustices in Wallachia and restore the Principalities to pre-Phanariot days.⁹

In March 1821, Ypsilanti crossed over into Moldavia and seized the government with the suggestion that a Russian army would soon arrive. On 17 March, however, official repudiation and denial of support from both Alexander I and the Orthodox patriarch in Istanbul arrived in Bucharest. Russian consuls in Bucharest and Jassy were recalled. Russian Foreign Minister Ioannis Capodistrias, himself a native of Corfu, and likely co-conspirator with Ypsilanti, was later dismissed by the tsar. Vladimirescu, with 65,000 men, arrived in Bucharest in early April. Ypsilanti, with no more than 5,000 rag-tag troops, arrived shortly thereafter. Their occupation of the Principalities had resulted in the usual denuding of the countryside, endemic to Romania of the period. Without Russian support, the two revolutionary armies were stranded. Furthermore, atrocities committed against Muslim residents in Jassy and Galati in the early days of the occupation of Moldavia promised reprisals from Ottoman armies. The chaos had engendered native flight, with one estimate that 12,000 *boyars* and merchants fled to Brasov and 17,000 to Sibiu in Transylvania.¹⁰

On 6 April, revolt had erupted in the Peloponnesus. The sultan could no longer ignore such assaults on his territories and subjects and prepared to send armies to both the Peloponnesus and the Principalities. Since he was at peace with Russia, however, Mahmud II was reluctant to give Alexander I cause for the renewal of hostilities. The commander of Vidin, Derviş Mustafa Pasha, wrote to the sultan shortly after the outbreak of the revolt to ask for new soldiers and supplies. Mahmud II and his advisers were hesitant to violate the Bucharest Treaty, which prohibited the Ottomans from sending troops into the Principalities. Derviş Mustafa warned that the peasants were afraid of just such an eventuality and were taking to flight.¹¹

Nevertheless, by 13 May Ottoman forces had crossed the Danube. They encountered a dissolving militia, inexperienced military commanders and discord between the two leaders. Ypsilanti's followers captured and executed Vladimirescu on the night of 8 June, sealing their fate. On 19 June, at the Battle of Dragatsani, Ypsilanti's forces were easily overrun by the Ottoman forces. Ypsilanti escaped into Transylvania, where he was arrested. He died in an Austrian prison seven years later.¹²

Among the fallen was a group of young Greeks called the Sacred Band, who unlike the majority of Ypsilanti's troops, 400 to 500 of them reportedly stood firm under the Ottoman assault. They were

[E]ducated in Europe, and for the most part students or merchants' clerks, who had repaired to the standard of Ipsilanti from Russia and Germany. They wore a uniform of black, as an emblem of mourning for the sufferings of their country, to whose service they had devoted their fortunes and lives. ... These young men, animated by the spirit which taught their ancestors to perish at Thermopylae, preferred a glorious death to flight or dishonour. [They were] at once the flower and hope of their country. The heroism displayed on this occasion will bear an advantageous comparison with the best days of Grecian history.¹³

Such hyperbole filled the gazettes and journals of London, Paris and St. Petersburg, stimulating many more philhellenes to volunteer.

Mahmud II had escaped the threat of all-out war with Russia for the moment. In April 1822, delegates from the two territories met with Ottoman and Russian delegates to re-establish order. The sultan granted the restoration of native rule, the replacement of Greek clergy by native clergy, and the creation of a Romanian militia in place of the Albanian guard. With the extension of the revolt to the Peloponnesus, relations between the two powers would enter another period of crisis resulting in war in 1828.

The revolt in the Peloponnesus and the Mediterranean islands proved more resilient than that of the Principalities. Organized by militia bands (*klefts*) and their commanders, in concert with local notables of the Morea and wealthy shipping magnates, it began as a spillover from Ali Pasha's resistance. It was further exacerbated by Ottoman attempts to coerce the Orthodox leaders into submission. What started as sporadic resistance coalesced into a general revolt in April 1821. Muslim residents were the targets of local anger. Perhaps as many as 15,000 of the estimated 40,000 Muslim residents in the Peloponnesus may have been killed in the course of events. Such atrocities were matched by the ferocity of Ottoman Muslim subjects and soldiers alike. The massacre of Christians on the island of Chios in 1821 resulted in thousands of deaths, and awakened Europe to the fierce struggle unfolding in the eastern Mediterranean.

Istanbul's population was traumatized by the outbreak. Mahmud II was forced on the one hand to protect the large Greek population of the city, while on the

other, to protect Muslim residents from the potential violent acts of the *Philike Hetairia* society, which had relocated its headquarters from Bessarabia in 1818. Ottoman reprisals in Istanbul included the public execution of Patriarch Gregory V in April 1821. His death reverberated throughout the Orthodox Christian world. Among other victims was the chief court translator, or *dragoman*, Constantine Mourouzis, symbol of an office dominated by Greek Orthodox families and considered the most obvious symbol of Greek treason.¹⁴ The outbreak of full rebellion in the Peloponnesus, the internationalization of the cause, and the factionalism that developed among the Greek parties to liberation meant the eclipse of the *Philike Hetairia* and the construction of a fledgling national Greek government.

Ottoman commanders had great difficulty controlling their soldiers, as Grand Vizier Salih Pasha reported concerning Chios. There, he said, “so-called” soldiers were plundering pardoned *reaya* villages and enslaving the inhabitants. The Chief Religious Officer condemned the enslavement of pardoned villagers, who were lawfully considered free men and women. In another example, Marines guarding Ottoman merchant ships were castigated for attacking peaceful *reaya* upon landing in the Dardanelle ports. Commanders in the area warned the sultan of the possibility of massacre. Ordered to discipline the violators, the Janissary Agha refused to assume responsibility, saying they were irregulars, *miri levendat*.¹⁵ Mahmud II was furious, equating the plunderous marines with the Greek rebels and berating his grand vizier for seeking the consent of the Janissary commanders. Such episodes were endemic during the conflict, and beyond the control of Istanbul. Repeated instances of plunder and massacres, rife on both sides, must have hardened the resolve of Mahmud II to rid himself of the Janissaries. (*See Vasfi Efendi, Ottoman House*)

After the death of Ali of Ioannina, Ottoman armies were able to reassert control over the northern territories of Epirus, Thessaly and Macedonia. They concentrated their efforts on retaking the fortresses in the Peloponnesus, as well as the cities of Missolonghi, Thebes and Athens on the mainland. They faced considerable resistance both from entrenched local armies and from Greek merchant piracy at sea, which crippled supply lines from Istanbul. They were quickly losing control of the situation.

The continuing success of the Greek side was largely due to the *klefis*, renowned for indiscriminate banditry throughout and adept at piracy at sea. Their style of warfare suited the terrain and the political environment. They proved fierce opponents to the Albanian warrior bands that constituted the bulk of the Ottoman forces. The *klefis* became the symbol of resistance to the tyranny of the Ottomans, and inspired the philhellenes of Europe, caught up in the enlightenment celebration of classical learning and style. The styling of the bravado and banditry of predatory band leaders as national heroes has long masked the true nature of the ubiquitous bands that determined the nature of conflict and violence in the Ottoman Middle East after 1800 to 1918. John Koliopoulos¹⁶ describes an unsettled highland society hostile to the lowlands and towns as part of a strategy of

avoiding foreign interventions. Such communities evolved a predacious lifestyle using force to protect and feed family networks that proved useful but exceeding unreliable and violent when harnessed for international wars. The Ottoman bargains with such mountaineer, pastoralist populations resulted in their perpetuation and open resistance from 1800 forward.

These were the Greek rebels that philhellene volunteers encountered in the Peloponnesus as they travelled to Missolonghi to be with Lord Byron, the quintessential romantic rebel whose verses stirred the enthusiasm of intellectuals and military adventurers alike. Greek committees were formed in all the major cities of Europe, raising funds and volunteers for the cause. They joined groups of Greeks who were educated abroad and imbued with French revolutionary fervor but riven by factionalism. Guerrilla warfare as described complicated the war of liberation, even as it continued to be supported by the philhellenes. Checked, the Ottomans withdrew to the large fortresses where they were besieged. As always, hunger and illness often claimed more victims than actual battles.

Unable to suppress the rebellion, Mahmud II turned to his Governor of Egypt, Mehmed Ali, in late 1824. By that time, Mehmed Ali's reputation was more than equal to that of Ali Pasha of Ioannina. Veteran of domestic and international conflicts, Mehmed Ali had preceded Mahmud II's army reforms by a decade and had disciplined troops at his command. Mahmud called on Mehmed Ali to assist him in ending the Greek rebellion. Mehmed Ali agreed to participate only on the condition that his son, İbrahim, would be awarded the Peloponnesus, while he reserved Crete for himself. In February 1825, after retaking Crete, and commanded by Mehmed Ali's son İbrahim, the Egyptian army entered the Peloponnesus. İbrahim arrived with 5,000 men, and was soon joined by another 7,000 from Crete, eventually assembling 17,000 troops in the Morea.¹⁷ İbrahim Pasha relieved Ottoman forces besieged in Patras, and by May had captured Navarino. The reformed Egyptian troops, drilled by French advisers, proved more than a match for the Greek regulars and militias. One Greek observer noted that

these Arabs make war in a manner that no one has seen before; they advance in regular squares and standing upright as if a bullet could not harm them, they then rush the Greeks with bayonets stuck on their Tophאים [tüfenk, or musket] so long, and what soldiers in the world could be supposed to endure that?¹⁸

The Greek army was demoralized, and as ill-equipped as their Ottoman opponents. Though Greek ships continued to disrupt Ottoman supply lines, their efficacy was checked by the reformed Egyptian navy (map 4.1).

By April 1826, İbrahim Pasha and Rumeli Governor Mehmed Reşid Pasha, *Serasker* of the Ottoman army in northern Greece, had joined forces and retaken Missolonghi on the Greek mainland after a year-long siege. The Ottoman victory was accomplished with significant bloodshed: perhaps as many as 3,000 of the defenders were killed and another 5,000 women and children were enslaved. Stratford Canning, Ambassador to Istanbul, was invited to Topkapı palace in June

Babel, spouted their own titles, the valour of their own countrymen, and breathed vengeance upon the Turks? Surely all these men must be better qualified to judge, than ignorant Greeks.²⁰

Great power intervention and Navarino 1827

With the help of Mehmed Ali and his sons, the Ottomans appeared poised to re-establish imperial order in the remaining rebellious territories. The revolutionary forces were in disarray. By 1827, the Greek rebels retained control over Nauplion and Corinth only. The Orthodox Patriarch in Istanbul was seen presenting the sultan with petitions for pardon and amnesty from his followers in many parts of Greece, requesting reinstatement as *reaya* of the sultan.²¹ Two events had altered the outcome of the conflict. First, Mahmud II had found the opportune moment to eliminate the Janissary corps in Istanbul, on 15 June 1826, and did not press the Ottoman advantage in the Peloponnesus. The purge and reconstruction that followed his destruction of the last Janissaries left him reliant on the proxy army of Mehmed Ali in the Greek conflict, and particularly vulnerable in the Balkans.

Secondly, Britain, France and Russia intervened in the conflict. Although the three powers pursued a policy of neutrality in the Greek question until 1825, events in the Principalities had brought the Russians and Ottomans perilously close to war once more. The prospect alarmed British and French diplomats, who were increasingly sensitive to Russian imperial aims in the Caucasus and the Black Sea. The disruption of trade was a major cause of concern, as Greek pirates showed little discrimination in their choice of targets. The fall of Missolonghi and Athens raised a public outcry in Europe. Tsar Alexander I died in 1825 and was succeeded by Nicholas I (1825–1855), who proved of much firmer resolve concerning the Ottomans. In April 1826, the Duke of Wellington attended the coronation of Nicholas I and together they concluded the Convention of St. Petersburg, by which they agreed to mediate in the Greek conflict. On 6 April 1826, the new tsar presented an ultimatum to the Ottomans concerning the Principalities and the Caucasus, which insisted on implementation of the clauses of the Treaty of Bucharest. Wellington had erroneously assumed that would end Russian ambitions in Greece.

After stalling during the first months of military reform in Istanbul, Mahmud II concluded the Convention of Akkirman with Russia in October 1826, which temporarily settled the unresolved conflicts from the Treaty of Bucharest previously described. It called for the withdrawal of Ottoman troops from the Principalities and asserted Russian rights at the eastern end of the Black Sea, giving Russia unparalleled access to the Bosphorus Straits and the Mediterranean. Mahmud II may have considered it a means of removing Russia from the Mediterranean equation, or as a delaying tactic until he had his new army ready.

Nonetheless, the Greek conflict continued to fester and looked particularly bleak for the rebels in June 1827. On 6 July of that year, the Treaty of London—the official acknowledgment of the Convention of St. Petersburg—was signed. By that

time France, Austria and Prussia had been added. Unanimous internal pressure in favor of a proposed armistice and the intervention of European mediators to settle the Greek question was brought to bear on the Ottomans. The European powers envisioned the initial creation of a vassal state in Greece much like the Principalities. However, the sultan had already handed an Ottoman ultimatum to the diplomatic representatives in Istanbul, insisting that the Greek question was his to solve, and rejecting intervention and mediation by any foreign power.

In the official declaration (*firman*), the sultan reminded the international powers that he had absolute authority over the nations subject to his dominion. Each independent power “possesses also institutions and relations which concern only itself and its internal state, which are the offspring of its legislation and form of government.” He denounced the revolt of the Greeks, who,

from generation to generation, have been tributary subjects to the *Sublime Porte*, ... have been treated like Mussulman in every respect, and as to everything which regards their property, the maintenance of their personal security, and the defence of their honour; that they have been, particularly, under the glorious reign of the present sovereign, loaded with benefits far exceeding those which their ancestors enjoyed.

The Ottomans had never refused to pardon and reinstate rebels, the statement continued, but insisted on the non-intervention by foreign powers, and respect for Ottoman sovereign law. The sultan felt it necessary to reiterate that the ‘Greek question’ be understood as belonging to the internal affairs of the *sublime Porte*. Although he recognized mediation between two independent nations,

a reconciliation may be brought about by the interference of a third friendly power: it is the same in respect to armistices and treaties of peace. But the *Sublime Porte* being engaged in punishing in its own territory, and in conformity with its sacred law, such of its turbulent subjects as have revolted, how can this cause ever be made applicable to its situation? And must not the Ottoman government attribute to those who advance such propositions, views tending to give consequence to a troop of brigands?

From this declaration it is clear that Istanbul perceived the Greek Revolt as a *fitne*, a rebellion against the state, rather than as the rise of a Christian nation—at least in the public version of events. Mahmud II saw restoring order (*nizam*) as his absolute right. For the Ottomans, the Greeks had violated the *zimmi* pact that regulated relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. Mahmud’s statement of June 1827 clearly articulated the revolt in the language of the shar‘ia, and warned against outside interference. In that framework, rebel non-Muslim subjects could be declared *harbis*, warring non-Muslims, and the sultan could call for a general mobilization, *nafir-i am*, to confront a (theoretical) attack on the state.²²



FIGURE 4.4 “Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt,” Sir David Wilkie, 1785–1841 © Artefact / Alamy Stock Photo MD29B9

When the Ottomans refused mediation, an allied naval blockade was imposed in the eastern Mediterranean to prevent men and supplies from Egypt reaching the Peloponnesus. In October 1827, a fleet of allied ships entered Navarino Bay, where a combined Ottoman–Egyptian fleet lay anchored. On 20 October, after a fierce battle, the entire Ottoman and most of the Egyptian fleets were destroyed. A total of 57 ships sank and 8,000 men drowned. In little over a month, Mahmud II had repudiated the Akkirman Convention, closed the Dardanelles straits to shipping and declared war against Russia. By August 1828, Mehmed Ali had deserted the sultan, signed a convention with the allies and withdrawn all forces from the Peloponnesus, to be replaced with French troops of occupation (Figure 4.4).

Mehmed Ali Pasha and the transformation of Egypt

Born in the late 1760s at Kavala in Macedonia, Mehmed Ali was the son of an Albanian Ottoman soldier. In 1801, he was appointed deputy commander of the Kavala contingent to the army of Egypt. By mid-1803, he was commander of his own Albanian army, part of the forces assembled for the 1801–1802 Anglo–Ottoman campaign against the French occupation. While the newly appointed Governor of Egypt, Hüsrev Pasha, contended with his rival Tahir Pasha,

commander of the combined Ottoman Albanian force, Mehmed Ali consolidated his own power and prepared to confront the *mamluk* households. In 1803, a riot over pay broke out among the Ottoman Albanian troops, who consequently drove Hüsrev out of Cairo. Tahir Pasha was soon assassinated by the *Mamluks* he had called on for support. Mehmed Ali then assumed command of the Ottoman Albanians and defeated Hüsrev Pasha's army at Damietta. He was appointed governor in 1805, following several unsuccessful attempts by Istanbul to impose another Ottoman governor on Egypt. Selim III acquiesced to the fait accompli, recognizing the coalition Mehmed Ali had constructed with the backing of the military, the ulema and the merchants of Cairo.

Selim III's deposition and death allowed Mehmed Ali a respite from internal challengers. He consolidated power while awaiting his moment. It came in March 1811 when he confronted and eliminated a number of the *Mamluk* Beys in Cairo, by which he acquired independence of action in Egypt. Survivors were incorporated into Mehmed Ali's new forces.²³

Between 1811 and 1824, Mehmed Ali undertook a series of striking and innovative reforms that completely reorganized Egyptian society. This has led some historians to see him as the founder of the modern nation of Egypt.²⁴ His program of consolidation and reform included centralizing finances, introducing conscription, monopolizing export and import trade, and experimenting with industrialization. In 1809, he experimented by taxing *waqf* (*vakf*) lands, challenging his erstwhile allies among the ulema. In 1810, he began to reorganize the agricultural system by introducing direct taxation and administration at the provincial level. Between 1812 and 1815, Mehmed Ali revoked the tax farms (*iltizam*), and increased taxes on *vakf* lands. By 1821, a cadastral survey, registration and the imposition of the new system of taxation had been achieved. These efforts brought 60% of the territory of Egypt under the new tax regime. Mehmed Ali created government monopolies of all of Egypt's cash crops: grains, rice, sugar and most notably, cotton. War in Europe proved a boon to his agricultural reforms, and the demand for grain during the Napoleonic wars made Mehmed Ali a wealthy man. He also introduced a number of long-staple varieties of cotton, increasing the crop yield. In this effort, as with his other reforms, he worked by negotiation and building coalitions with trusted associates who formed the core groups of Ottoman Egyptian elites of the nineteenth century. It was during this early period that Mehmed Ali hatched the idea of extending his power to Syria as well.

Mehmed Ali also oversaw the construction of factories during this period, intended as a means of achieving self-sufficiency in certain goods as well as of supplying the army. Arsenal and textile factories, sugar refineries, rice mills and tanneries were all established, starting in 1815. Within two decades, however, most of them were closed or had collapsed because of technical and operational difficulties. The net effect was to facilitate Egypt's integration into the world market as a supplier of raw cotton to the textile mills of Britain and the United States.²⁵

Nonetheless, by 1820 Mehmed Ali had achieved a robust economic base and sufficient state revenues to underwrite his next series of adventures. In 1811,

Mahmud II ordered his governor to subdue the Wahhabis in Arabia, who had seized the holy cities of Medina and Mecca. The Wahhabis, named for Muhammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (1703–1792), followed the Hanbali school of Muslim practice. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb further advocated that all non-conformists to the shar‘ia, such as Sufis or Shiites, were heretics, and open to attack. This included the Ottoman dynasty, considered illegitimate by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb and his successors. Selim III and Mahmud II both were confronted with the vigorous revolt of the Wahhabis and their adherents—the Arab tribes of the Najd and Hijaz, especially the family of Ibn Saud—who established a theocracy in Diriya, near present-day Riyadh. For over two decades, Mehmed Ali’s sons Tusun and İbrahim would lead military expeditions to the Hijaz, Sudan, Crete, the Morea and greater Syria.

The Wahhabis, however, proved a stubborn foe. Tusun was initially bested by the Wahhabis, but he regained Mecca and Medina by 1813. When the keys of both cities were presented to the sultan in 1813, Mahmud II and Istanbul rejoiced. Mehmed Ali’s campaign to subdue the Wahhabis completely, however, would not be accomplished until 1818, when his elder son İbrahim Pasha’s army defeated them in Najd. Although the Hijaz remained under Ottoman hegemony, the Wahhabis re-occupied Najd in 1824. Wahhabism continued to influence the religious debates of greater Syria, stimulating many to question the authority of the sultan. These debates in part account for the ease with which Mehmed Ali and his son would conquer and occupy the Ottoman territories in Syria after 1830.

Mehmed Ali’s achievements are remarkable, most of all in the striking re-organization of the military, an idea generally acknowledged to have been his. All his other reforms were in service of the creation of a conscription army and a navy in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, that made the state of Egypt a formidable power by the time of his confrontation with the Ottoman army in Anatolia in 1831. Perhaps it was the experience of seeing French soldiers on Egyptian soil that originally stimulated Mehmed Ali’s interest, or perhaps it was his knowledge of the New Order reforms of Selim III. He had likely seen Hüsrev Pasha, part of the Anglo-Ottoman coalition against Napoleon in 1801–1802, commanding a reformed regiment. They were to remain lifelong enemies, one in Cairo, the other at the sultan’s side in Istanbul. In 1815, Mehmed Ali explicitly ordered his Albanian troops to begin target practice and drill in the manner of the New Order.²⁶ By 1822, the date of the first conscription order, Mehmed Ali was instructing his advisers to draft new organizational plans on the model of Selim’s New Order.

Mehmed Ali had turned his attention to the conquest of the Sudan. He mobilized an enslaved Sudanese army, some 6,000 strong, following the occupation of Semnar, Kurdufan and Dongola, the latter the stronghold of a number of *Mamluk* emirs. There are important differences between the army sent to the Hijaz to quell the Wahhabis, and the army that resulted from two expeditions to the Sudan in the summer of 1820. The former was contractual and confederative, as were the expeditions in 1820, made up of Turkish, Arab and Albanian cavalry and infantry mercenaries and commanded by their own warlords.

The new standing infantry army was to be paid from government revenues through direct taxation, with a regimental command structure staffed by European-trained, non-native (i.e. non-Egyptian or Arab-speaking) officers. This initiative was paralleled and supported by the construction of a new navy. By 1820, shipyards all over the Mediterranean were supplying Mehmed Ali with his new vessels.²⁷

The expeditions to the Sudan proved an unmitigated disaster. A major revolt in 1822 resulted in the death of Commander İsmail Pasha, Mehmed Ali's third son. The Sudanese population could not endure enslavement and transportation. After four years in the Sudan, only 3,000 of 20,000 Sudanese troops collected by the army were still alive. The expeditionary armies themselves fell ill of dysentery and other fevers and grew mutinous. As a result, the conscription of the peasants (the *fellahin*) of upper Egypt began. Service was originally set at three years, and replacements were to be drawn from village census rolls resulting from the new land surveys and tax registers. In reality, conscription was brutal and haphazard and the length of service variable.²⁸

Around the same time, Mehmed Ali organized an officer training school for enslaved people and Turkish-speaking soldiers of the old army, and requested teachers from his agent in Istanbul, Necib Efendi. He also sought the advice and assistance of the French, notably Colonel Sèves known as Süleyman Pasha, who rose to rank of chief-of-staff to İbrahim Pasha's campaign in Syria in 1831.²⁹ Initially, all non-foreign commanders were appointed from among ethnic Turks and Circassians. Arabs could not rise above the rank of captain (*yüzbaşı*). As Mehmed Ali once explained:

I have not done in Egypt anything except what the British are doing in India: they have an army composed of Indians and ruled by British officers, and I have an army composed of Arabs ruled by Turkish officers.... The Turk makes a better officer, since he knows that he is entitled to rule, while the Arab feels that the Turk is better than him in that respect.³⁰

Rank-and-file conscripts resented the discrimination bitterly. Native officer training was escalated in 1827 under the direction of the French mission. Only in 1828, when Mehmed Ali openly defied Mahmud II by not sending the troops to the Danubian front as requested and dismissed some 700–800 Turkish-speaking officers, were new native graduates of the school commissioned.³¹ Even so, the highest-rank officers remained Turkish-speaking during Mehmed Ali's Syrian campaign.

Mehmed Ali's militarization of Egyptian society did not go uncontested. Desertion of the peasant—the real victim of the reordering of Egyptian society—was endemic, as many as one in three in these early years. In 1823, a large revolt against the new taxes and conscription broke out in lower Egypt, which was only defeated by troops led by the Pasha himself. In 1824, some 30,000 men and women participated in a similar rebellion in upper Egypt. Mehmed Ali sent the new troops to quell the revolt successfully, leaving behind 4,000 casualties.³²

Navarino is significant as it represents the beginning of international intervention without declaring war by the new global European powers; a practice normalized and still in evidence in the contemporary Middle East. Between 1774 and 1830,

French Revolutionary and enlightenment fervor combined with a new concatenation of international power brokers pouring out of Europe. The Middle East served as its first great laboratory of post-1815 international relations. Simultaneously, the military and cultural interactions rendered Mehmed Ali of Egypt the new domestic challenger to the sultan's survival. Given the extent of the external and internal threats to the dynasty in the 1820s, it is remarkable that the sultan embarked on the next stage of his reforms, the elimination of the Janissary corps.

***Splintering the Ottoman House: Mustafa Vassı Efendi of Kabud;
Ali Pasha of Ioannina; Bashibozuks***

***Mustafa Vassı Efendi of Kabud*³³**

For the Greek revolt in the Morea, we have a unique manuscript from a soldier whose curious narration has recently been translated. Vassı Efendi, the son of a standard-bearer in the Ottoman military, appears to be Kurdish himself. While his narrative is hardly a polished piece of literature, it remains a rare bit of autobiography of a common Ottoman professional soldier. His escapade was a private enterprise and evoked no discipline other than a scolding. Mustafa Vassı Efendi of Kabud, a village near Tokat in Anatolia, spent the years of 1801–1833 as a soldier for hire, first in Erzurum, as part of the troops under Dramalı Mahmud Pasha. He later travelled to Ağrıboz, where he signed on with Çarhacı Ali Pasha and then Ömer Pasha after him. Vassı Efendi described battles, sieges, looting and pillaging without batting an eye. The following passage is typical and is evocative of the life of an Ottoman irregular in the period immediately preceding Mahmud II's reforms. The events described take place near Ağrıboz: "The Janissaries, because they were on foot, soon fell behind. We, who had good horses, went on ahead. We were altogether 18 horsemen. Anyway, we went off and arrived in an infidel village." They sat down under two mulberry trees, whereupon some local inhabitants approached them, and said: "We are afraid of you. We have wives and daughters on that mountain over there. If you give us protection, we will come down. We said: the pasha has sent us and we have orders to protect you. The infidels were extremely glad, went away and brought lambs and bread to us. About 20 to 30 women and girls came with them." The cavalrymen were afraid of being outnumbered, and isolated for the night, when they assumed the infidels would slay them, so "[we] took the infidels, cut off their heads, captured these 30 women and girls," and took off. They came upon a church, captured the infidels who were inside the church, cut off their heads and hid in the church for the night. They found 5,000 sheep beside the church the next day, and with sheep and captives, returned towards their camp. It is at this point that they encountered Janissaries, who stripped them of their captives and booty at gunpoint. "I had a girl and woman with me, and two mules. They arrived, plundered all my

possessions. I remained behind as a simple foot soldier." Then, he ran into other Janissaries. Pretending to be a Janissary himself, "he complained of his treatment at the hands of other members of the oca." A Kurdish servant of the Janissaries addressed those who had abused him: "You have taken this man's possessions, slave girls and severed infidels' heads. Things like this do not befit our corps. Now give this man his belongings." Vasfi Efendi thus retrieved his booty and returned to camp. His commander rewarded him with two coins for the heads but chastised him: "No-one of the deli horsemen should advance on the main army corps." Henceforth, Vasfi Efendi noted, they remained with the pasha.

Ali Pasha of Ioannina³⁴

Danish traveler Peter Brønsted, one of many diplomats, spies and intellectuals of the late eighteenth century who visited the 'Diamond of Ioannina,' said of Ali:

He had nothing of that white and delicate complexion, which is so common



FIGURE 4.5 "Sketch of Bashi Bozuk" by James Robertson, Illustrated London News, 1854 © 19th era / Alamy Stock Photo BAM67A

amongst the Turkish seignors; his own was brown and manly; his manners, concise and lively, had absolutely nothing of that slowness and gravity, which is the bon ton with the Turks of high rank. Ali, as the Greeks told me, even frequently mocked such a theatrical sort of gravity. He spoke quickly, moved with rapidity, and in one word, had nothing of an old Turk, except his dress;—his body was that of a Greek, and his soul that of an Albanian.

Ali Pasha first derived his power from his appointment as Derbend Başbuğu in 1786, an important frontier position that he held until 1820. It was his own ties to Albanian chieftains (Tosks) in Tepedelen, as well as the increasing use of such warrior stock for the late eighteenth-century Ottoman armies, which gave him his leverage. Albanian recruits pressed into Ottoman service as levends were diverted to the Morea in 1770–1771, when Grand Vizier Mehmed Muhsinzade used them to suppress a rebellion in the midst of the 1768–1774 war. This inaugurated a cycle of violence between the two communities. Ali Pasha adroitly capitalized on this sustained conflict by coupling the animosities of the Greek and Albanian rival chieftains with his own particular brand of diplomacy. He cultivated the loyalty of his Ottoman rival appointees, married his children into their families, and then eliminated them in the various sancaks of his own and surrounding areas. In 1810, his reach extended into northern Albania when he added the sancaks of Ohri and Elbasan to his holdings. Mahmud II watched this process helplessly. Ali did respond to the sultan's call for soldiers in 1809, as we have seen, sending Mukhtar and Veli Pasha with their armies to the Danubian front. By 1819, Ali Pasha could reputedly muster 40,000 men if need be (Figure 4.5, and Figure 4.3).

Bashibozuks: The Ottoman tribal question

The persistence of the nomadic ethos is nowhere better caught [than] in the palace of the Ottoman Turkish sultans, where, the rulers of an empire that stretched from the Danube River to the Indian Ocean spent their days as they might have done on the steppe seated on cushions on carpeted floors of makeshift pavilions set up in the palace gardens, dressed in the horseman's kaftans and loose trousers, and having as their principle regalia the mounted warrior's quivers, bow cases and archer's thumb rings. Planted though it was in the capital city of the eastern Roman empire, Topkapi remained a nomadic camp, where the horsetail standards of battle were processed before great men, and stables stood at the door.³⁵

The Ottomans were part of and heirs to the possession of one of the most mobile parts of the world. Their organizational genius, studied or not, was a particular ability to create a series of what look like spider web organizations. These organizations were comprised of an organic family, slaves, cousins, clients and

intermediaries when necessary (translators, factors, etc.), and characterized their original thrust into Anatolia, present-day Turkey. Success was by no means certain; rather, it was hard-won, more than a hundred years in the making, so the charisma of the first ten sultans is widely acknowledged, and their proximity to a collapsing Byzantine world fortuitous. Religious authority was quickly attached to the household of Osman, with Muslim and Turkic cultures dominant, but collaborations embraced all comers and an array of ethnicities and religious persuasions joined the enterprise. The question of their ferocity as Muslim jihadists—gazis—has become a bit shopworn, but to settled peasants, Christian or otherwise, they would have been terrifying and mesmerizing. The challenge of the Ottomans at the edges of an emerging European consciousness must be acknowledged as having a large influence on the development of European absolutism itself.

There is little or no doubt that the early success of the Ottomans was determined by the ability to attract voluntary and autonomous mobile manpower to the imperial project. Such fighting forces remained essential to the evolution and perpetuation of the dynasty, and it is precisely those needs that perpetuated the nomadic/mobile cultures and ideologies that persisted into the twentieth century. This is particularly evident in the post-1800 era of transformation, when successive sultans superimposed a modern regimental organization onto an autonomous array of regional partnerships based on communal networks and powerful local families.

*Such fighting men go by many different names: *akıncı*, *sipahi*, or *timarli*, *sepoy*, *levend*, *deli* and *bashibozuk*. Often, they were built on communal protection and warlord networks and just as often, they represented specific ethnicities, such as Albanian or Circassian familial groups. Latterly they were included in the reformed Nizamiye military system as irregular contingents, namely the *bashibozuks*. By the late-nineteenth century, the *bashibozuks*—literally meaning broken-headed (or out of their heads), implying leaderless and uncontrolled—had become the ubiquitous label for [Turkish] barbarity. It is this disdain that is reflected in the quote above by John Keegan, renowned twentieth century military historian.*

*Sultan Mahmud II's (1808–1839) attempt to reassert Ottoman control over revolutionary Greece and Serbia represents a moment of significant renegotiation, though in the new context of liberation, constitutionalism and colonial powers. Tribesmen and warrior peoples, if not drawn into the charmed military circle as fief-based cavalry (*sipahis*), or palace-based infantry (*Janissaries*), were given special roles. Such roles included caravan protection and they were left as self-governing clients in a system known as *ocaklık sancak*, what may be a uniquely Ottoman way of dealing with remote, naturally insubordinate, marginal or deeply-rooted confederative warrior cultures. In Erzurum (Northeast Anatolia) from 1682–1702, for example, 9 of the 17 provinces were *ocaklık*, granting hereditary status to multiple generations of local families.³⁶ So was the case of most of the southern frontiers of the empire, where Bedouin Arab and Kurdish tribesmen of varying degrees of settled and nomadic resided (Figure 4.6).*



FIGURE 4.6 “Les Bachi-Bouzouks,” 1892, New York Public Library, Vinkhuisen Collection

Local notable families (*ayans*, or warlords) created or enlarged their own armies, volunteers from among the empire's most difficult populations to control: the mountain men of the Balkans and the Caucasus. Such militias have been hard to characterize because they were guns-for-hire, sometimes by the sultan himself (*levends*, *sekbans*) and sometimes by enemies of the royal household. They include, broadly speaking, Albanians, Kurds, Circassians, Bosnians, Bedouin Arabs and Tatars, ethnic groups with long warrior traditions as well as a history of service to the dynasty. Essentially the manpower pool available to the dynasty in this period evolved from a centrally controlled to a confederative military system just as Europe itself moved to centralized, conscription-based armies. This was most evident on the Russo-Ottoman battlefields of 1768–1774, when both the manpower and the provisioning organizations collapsed.³⁷

In other words, the Ottoman need for manpower not only facilitated the emergence of powerful provincial notables but more importantly sanctioned the flourishing of a style of life for the individual warrior/soldier that persisted into the twentieth century. Meeker's informants in the region of Trabzon on the Black Sea in the 1960s could recall without difficulty 22 aghas and agha-families of the nineteenth century, the locally entwined elites, or “little despots” as described by foreign observers. These were not just the major warlords of the era, but an entire

system of deeply entrenched military entrepreneurs by the end of the eighteenth century.³⁸

The lack of Ottoman systemic control over their surviving territories in the mid-nineteenth century, combined with the reverse migrations from Eurasian territories, which accelerated after the Crimean War, reproduced and perpetuated a particularly strong independent paramilitary culture based on mobility. In this system, the strong man of arms (mostly on horseback) continued to serve as the provincial model of security, the *bashibozuk* phenomenon, which presents itself in kinship networks or clientage warrior bands.

The Ottoman understanding and treatment of such indigenous confederations distinguishes it from Russian and/or British imperial/colonial practices. Russian practice was to incorporate ethnic formations into an existing regimental system, as with the Cossacks by the eighteenth century. In the case of mid-nineteenth century India, the British typically promoted a romantic view of the martial races as pivotal to the maintenance of empire, for example with Sikhs and Ghirkas. By contrast, sultans Selim III (1789–1807) and especially Mahmud II (1808–1839) adopted wholesale a French revolutionary army model based on mass conscription that left little space for the collaborative forms of warfare (and the colorful ethnic diversity it represented) that persisted in the Ottoman hinterlands.

Most striking in this era of transformation is the apparent willingness of Mahmud II to turn his back on the foundational source of Ottoman power: the mobile warrior tradition in all its colorful ethnic and religious diversity, the generic *bashibozuk*. To man the battlefields, Mahmud not only homogenized the idea of an Ottoman soldier, he smashed the warlords, fundamental to border security in the empire, and tore up the self-governing agreements with Albanians, Kurds and Bedouins in his desperate fight with Mehmed Ali. The struggle to conscript Kurds, Bedouins and Albanians, especially in the effort to confront the Egyptian upstart, ignited an empire-wide resistance to conscription that exploded into large scale rebellions across Ottoman territories, some challenging the right of the dynasty to bear the title of caliph. Many were a response to the stripping of the privileges of private, contract armies—and to the end of centuries of contractual agreements with the Ottoman center.

Mahmud II destroyed the last vestiges of the sultan-slave patrimonial relationships and the spider networks that were foundational to the empire and essential to its perpetuation. The iconographic images of the warrior tradition, Janissary style costumes, ubiquitous in the *bashibozuk* paintings of Orientalist painter Jean-Léon Gérôme, became the preferred costumes of Albanian and Greek nationalists, and inspired the French colonial troops, the Zouaves. The Crimean War battlefields had exotic colonial troops side-by-side with Europeans in mufti: Cossacks, French Zouaves, highlanders and hussars. Mahmud II and his successors exerted a constant, though ultimately unsuccessful effort to discipline irregular manpower into the new homogenized Nizamiye forces. By the 1870s, the word *bashibozuk* had become synonymous with barbarism and brutality in Europe, and a propaganda nightmare for Abdülhamid II (1878–1909) in

Istanbul. The British, meanwhile, settled on supporting the Bedouin as the true Arabs—the warrior nation of Arabia—to be added to the colonial empire by the 1900s, as discussed in subsequent chapters.

Notes

- 1 A. Juchereau de Saint-Denys, *Révolutions de Constantinople en 1807 et 1808* (Vol. 2) (Paris: Librairie de Brissot-Thivars, 1819).
- 2 Avidor Levy, "Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II, 1808–1839" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1968), 52.
- 3 Ali Yaycioğlu, *Partners of the Empire: The Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 296.
- 4 George F. Jewsbury, *The Russian Annexation of Bessarabia, 1774–1828: A Study of Imperial Expansion* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1976), 32.
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PART III

The new Muslim absolutism 1840–1870

1839 is generally acknowledged as the beginning of the era of the Tanzimat, or Reorganization. This era was inaugurated with Sultan Abdülmecid I's public proclamation of the Ottoman intentions to reorganize society for the benefit of all subjects. After the withdrawal of Mehmed Ali from Syria in 1841, the Ottomans and the Tanzimat bureaucrats clearly saw themselves in the role of "civilizing" monarchs in their peripheral and reoccupied territories such as Albania, Kurdistan, Iraq and Lebanon. By contrast, local societies and communities were increasingly alienated from the idea of Ottoman citizenship that mid-century intellectuals, notably the young Ottomans, advocated. After 1800, Britain emerged as an ally to the Ottomans in the long struggle with Napoleonic France.

Over the next few decades, the British developed the perspective that the best defense against Russian encroachment into the Middle East was a live rather than a dead Ottoman Empire. This policy, which vacillated according to prime ministerial politics in London, committed Britain to an undeclared colonial domination of the Middle East crowned by the occupation of Egypt in 1882. The Ottoman economy felt the impact of the global trading system, represented by the continuation of the commercial privileges system (capitulations) that was extended to European powers. Severely pressured, Mahmud II agreed to the Anglo-Ottoman 1838 commercial treaty, which forced free trade on Ottoman territories and heavily favored the British. The net effect on a still largely rural and pre-industrialized society was the eclipse of Muslim trading networks and the empowerment of port-city elites, where trading circles were largely non-Muslim.

The Treaty of London in 1840 finally subdued Mehmed Ali and his son Ibrahim, following a period of ruthless modernization and militarism in Egypt. The period had not only altered Ottoman rule over Egypt but had also tested great power diplomacy at a critical moment in world history. Egypt was informally colonized and drawn into world markets long before the British occupation of

1882. Meanwhile, the Ottomans found themselves colonized from within by minority financiers and their international protectors. This was most acute during the Crimean War (1853–1856) when Ottoman, French, British, Italian and Russian armies became embroiled in one of the more tragic examples of pre-modern imperial warfare. The Crimean War like the later American Civil War, was fought in the full light of eye-witness journalism, photographs, and public opinion.

Chapter 5 describes the great transformation of the empire beginning with the destruction of the Janissaries in 1826 and ending with Mehmed Ali's invasion of Syria. Chapter 6 continues the story of the Reformation Era by describing the Tanzimat reforms underway in the midst of the efforts to subdue Mehmed Ali in Syria and ending on the battlefields of the Crimean War.

5

THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

The auspicious occasion, 1826

Charles Macfarlane, an eyewitness to the events of the 1820s, provides a description of Mahmud II shortly after the elimination of the Janissaries:

Instead of melancholy and a doomed man, I remarked an expression of firmness and self-confidence, and of haughtiness not unmingled with a degree of ferocity. His lift and orientally arched eye-brows, his large coal-black eyes, (which are habitually however rather heavy than otherwise,) his thick black beard and mustaches, which completely veil the expression of the lower features, the lordly carriage of his head, are all calculated to strike, and coincide perfectly, with our picturesque idea of an eastern despot. He had become fond of military training exercises and commanded his own squadron of horse. He was renowned for his prowess with the bow and arrow. His transition from “the habitual life of the sultan to the life of a sort of Frederick the Great,” has rather improved his general health than otherwise.¹

It was but a brief moment of triumph. Mahmud II had successfully eliminated the gravest of his internal threats, the Janissary corps, and temporarily checked the Greek Revolution. Ahead, however, lay the October 1827 disaster of Navarino, when the entire Ottoman–Egyptian fleet sank to the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. Ahead also lay the Russo–Ottoman war over the principalities, from 1828–1829, as well as the first major confrontation with Mehmed Ali’s son, Ibrahim Pasha, in the plains of Anatolia in 1831. Both would severely test the newly formed army, the *Asakir-i Mansure-yi Muhammadiye*, on the battlefield. How did Mahmud II manage it (Figure 5.1)?



FIGURE 5.1 Sultan Mahmud II, 1838. Courtesy Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University, Call no. FAL-LC XCAGE GT1400.C65 1838

From 1822 forward, Mahmud II appointed the ablest loyal men around him as his advisers. He kept a tight rein on state affairs, rapidly removing those who opposed him or who proved unable to carry out his orders. When the Janissaries challenged the sultan in the streets of Istanbul, he matched violence with violence. By ruthless means he eliminated much corruption and disorder and produced a great degree of loyalty to his reform mission. However, he also eliminated most of the experienced Janissary officers, which had grave consequences on the battlefield. Thinning the ranks did produce Hüseyin Agha, who rose through the hierarchy to be appointed as Commander of the Janissaries in February 1823. He immediately proved himself in the struggle with the corps, removing suspected adversaries from the rank and file and banishing them in large numbers.

When Hüseyin Agha's harsh measures provoked a reaction in the corps, Mahmud II removed him from the post, but made him commander of the Bosphorus forts, as well as Governor of Bursa and İzmit. When two grand viziers proved incapable of disciplining the Janissaries, they were relieved of command in quick succession. In December 1823, Mahmud II turned to his reliable servant, the aged Mehmed Said Galib Pasha, and appointed him grand vizier. Galib had survived the riots and purges around Selim III and Alemdar Mustafa and returned to help to negotiate the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest. Galib was secretly informed of Mahmud's plans for the elimination of the Janissaries and recommended the appointment of a more seasoned soldier than himself for the task, suggesting Benderli Mehmed Selim Pasha, then Governor of Silistre. Mahmud sent for him, and

Mehmed Selim arrived in Istanbul disguised as a Tatar messenger. He was appointed grand vizier on 14 September 1824.

While searching for the appropriate instrument for the destruction of the troublesome Janissaries, Mahmud II focused his attention on the artillery, doubling the size of the corps in Istanbul to 10,000 gunners and 4,400 drivers by 1826. A small, mobile artillery regiment, which had almost been annihilated in the 1806–1812 war, was reorganized and continued its training based on western models. After the war, that regiment's strength was increased to around 1,000 officers and men with 70 light field pieces. The artillery forces were well paid and allowed long leaves home, all part of Mahmud II's effort to earn their loyalty. His efforts bore fruit, as the regiments stood by him during the events of 1826. The sultan also directed the strengthening of the fortification system after 1812, on the Danube River, and the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. The military arsenals were reorganized, gunpowder production stepped up, and large quantities of arms—such as 50,000 muskets from Liège—were imported from Europe.

By the spring of 1826, the Janissaries had alienated most of their potentially loyal backers in Istanbul with their unruly behavior. Still, in order to move forward with his plan, Mahmud II had to acquire the approbation of the ulema, notably the chief religious officer. In November 1825, Mahmud II appointed Mehmed Tahir Efendi to the post, known to favor the sultan's intended reforms. Mehmed Esad Efendi, a member of the ulema, was appointed as the official historian in September 1825. He was commissioned to write a history called *Üss-ü Zafer* (*The Foundation of Victory*), that was published shortly following the events of 15 June 1826, justifying the events. Mahmud II also ordered the writing and distribution of books on the life of the Prophet Muhammad, which may have been intended to appease the ulema as well as the public.

The sultan laid very careful plans in order to forestall the kind of resistance that led to the downfall of Selim III. At the end of May, Grand Vizier Mehmed Selim Pasha assembled prominent members of the ulema and presented the sultan's program of reform. The meeting, as described by the nineteenth-century historian Ahmed Cevdet, focused on the disorder and lack of discipline in the Janissaries. Apart from the decay of the corps itself, foreign spies who spread the disease of sedition and the fever of anarchy had infiltrated their ranks. Selim III, who set about his reforms too hastily, had seen his new troops defeated by the Janissaries. Hence, the ulema concluded, the only way to succeed was to begin the reorganization from the inside. They proposed the formation of squadrons of soldiers, called *Eşkıncı*, from within the Janissaries themselves. The assembled ulema agreed to the scheme and the officers of the Janissaries pledged the cooperation of their troops.

All was ready to enlarge the circle of participants. On 28 May 1826, 66 Ottoman officials and ulema, as well as the grand vizier and other members of the bureaucracy, assembled at the headquarters of the chief religious officer. Of those present, 34 were prominent religious officials. The grand vizier addressed the assembly, speaking to the necessity for reform. Among his many arguments, he asserted that:

1. Muslim soldiers had fallen into a state of permanent revolt.
2. The soldiers fled in the face of the enemy, bringing shame and dishonor upon the community.
3. The corps had been infiltrated by all kinds of impostors, especially those so-called *reaya*, the Greek rebels (*eşkıya-yi Rum*). The rebels had spread the rumor that the war against them was intended to suppress the corps rather than suppress a revolt of the *reaya*.
4. The weakness of the religious spirit and inattention to the ancient military laws had led to a decadence within the corps.
5. Muslim soldiers no longer paid any attention to religious duties, to the merit of being a “warrior for the faith,” or to the obligation to obey their superiors.

Once approval had been secured on all sides, the new *Eşkıncı* regulations were read out loud. Following the reading, the group drafted an affidavit of commitment to the reforms, as well as a *fetva* submitted by the chief religious officer. All those present signed the affidavit, which was then carried to Janissary headquarters for further signatures. Approximately two thirds of the signatories were Janissary officers.

The document itself is very carefully prefaced to legitimize reform and military discipline as a religious duty, and conforming with the Qur'an. The *Eşkıncıs* were to be drawn from the existing companies of the Janissaries and their officers. Each company was assigned a surgeon and a prayer leader. Rations were regulated, in an attempt to remove the monopolies and irregularities of the traditional corps. The *Eşkıncıs* were to be paid in the presence of their commanding officers, but only after a roll call.

Most importantly, drill was regulated in the document. The main intention in establishing the troops, according to the text, was to train them in the art of war which required constant practice. Discipline was to be strictly enforced. The men were to be present in their barracks at all times. Leaves were also to be strictly regulated, and those who did not return were to be reported and sought. Guard duty was mandated and specified for each of the new companies. Most historians agree that the *Eşkıncı* reform project was an overhaul of the Janissary regulations rather than a radical break with the past. However, it is worth remembering how consensual this process was, with Mahmud II insistent on acquiring the approval of large numbers of both military and religious officials. Even so, on the documents submitted to him on 28 May, he wrote that the potential for rebellion still existed.

On 12 June 1826, a small number of the new troops—among them the captains and senior officers of the new organization—demonstrated the drill in front of Ottoman high officials and members of the ulema. But all was not well with the Janissaries; there were stirrings of a rebellion in the corps. One or two of the officers who had supposedly been on board with the reforms were among the instigators. On Wednesday, 14 June 1826, Janissaries began to assemble in Et Meydanı, the traditional square for signaling a rebellion. They first attacked and burned the Janissary commander's headquarters. According to one source, their

numbers grew to 20,000 or 25,000, suggesting that parts of the population joined in. Loyal auxiliary corps, artillery, bombardiers, sappers and marines—all combat ready—were ordered to the palace. The ulema sanctioned the use of force for suppressing the rebellion. Mahmud II picked up the sacred banner, wishing to lead the troops in person, but was persuaded otherwise. The sultan had prepared well for this possibility: he bested his opponents for the moral high ground and found large parts of the city's inhabitants willing to fight with him.

By mid-afternoon 15 June, after adroit use of the sultan's artillery, the rebellion was over. It quickly became known as the “Blessed Affair” or “Auspicious Occasion” (*Vak'a-yi hayriye*). By the time Sultan Mahmud attended Friday prayers the following day he had already replaced his Janissary escort with a special guard of the new troops, signaling to all his commitment to the new regime. His careful, studied approach had achieved the opening for a complete transformation of the Ottoman order (Figure 5.2).

Ottoman officials wasted no time in eliminating possible pockets of resistance. That same day, two courts were set up to interrogate the surviving Janissary prisoners: one by the grand vizier in the Hippodrome, and the other by the Janissary commander at his headquarters. Three hundred prisoners were summarily executed. The following day, a great council was assembled to formally abolish the Janissary corps and replace it with the *Muallem Asakir-i Mansure-yi*



FIGURE 5.2 Sultan Mahmud II Leaving The Bayezid Mosque, Constantinople, 1837, Auguste Mayer, 1805–1890, Private Collection © Album / Alamy Stock Photo RDAG50

Muhammadiye, the Trained Triumphant Soldiers of Muhammad. Henceforth, the name Janissary was to be abolished, and the former Janissary commander became the *serasker*, or commander-in-chief. Esad Efendi himself read the public edict and subsequently published his version of events. He

kissed the precious banner of the Prophet with trembling lips, retired respectfully a few steps down the pulpit staircase, faced the immense crowd of Muslims and read aloud the firman ordaining the destruction of the Janissary corps, their name and insignia, whose existence had desecrated the temple of Islam for too long a period.... As all Muslim people know, the Ottoman state owes its creation and its late conquest of the East and the West solely to the powerful influence of Islamic religious spirit, Muslim law, the sword of jihad and the gazi spirit. Esad Efendi began. He then reviewed the history of the reforms from the time of Selim III, casting the blame on the Janissaries who refused to submit.

This had given the enemies of the Ottoman state the opportunity to advance against us.... The Janissaries had revolted one last time: They shouted, "We don't want any drill," and, in spite of the holy sanctions, the proclamation, their sworn allegiances, and the sacred *fetvas*, they turned the weapons given them by the state against the government of the Muslim people and broke out into rebellion against their legitimate sultan. Today they are nothing more than a useless and insubordinate body which has become the asylum of the spirit of unrest and seditions in which the numbers of evil men have outgrown the number of good ones, exhorted Esad Efendi.

Among those who have just been executed were found some Janissaries who bore, the Christian cross tattooed on their arm along with the insignia of the 75th Janissary battallion. This led Esad Efendi to exclaim:

This simply proves that infidel traitors, parading in the disguise of Muslims, have for a long time been using the Janissary corps to further their own nefarious ends by spreading false rumors.... Hence, let all the congregation of Muslim people, and the small and great officials of Islam and the ulema, and members of other military formations, and all the common folk, be of one body. Let them look upon each other as brethren in faith. Let there be no difference and contrariness between you. Let the great ones among you look with a merciful and compassionate eye upon the little ones, and let the minor ones, moreover, in every instance be obedient and submissive.²

Thus, the corps was wiped from the pages of Ottoman history, the reformers pausing only to blame the "enemy-in-our-midst," the infidel infiltrators. The proclamation made for wonderful theatre, and in many ways presaged the *Gülhane* rescript text inaugurating the Tanzimat agenda 13 years later. However, it is a straightforward statement of Mahmud II's Ottoman-Muslim absolutism, no matter

how much it was meant to reassure the people of Istanbul of the legitimacy of his actions.

The document also shows the influence of new strains of religious thought in Ottoman ruling circles. Especially influential were the teachings of the *Naqshbandi tekkes* (lodges), sufism of Caucasus origins, whose sheikhs first made a significant appearance in elite ranks in the late eighteenth century, and who had become advisers to Selim III. By the 1820s, their teachings had become part of popular discourse in Istanbul. These teachings were extremely influential in the latter half of the nineteenth century, especially in the inner circles of the sultans following Mahmud II.

The more strictly defined Muslim orthodoxy of the *Naqshbandis* clashed with more tolerant (liberal or heterodox) Sufi organizations. Two examples of such organizations were the Bektashi, installed as the chaplains of the Janissary corps in the sixteenth century, and the *Mevlevi*s, followers of Rumi's teachings who served as spiritual advisers to many of the sultans from the seventeenth century forward. Sultans Abdülmecid (1837–1861) and Abdülaziz (1861–1876) are said to have embraced an ideology based on an Ottoman/*Naqshbandi* synthesis that first emerged during the reign of Mahmud II. It moved into court circles via influential court imams as well as through the household slave system. This system produced individuals such as the ubiquitous Hüsrev Pasha from Abkhazia, and his protégés, many of whom came from the “Turkic” Caucasus and later became the prominent statesmen of the Tanzimat.

Naqshbandi thought advocated a strict emphasis on the *sunna* and the shar‘ia and the supremacy of the shar‘ia in the life of the community and state. It also promoted hostility to Shiites and especially to non-Muslims. Among those with ties to the order in the inner circle of Mahmud II were *Şeyhülislam* Mustafa Asım Efendi, the aforementioned Hüsrev Pasha, Pertev Pasha and Mustafa Reşid Pasha, later grand vizier and chief architect of many of the Tanzimat reforms. Their influence probably contributed to the banning of the Bektashi order, which occurred three weeks after the elimination of the Janissaries. Hajji Bektash was the patron saint of the corps; new inductees to Janissary regiments were required to swear by the 12 imams, Shiite practice, and on the virtue of ‘Ali as well as the light of the Prophet. Closely intertwined as they were with the Janissaries, the Bektashi brotherhoods were no doubt doomed from the day the decision was made to eliminate the Janissaries themselves.

Chief Religious Officer Tahir Efendi, Mahmud II's chosen enforcer, convened a meeting of top ulema and sheikhs of 11 Sufi orders. *Naqshbandi*, Qadiri, Halveti and *Mevlevi* were among them, but not the Bektashi. He opened the meeting with a lengthy diatribe against the Bektashi, and asked for evidence of their heresy, in what was essentially an inquisition. Those in attendance were reluctant to give evidence one way or the other. Encountering no significant objection, Tahir Efendi proceeded to supply the Sultan with a report that the *tekkes* (orders) should be shut down, and a number of Bektashis were to be banished to Anatolia. Three main Bektashi leaders were executed, accused of being libertarians and heretics,

and fomenting schism and heresy. The extremity of the language argues for the reiteration of orthodox ideology in Istanbul and the palace.

Given the upheavals surrounding the Greek community in Istanbul following the 1821 uprising, it must have been an extraordinary period of re-sorting ethno-religious categories and networks in the capital. Contributing to the climate of fear, the worst fire in a century broke out in the city in August 1826. The blaze, likely arson set by disgruntled ex-corpsmen, destroyed private and public buildings alike, with losses estimated at three million pounds by British Ambassador Stratford Canning.

The systematic obliteration of sedition continued throughout Ottoman territories. Mahmud's careful preparations were fruitful: special couriers were sent in advance to governors of provinces that had a large Janissary presence, but they were met with little resistance. The provinces appear to have capitulated to the new regime quite easily with a few exceptions, such as in Bosnia. In major concentrations of Janissaries such as Vidin, Edirne and Erzurum, resistance was subdued with the banishment or execution of a few key figures. Surprise and speed were instrumental in establishing the new order but could not mitigate widespread resentment, which influenced the ability to conscript troops for the new army.

The realities of reconstruction

Financing the reforms remained a huge problem. During the Mahmud II era, the empire experienced a steep rise in inflation that was greater than any other moment in its history. Prices increased 12 to 15 times between the late eighteenth century and 1850, in part because of ruinous fiscal practices. Furthermore, although Mahmud II had pledged to cease the confiscation of deceased officials' (known as *müşâdere*) estates, he did not hesitate to execute three of Istanbul's wealthiest Jewish bankers and seize their assets. The bankers had been money-lenders and suppliers to the Janissaries and their estates were worth roughly 108 million *kuruş* at a time when the annual state revenue has been estimated at some 200 million *kuruş*.

Devaluation of coinage and confiscation further crippled the economy and alienated generations of Ottoman subjects. The sultan imposed an export tax of 12% on silk, and a stamp duty of 2.5% on imported manufactured goods. Some effort was made to address the problem of tax farming and to confiscate *waqfs*—the charitable foundations (tax havens) of the ulema—but it was still insufficient. The cycle of indebtedness led to foreign intervention in Ottoman fiscal affairs by mid-century.

A second major problem was the lack of foresight about the new army command. Firstly, this was due to the speed of the transformation. Secondly, unlike Mehmed Ali, Mahmud II resisted the use of foreign advisers. In 1826, he ordered Mehmed Ali to send 12 officers to Istanbul to aid in the training of the new army. Mehmed Ali refused the appeal. Mahmud II could not (and just as likely did not want to) pay what Mehmed Ali did for his French officers and technical advisers.

Colonel Sèves received 17,500 *kuruş* a month from Mehmed Ali. By contrast, another Frenchman, Gaillard, veteran of Napoleon's armies, was paid 1,200 *kuruş* per month as Mahmud's chief infantry officer. Others were paid even less, obviously a disincentive for particularly bright and ambitious military minds. Those who were employed were of lower ranks, non-commissioned officers or even privates, with little experience of command. They proved particularly susceptible to manipulation by the Ottoman pashas, where the real problem of command lay.

The new organization of the military and bureaucracy specified that officers be appointed based on ability and seniority rather than favouritism and venality, which had been the practice with the Janissaries. In practice, however, favoritism continued as Mahmud II picked his commanding officers from the extended imperial household (Figure 5.3). Hüsrev Pasha headed the largest, most powerful, and last of such great households. (*Ottoman House*) While the traditional networks continued to operate, the embryo of a modern state bureaucracy in service to a constitutional government was already in evidence by mid-century.

In 1834, Namık Pasha—an Ottoman official and important reformer under four sultans—founded an officers' training school, the School for Military Science (Mekteb-i Ulum-i Harbiye). By 1839, cadets numbered around 400. Regular classes were



FIGURE 5.3 Serasker Mehmed Reşid Pasha (left), Sultan Mahmud II, *Kapudan* Hüsrev Pasha (d. 1855), frontispiece, John Reid, *Turkey and the Turks*, London, 1840

established 1836, but the curriculum remained restricted to Arabic, French, history, a bit of arithmetic, and infantry drill. Schools for naval and land engineering (developed out of what was once Selim III's School of Mathematics) and a medical school for army surgeons (established in 1827) were also in operation. The new officer school quickly created an officer class, as senior officers were given honors and governorships as well as pensions and benefits for surviving family members. Officer training would ultimately serve as the single most important modernizing force of the empire. In this period of the transformation, however, rivalries and factionalism remained the order of the day, and are generally accorded to be the reasons for failure of the *Asakir-i Mansure* army against Mehmed Ali's army in Anatolia.

Hüsrev Pasha was appointed as commander-in-chief in May 1827. He implemented the new regimental structure that was organized into battalions (*tabur*) on the Napoleonic model. In Istanbul, ten new battalions resulted. In the provinces, 21 new *Asakir-i Mansure* battalions were raised. Galib Pasha produced another one in Erzurum at his own request in late September 1827. The overall aim was to have a core force of about 25,000 men, but eventually to assemble an army of 100,000. By October of that same year, a regiment of the Hüsrev reorganization performed the drill on the former Janissary parade grounds of Davut Paşa. Full regimental organization, however, was not completely in place until 1831. Notably, three of the four newly appointed colonels were former members of the household of Hüsrev Pasha. By contrast with the infantry, the cavalry initially proved too costly to reform. A provincial *Asakir-i Mansure* cavalry regiment was established at Silistre in November 1826, for several reasons: horses and fodder had become prohibitive in Istanbul and were more readily available on the Danube. The fortress was on a very sensitive military frontier, where the cavalry was of some use, and Dobruja was full of noted horsemen—Tatar and Turkish tribesmen and Christian Zaporozhian Cossacks—who had settled there after 1775. Horses were a particular problem as they were so expensive, but even so, it is striking that so little was done to reorganize the cavalry. It may be one reason why the Ottomans continued to rely on their border warrior militias.

Most foreign eyewitnesses of the period admired the fortitude of Mahmud II but were contemptuous of the condition of the military (Figure 5.4). Writing in late 1827, Reverend Walsh, pastor of the British Embassy in Istanbul noted that “the Turkish empire seems just now in a perilous state of imbecility. The old military destroyed, the new unorganised; their courage subdued, their attachment alienated.”³

Helmuth von Moltke, then a young man in his 20s best known following his illustrious career as German Field Marshal von Moltke the Elder, observed

men disciplined after the European fashion wearing Russian jackets and Turkish trowsers; with Tartar saddles, and French stirrups, and English sabres; it consisted of *Timariots*, or troops giving feudal service; troops of the line, whose service was for life; and of militia, who served only a term of years, of whom the leaders were recruits and the recruits mere children. The system of organisation was French, and the instructors were men from all



FIGURE 5.4 Costume of the New Troops, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

parts of Europe. The splendid appearance, the beautiful arms, the reckless bravery of the former Moslem horde, had disappeared; but yet this new army had one quality which placed it above the numerous host which in former times the Porte could summon to the field—it obeyed.⁴

Further conflict and intervention by the great powers

On 20 December 1827, Mahmud II declared war on Russia. What possessed the sultan to go to war, unprepared as the empire was for another confrontation on the Danube? Most contemporaries concluded that he had little choice as the empire was faced with numerous challenges: dissolution on all sides, an aggressive challenger in Egypt, a cacophony of voices of resistance from his Muslim subjects and the continuous Russian encroachment. Russia was pushing forward in both the Caucasus and the Balkans, and even in the Mediterranean, where a Russian blockade of the Dardanelles began with the declaration of war. The sinking of the fleet at Navarino earlier that same year had stunned the empire and humiliated the sultan. In retaliation, Mahmud II had closed the straits to foreign shipping.

Mahmud II presented the case to his own public, justifying the new conflict as a jihad. The text of his declaration is full of evidence of the impact the Greek

rebellion had made on his thinking. In summary: All infidels, but especially the Russians, were mortal enemies of the Muslim community and the empire of Islam. The elimination of the Janissary rebels had allowed the Russians to invade and conquer Islamic territory as they had for the past 50 years. They had provoked their co-religionists into treason, aiming at the destruction of the Ottoman state. While the rebels of the mainland had generally been repressed, the bandits of the Morea continued their rebellion, calling themselves the Greek government. The Russians, English and French have interfered, with the aim of separating the Greek nation (*millet*) from Ottoman subjecthood. The sultan ended by calling upon all Muslim subjects to unite in defense of the Muslim nation (*millet*).⁵

For Mahmud II, known to all as the “infidel sultan,” this was clearly a call to arms to rouse the public and swell the ranks of his new army. While the sultan experienced some success at raising new troops, he found both his advisers and his subjects deeply divided on the question of whether to go to war with Russia in 1828. In spite of the initial success in recruitment—perhaps as many as 10,000 infantrymen in Istanbul in six months—the rush to join slowed thereafter. Pockets of resistance emerged as reactions to the new army units ranged from the violent (especially against conscription) to the derisive. Macfarlane records the comments of a “true Turk” in Izmir, while observing a review of the new troops:

And what in Allah’s name can the sultan expect to do with these beardless, puny boys, with their little shining muskets? Why, they have not a *yataghan* [sword] among them! The *yataghan* is the arm of Mahomet and his people and not that chibouque-wire [bayonet] I see stuck at the end of their guns. Maşallah! And what sort of monkey’s dress is that? What sort of ugly-faced, shrivelled, puling dogs are these? Why, they don’t look like Osmanlis!⁶

The population of Istanbul suspended overall judgement but made fun of the new recruits. They ridiculed the troops for taking 12 days to march from Edirne to Filibe (Plovdiv), a march that the Janissaries reputedly accomplished in 32 hours. Pay for the army fell into arrears, and horses for the cavalry were raised by forceful pressure on local pashas and aghas to “donate” them to the cause, only part of the exactions that the new military required. Rapid promotion initially proved enticing to recruits, but by the outbreak of hostilities in mid-1828, the leadership had returned to the old order of favouritism and factionalism over merit. Bosnia, with a proud martial tradition, proved particularly stubborn, exploding in a popular rebellion led by ex-Janissaries against the governor and the new uniforms. Mahmud II appointed a new governor who was able to settle the province, but no soldiers from Bosnia signed on for the 1828 campaign. Albanians were reluctant as well, although 10,000 of them did join the grand vizier at Şumnu in mid-July. Arab Syria resisted sufficiently to halt conscription efforts for fear of general uprisings. The Kurds, another backbone of the Ottoman military, largely chose not to participate.

Mahmud II had ordered the evacuation of the left bank of the Danube before the campaign began, except for İbrail and a few minor bridgeheads. İbrail was the last fortress in Ottoman hands on the northern shores of the Danube.⁷ Most of the engagements of late 1828 occurred at the mouth of the Danube at Varna and at Şumnu. The Ottomans were typically slow to mobilize. Part of the reason was the opposition to the sultan's plans: all of his senior administrators opposed the war. General morale was exceedingly low, as the well-known (and increasingly well-founded) superstition that the Russians were destined to be the conquerors of Istanbul circulated widely. And finally, a bitter rivalry between Commander Hüseyin Pasha and Grand Vizier Mehmed Selim kept the two best commanders of Ottoman troops close to the sultan in Istanbul. The grand vizier finally left Istanbul for Edirne at the beginning of August.

Campaigns on the upper Danube, continuing into early 1829, left the Russian army in charge of the Danube littoral. Similarly, the army in the Caucasus had made further inroads, capturing Anapa. Russian steadfastness had won the day, but the human costs were terrible. What beat the Russians in the brief conflicts of 1828–1829 was not the *Asakir-i Mansure* troops but rather terrain, an inadequate commissariat, and a particularly bad plague year. Well into the nineteenth century, plague and cholera caused more deaths than the battles themselves. The Russians troops were particularly devastated by disease and desertion on all sides. Typhus, fevers, dysentery, scurvy and inflammatory disorders killed ten times as many soldiers as did plague. By May 1829, plague had spread to Varna, and 50–80 new cases were brought in daily in June. In the five months of March–July 1829, 28,746 died in hospital, all due to illness. The plague proved particularly virulent at Edirne, which was crippled with the number of cases of dysentery and diarrhea. The stench must have been frightful.⁸

Confrontations along the Danube continued into 1829 but ended in August with Russian troops camped outside Edirne. It was with relief on both sides that negotiations began between the two belligerents, encouraged by Prussian mediation. The Ottomans admitted defeat in mid-August and signed on finally to the Convention of Akkerman, which settled the Greek and Serbian questions for the moment. The sultan was prepared to accept all the territorial cessions in Europe but initially resisted ceding those in the Caucasus. He was in despair over the size of the indemnity, originally set at 11,500,000 ducats or 400 million *kuruş*. In a show of force, Russia marched to 60 miles outside of Istanbul, prompting British Ambassador Gordon and French Ambassador Guilleminot to intercede on behalf of the sultan:

The *Sublime Porte* has formally declared to us, and we do not hesitate to attest to the truth of the declaration, that [by a march on Istanbul], it will cease to exist; and in annihilating its power the most terrible anarchy will strike indiscriminately, without means of defence, at the Christian and Muslim populations of the Empire.⁹

Unwilling to risk Istanbul, Mahmud II capitulated and accepted Russia's terms.

Treaty of Adrianople 1829

By the Treaty of Adrianople, signed in September 1829, Russia restored all the cities, harbors, fortresses and districts south of the Danube to the Ottomans, but the left bank was cleared of the Ottoman presence. Wallachia and Moldavia, while remaining under the nominal suzerainty of the Porte, were granted freedom of religion and the right to an independent national administration, guaranteeing the further influence of Russia. The sultan retained only the right to appoint the local rulers, the *hospodars*, a last attempt at maintaining the fiction that the principalities were still an integral part of the Ottoman system. The treaty restored six districts to Serbia and guaranteed its freedom, another of the much-contested concessions. Finally the treaty guaranteed the complete freedom of trade in the Black Sea and the passage of merchant ships through both the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles straits.

One of the immediate results of the conflict was the systematic construction of quarantine stations especially in the territories recently occupied by Russian and Ottoman troops. The decimation of the population of the Balkans had been severe. After a particularly bad episode of cholera in 1830, the Ottomans created a quarantine council which undertook a more systematic approach to public health. "By the mid-1840s, of the total 81 quarantines operational in the Ottoman Empire outside of Istanbul, 25 were located in Rumeli and along the western Black Sea coast."¹⁰ By the late 1860s, the Ottomans were part of the international sanitary regime, having built a quarantine station in the Aegean at Urla Island in 1865. Another station, specifically for pilgrims to Mecca, was established at Kamran in the Red Sea in 1882.

With the 1829 Treaty of Adrianople, the Ottomans' first line of defense became the Balkan Mountains, rather than the Danube itself. At that time, Russia still had 11,000 troops in the Principalities and 17,000 in Silistre. They remained until 1835. In 1833, when Mehmed Ali and his son Ibrahim threatened to storm Istanbul from Kütahya in Anatolia, Mahmud called on those same Russian troops to prevent the imminent collapse of his empire, an astounding diplomatic reversal that awoke Great Britain to the real dangers of Ottoman collapse.¹¹

The two-year conflict had convinced Russian Tsar Nicholas I to work in concert with the other European powers concerning the future disposition of the Ottoman Empire. He concluded that the elimination of an Ottoman Europe or Istanbul was not in the best interests of Russia. This change in policy offered the sultan an interlude from maintaining vigilance on the Danube, and an opportunity to consolidate his hold on his remaining territories. For the next two years, serious revolts continued to break out across the empire, in part stimulated by the chaos, shortages and exactions of the recent war, but also instigated by opponents of the New Order and by legitimate fears of what conscription meant. The sultan turned his new troops against those internal revolts, and the new army honed its skills against its fellows, much as Mehmed Ali was forced to do in the initial stages of building of his new Egyptian army.

Although the *Asakir-i Mansure* had begun as a volunteer army, coercion was needed to continue to fill the new regiments as wars lengthened and losses continued. This proved unsustainable, so a conscription law was introduced, first in Istanbul in the early 1830s, and latterly across the empire as the system expanded.

Who were these new recruits? By sultanic decree, they were Muslims and non-Muslims, but increasingly, ethnic characterizations emerged among the sultan's advisers. According to his advisers, the core of the new, docile army should be made up of "Turks." Ottoman commanders saw the "Türk uşağı" ("Turkish lad") as the most reliable, most malleable cannon fodder. The word "Turk" here is as much an ethnic stereotype as "Albanians," "Kurds," or "Greeks." Mahmud II's choice to reassert the primacy of Muslim orthodoxy and shar'ia as part of his imperial image arose in part from his sense of betrayal by his Greek subjects, explaining the categories of "disloyal" or "unsuited" (for conscription or recruitment) in public documents. The most frequently evoked suspect groups included converts, heterodox Muslims, Greeks (Yunanlı), Albanians (Arnavut, virtually synonymous with Bektashis and classed together with Greeks), Kurds, Bosnians and Arabs. Converts were explicitly barred from enlistment. The exclusion of non-Muslims continued and became one of the most contested aspects of citizenship as it unfolded over the last century of Ottoman existence.

Such attitudes and exclusionary policies prevented the application of a universal conscription system, which, coupled with fiscal difficulties, crippled the Ottoman military system until the first decade of the twentieth century. When the sultan attempted to extend the *Asakir-i Mansure* regime to Damascus, for example, he envisioned sending troops from Istanbul or from Sivas and Adana to replace the locals. Local recruits were not to be considered, as they were too attached in the old system and proved more than able to resist conscription.¹² In Bosnia and northern Albania, rebellion was undoubtedly driven by an intense sense of betrayal. From the military reformers' point of view, independent warrior militias such as the Bosnians represented an affront to a centralised order. Such instances of massive rebellion by potential recruits only reinforced the presumed unsuitability for the *Asakir-i Mansure* of men other than those of "Turkic" stock. Nevertheless, the sultan could not survive with an army of recruits from Turkic stock only, as they were a minority population in the empire and conscription exhaustion of Turkic Anatolia quickly set in. Charles Macfarlane, returning to Turkey in 1847 noted: "conscription, as I have repeatedly observed, is eating up the remnant of the Mussulman people and consuming the heart's core of the Empire."¹³

Although the fighting force was re-engineered as Sunni Muslim, Mahmud II introduced considerable innovations in his conversations with the general population. In the late 1830s, he embarked on a tour of Bulgaria, the first time a sultan had left greater Istanbul in over a century. He undertook five such journeys, part of an intensive effort to capture the loyalty of his non-Muslim subjects. He moved among them, dressed in western garb, gave speeches, and curtailed excessive ceremony. More importantly, he routinely gave money for the repair of churches and synagogues and gathered children of all religious communities to stress the

importance of education. During a meeting with the leaders of the Principalities in 1837, he said: "It is our wish to ensure the peace and security of all inhabitants of our God-protected great states, both Muslim and raya [*reaya*]. In spite of all difficulties we are determined to secure the flourishing of the state and the population under our protection." Later the same year, he referred to his subjects as his children whom he treated equally, "the only difference perceived among them being of a purely religious nature." Or at Şumnu, he said, "Your faith is different, but all of you equally guard the law and my Emperor's will."¹⁴

Moltke, traveling with the sultan in Bulgaria, had this to say about the sultan:

In this country where the peasant is accustomed to doing everything gratis, in the name of *corvée*, for the lord, the sultan pays to cover the cost of his voyage. I was told that he carried on him 2.5 million florins, and a mass of precious objects; we do not pass any destitute or disabled person that the sultan does not order that a gold piece be given to him. At his departure, he left 10,000 florins for the poor of Şumnu, and took specific measures to ensure that the money arrived at its destination and that too much not stay in the fingers of the distributors. The imams were charged with reporting to him. During the voyage, I always saw groups of women holding their supplications above their heads. An officer approached, collected the petitions, and passed them to the almoner. Later, the sultan was promenading in a four-horse phaeton which he himself drove handily; a poor woman lifted a paper high on a cane, but as the procession was passing very rapidly, no one noticed her. Except the sultan, who stopped the horses, despatched an officer and continued on his way.¹⁵

These gestures of inclusion and noblesse oblige predate the Gülhane rescript of 1839, which promulgated equality of citizenship and empire-wide conscription in the army. The ambiguities in policy and practice set off the long struggle over Ottoman citizenship rights. At the heart of the debate was the problem of manpower mobilization. The contradictions would become abundantly apparent in the contest over Syria between Mehmed Ali and Mahmud which unfolded after 1831.

Mehmed Ali's invasion of Syria

After Navarino and the surrender of the Morea to the European powers and the Greeks, Mehmed Ali contemplated further expansion, independent of his master in Istanbul. To the west, the French talked of joint operations against Tripoli, Tunis, and Algiers, but then occupied Algeria themselves in 1830. The more logical move for Mehmed Ali was to occupy greater Syria, historically seen as an extension of Egypt. Syria represented a buffer zone, a source of manpower and natural resources such as iron, wood and coal, as well as an opportunity for Mehmed Ali to broaden his tax base. Both Mehmed Ali and his son İbrahim

coveted Damascus, a center of potential wealth, because the city served as the hub of pilgrimage and trade routes. Mehmed Ali had ignored Mahmud's request for troops in the 1828–1829 war against Russia, sending money instead. He had already spent some 20–25 million *riyals* on the invasion of the Morea, and was rebuffed when Mahmud II only offered him control of Crete, rather than his coveted Syria.¹⁶ Whether Mehmed Ali contemplated bringing down the Ottoman dynasty or was simply behaving in the time-tested Ottoman *ayan* fashion, seems a moot point. By 1828, expansion was clearly on the Egyptian agenda, and Syria was the target. From 1828–1831, intensive preparations were under way in Cairo and Alexandria. The navy was rebuilt, the army reorganized, and conscription intensified. European observers speculated at the aim of such intensive preparations. By the end of 1831, the destination became clear as troops and ships left Egypt for Sidon on the Levant coast.

With peace on the northern border, Mahmud II was in a position to turn his attention to consolidating the Arab provinces, which continued to resist his economic and military reforms. His preoccupation with the northern arc had led him to neglect of the territories of Syria and Palestine. The Acre–Sidon–Damascus triangle had undergone a decade of disorder and chaos before Mehmed Ali chose to invade, much of it driven by the relentless Istanbul reform agenda as well as the region's rapid integration into the world economy. In June 1831 a major rebellion broke out in Damascus. The governor, Selim Pasha, had imposed a new surtax on the merchants of the city, which engendered a revolt. The governor's troops fired upon the rebels, who in turn besieged the citadel, burned the government buildings, and killed the governor alongside many of the 5,000 troops who accompanied him. Elders of the city established an interim government while they awaited the arrival of the new Ottoman appointee. This disorder must have facilitated İbrahim's occupation of the city in June 1832, who invaded just as the rebellion was losing force.¹⁷

İbrahim Pasha, universally admired as a commander of troops, is also generally credited with moderation towards the population in the early days of the occupation. He would prove adroit at exploiting the simmering discontent among inhabitants of greater Syria, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. To the Christians, he promised tax reform and exemptions. To the Muslims, he (and his father) argued the sultan's unsuitability as caliph, appealing to the divergent voices already raised in protest against the reform regime. Mehmed Ali was just as willing as Mahmud II to use religious symbols to stimulate enthusiasm, hence his army was known as the *Cihadiye* (the Jihadists).

For the next decade, Mehmed Ali and Mahmud II were rivals in Syria. They competed not only for territory and tax revenue, but also for loyal subjects; they sought supporters for their expansionist and reformist aims as well as manpower for their armies. Mehmed Ali had insisted on his senior officer class being Turkish-speaking while the enlisted men were Arabic-speaking. He worried that Arabic-speaking commanding officers would form bonds with the enlisted men, ultimately challenging his own authority. Hence, Arabs could be promoted only as far

as the rank of lieutenant. This practice led to the absorption of numerous ethnic categories which had made up the *Mamluks*—for example Circassians or Georgians—into the Turkish-speaking ranks, and the creation of an officer corps that was extremely loyal to Mehmed Ali.

It also meant a constant flow of able officer stock from the new Ottoman army to the *Cihadiye* camp. Such defectors joined European officers of equal rank who were paid very well, such as Süleyman Pasha (Colonel Sèves), İbrahim Pasha's second-in-command. In more than one instance, Ottoman prisoners who spoke Turkish were appointed as high-ranking officers over İbrahim's troops, and even commanded their own regiments of Ottoman prisoners.¹⁸

Empire-wide resistance to Mahmud II intensifies

Apart from the Turk-Arab rivalry, Mahmud's II relentless intervention in the countryside and his overturning of the traditional order undoubtedly stimulated the anti-reform movement that gained momentum in the 1830s. Mehmed Ali came to represent a different new order and an alternative to the infidel sultan, who many felt had violated the *shar'ia*. After 1831, even the ulema in Istanbul began inciting the public from their pulpits. Insurrections in Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia and Baghdad were often couched in terms of the sultan's violations of the traditional law. Unrest spread into heartland Anatolia: to Ankara, Kayseri, Aydın and Tokat. Public expressions of resistance to obvious signs of westernization, such as the sultan's portrait and wardrobe, escalated. Mahmud was openly condemned: "Infidel sultan, God will demand an accounting for your blasphemy. You are destroying Islam and drawing down upon us all the curse of the Prophet."¹⁹

Such demonstrations were expressions of social identity that cannot simply be dismissed as religious obscurantism. It appeared to many across the empire that the sultan-caliph in Istanbul was at war not just with external enemies, but with his own Muslim subjects—most especially with the traditional political and social hierarchy of autonomous tribes and households. Equally important, as described in the previous chapter, the resistance to his rule coincided with the rise of militant Muslim voices, such as the rebellious Wahhabis and the Sufis *Naqshbandis* who called for reform from within the faith itself.

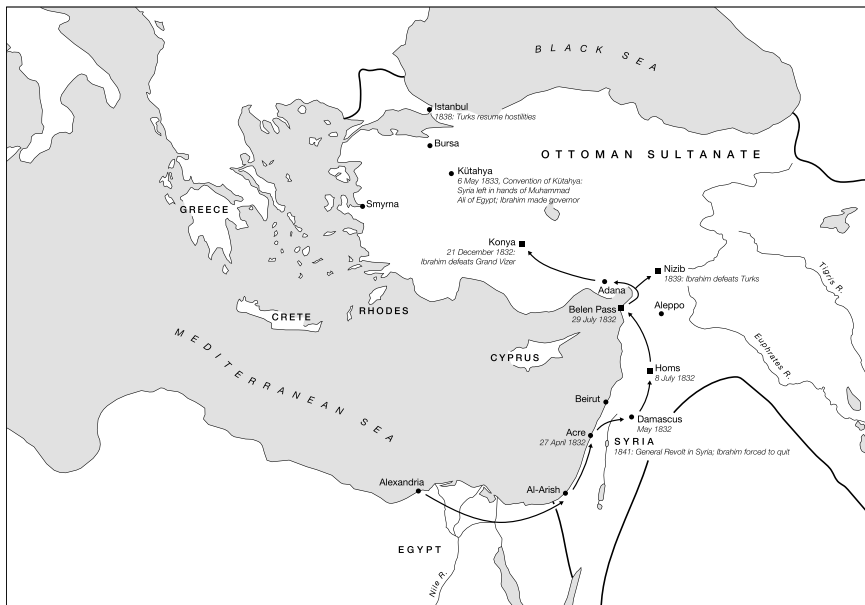
The Egyptian governor's aggressive expansion and initially successful campaign, however, engendered increasing problems at home in Egypt. Conscription of the peasants had produced some 130,000 recruits by the time Mehmed Ali invaded Syria. In under ten years, he had not only transformed a traditional, agricultural society into a plantation economy, he had also radicalized the relationship between a government and its people. Logistics, discipline and troop welfare all appear to have been successfully coordinated in the initial stages of the new expansionist enterprise. Yet desertion remained appallingly high, and the death toll from plague and other diseases insupportable. Rural disorder was on the rise as banditry became an essential form of collective political action. Piracy and theft from state

warehouses forced patrol of Egyptian harbours by gunboats in 1831. In June 1832, press gangs rounded up the male population of Cairo for the ongoing campaigns, a measure of the strength of resistance to conscription.

In mid-November 1831, Mehmed Ali's son Ibrahim Pasha invaded Jaffa and Haifa without resistance. By December, Sidon, Tyre, Beirut, Tripoli, Latakia, Jerusalem and Nablus swore allegiance to Ibrahim Pasha, and he could concentrate on the fortress of Acre. Governor Abdullah Pasha was said to have 2,500 men and a year's supplies (map 5.1). A six-month siege ensued, during which Ibrahim consolidated his position in the surrounding area.²⁰

Mahmud II responded to the invasion by sending an emissary to Alexandria in December, threatening reprisals. A blockade was imposed on Egyptian ports. In April a *fatwa* was issued in Istanbul, declaring both Mehmed Ali and his son rebels and enemies of Islam. The siege of Acre continued. On 27 May 1832, a final assault forced the surrender of Abdullah Pasha, who was sent as a prisoner of war to Egypt. Ibrahim's victory freed him to march on Damascus, which surrendered with little fight on 16 June. He then pushed north from Damascus with 30,000 troops and arrayed his army before Homs where they confronted an assembled Ottoman force.

The performance of the Ottoman armies had been abysmal. The success of the Egyptian troops was due to their training, to Ibrahim Pasha's experienced command, and to the voluntary submission of most of Syria and Palestine, and then Aleppo. By 31 July 1832, Ibrahim controlled Tarsus and Adana. With the arrival of new Egyptian recruits in October, Ibrahim Pasha consolidated control of the



MAP 5.1 Mehmed Ali's campaigns in Syria © Gregory T. Woolston

region by occupying Urfa and Maraş, maintaining strategic access to Erzurum and points east. He camped in Adana and awaited orders from his father. His primary communication with Egypt was by sea, well patrolled by the Egyptian navy.

At the end of August 1832, Mehmed Ali wrote to the sultan to begin negotiations, but Mahmud II delayed responding. He was awaiting news from two ongoing initiatives: a diplomatic appeal to Britain to intervene, and orders to Grand Vizier and Commander Reşid Mehmed Pasha to mobilize a large army from all over the empire. Between July and October 1832, four armies were raised that included troops from recently subdued Albanian and Bosnian communities. It seems a particular act of desperation for Reşid Mehmed and Mahmud II. Raising such troops could only have been accomplished with considerable force and most likely relied on the old strategy of requesting local officials to raise troops from the villages.

Arbitrary numbers of young men to be conscripted were assigned to each town and village, forcing undue hardships on Muslim households. Massive resistance and desertion as well as self-mutilation to prevent recruitment appear to have been rife in both the Ottoman and Egyptian armies. Desertion statistics averaged 10–25% in the *Cihadiye* early on, but six years after the campaign began, Mehmed Ali received a report that said that 60,000 soldiers had deserted the army, a 50% loss of conscripts.²¹ Archival documents from 1837 indicate 500,000 soldiers had been conscripted to the Ottoman army over the last decade. One in four was deserting (even higher among Kurds). Death and desertion may have reached 45,000 men a year over the ten years.²²

When the two armies finally met on the plains north of Konya, the Ottomans outnumbered the Egyptians three to one, but the Egyptians won the day. By the beginning of 1833, inhabitants of Anatolia were inclining to İbrahim, whose adroit use of force, incentives and ideological pressure attracted adherents and volunteers for his army. İbrahim continued moving his troops until he stood at Kütahya, where his father ordered him to halt at the end of January 1833.

Upon hearing of the latest defeat, Mahmud II acquiesced to Mehmed Ali's request for negotiations, and sent Grand Admiral Halil Pasha to Egypt for that purpose in mid-January 1833. Halil Pasha was instructed to reinstate Mehmed Ali as Governor of Egypt, Crete, Jiddah, Sidon, Tripoli, Jerusalem and Nablus, but not Aleppo and Damascus. Tortuous negotiations, mostly facilitated by the Russians and the French, were carried on between Alexandria and Istanbul until May 1833 when the convention of Kütahya was finally signed. İbrahim Pasha pressed his father repeatedly to ask for independence from the sultan, a stance he apparently held from the beginning of the invasion. However, Mehmed Ali—at this stage at least—did not envisage independence as an option.²³ Mahmud II finally acceded to the appointment of İbrahim as governor of Damascus, Aleppo and Adana in a verbal commitment on 5 April. As of 10 May 1834, Mehmed Ali was to begin paying a tribute of 30,000 purses to the sultan for the newly acquired territories.²⁴

A return to the Eastern Question

No one in Cairo or Istanbul—or indeed in European diplomatic circles—expected the Convention of Kütahya to be the end of the matter. In desperation, Mahmud II requested Russian support in early 1833. Two envoys to Palmerston's government in London had failed to generate the British naval blockade of Alexandria as had been requested by the sultan. Envoy Namık Pasha left London for Istanbul on 17 March 1833, empty-handed. The French offered to mediate, as they sided with Mehmed Ali throughout the period. The Russians, however, offered military assistance, as both naval and land forces stood a few days distance of Istanbul. On 2 February, Mahmud II made a formal request to the Russian Minister in Istanbul for military support. By 20 February Russian ships with troops on board anchored in the Bosphorus strait at Beykoz and Büyükdere. The troops camped at Hünkâr İskelesi on the Asian shore. Meanwhile the French unsuccessfully continued to act as brokers as the negotiations with Mehmed Ali dragged on. The Russian presence must have terrified the city but certainly alarmed the great powers.

France and Great Britain reacted by sending squadrons to Besika Bay just beyond the Dardanelles strait. Still, relations between the two great powers were not sufficiently cordial to force the issue with Russia. In the end the Russians left, but only after they had secured the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, an eight-year mutual defensive alliance with the Ottomans, including pledges to consult with one another in matters of security (8 July 1833). A famous "secret" article was also included, by which the Ottomans guaranteed to close the Dardanelles to all foreign warships in the event of an attack on Russia. Simultaneously, Tsar Nicholas I was negotiating the Münchengrätz Convention with Prussia and Austria, signed in September 1833. That agreement was designed to oppose further expansion by Mehmed Ali, and to maintain Ottoman integrity. This, as we have seen, was to be the new Russian policy towards Istanbul.²⁵

The British spent the rest of the decade re-establishing their relationship with the Ottomans, somewhat alarmed at the influence the Russians had acquired with the sultan. With the Kütahya agreement, Mehmed Ali had nominal authority over the two routes to India: the Suez–Red Sea, and the Euphrates–Basra in Iraq. (Coincidentally, British explorer Captain Chesney would successfully navigate the latter route with a steamer in 1836–1837.) Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Minister (1830–1834) and then Prime Minister (1835–1841), who once viewed the collapse of the empire as imminent, did an abrupt about-face: "Because British policy was Russophobe and Egyptophobe, it now became strongly Turcophile.... The Ottoman Empire was to be preserved, supported, reformed, and strengthened.... In the 1830s Britain prescribed a regimen of what might be called trade and aid for the Ottoman Empire."²⁶ Palmerston gave immediate orders that the Levant fleet be strengthened and stand ready to serve the sultan if Mehmed Ali threatened further action, upon authorization of the British ambassador in Istanbul. It was a stand-off that never really threatened war, but presaged further crises in the decade to come. The next phase of the Eastern Question had begun.

Further reforms

Mahmud II pressed forward with his reform agenda, touching on nearly every aspect of Ottoman society. In 1835, three independent branches of government were reorganised: the military (*seyfiye*), the judiciary (*ilmiye*), and the civil bureaucracy (*kalemiye*). This elevated the *Serasker* (Commander-in-Chief) to equality with the *Şeyhülislam* and grand vizier, and reduced the status of the latter, heretofore known as the “absolute deputy” of the sultan. It also marked the beginning of a true civil service, although well-trained candidates for offices were several decades away. Mahmud II understandably had to concentrate on the military, so it should come as no surprise that one of the long-term consequences of these reforms was the valuation of a military over a civilian career. Salaries for the officer corps and related staffs grew tremendously in an era of great fiscal crisis. Educational institutions were revived or inaugurated. The naval and military engineering schools grew in importance. A medical school to train doctors for the army had been opened in 1827, but was reorganized in 1838, when it was transferred to Galatasaray, the venerable palace training school. An imperial music school followed by 1834, as well as the School of Military Sciences (*Mekteb-i Ulum-i Harbiye*). By 1838, the sultan was contemplating a system of secular elementary and secondary schools, a few of which were opened in his lifetime, and which he celebrated on his tours of Thrace and Bulgaria.

Major initiatives around diplomatic practice also occurred at this time. Mahmud II had attempted to send numerous young men overseas for education in 1827, much as Mehmed Ali had in 1826 with limited success. The language barrier was an acute one, which Mahmud had addressed originally by creating a Translation Bureau in 1821 to train local Muslims in the language of diplomacy. Enlarged during the Mehmed Ali crisis, it grew to a staff of 30 by 1841. Embassies were reopened in major European capitals, and the young diplomats and translators sent to Paris, Vienna and London formed the nucleus of the reform leadership for the following decades. Among them were Mustafa Reşid, Ali and Fuad Pashas, all future grand viziers and protégés of *Reis* Pertev Pasha, himself chief opponent of Hüsrev Pasha until the latter engineered Pertev’s downfall in 1837.

The language of governance also changed at this point. Government departments were reorganized as ministries. For example, in 1835–1836, the former offices of the *Kahya* and *Reis*, both under the grand vizier at the *Sublime Porte*, were renamed the Ministries of Civil and Foreign Affairs. By Mahmud II’s death in 1839, Civil Affairs had become the Ministry of the Interior. In 1838, the office of Grand Vizier briefly became the office of the Prime Minister (*Başvekil*). These changes reflected the increasing importance of negotiations with the European powers, but also a slow rationalisation of the tasks of a modern bureaucracy. Staffing them adequately would be one of the most acute problems of the Tanzimat period.

In 1831, to promote the progress of reform, the sultan agreed to the publication of *Le moniteur Ottoman* by Alexandre Blacque, founder of the *Spectateur de l’Orient*

(later *Courier de Smyrne*) in Izmir. A year later a Turkish version, *Takvim-i Vekayi*, started publication. Both served initially as official gazettes. The introductory article of *Le moniteur* made an explicit reference to the important (and traditional) role of historiographers and analysts in the empire, and the contents of both presses were regularly reviewed by the sultan himself. A more independent newspaper, the *Ceride-i Havadis*, started publication in Istanbul in 1840 after Mahmud II's death, but a critical and more independent press began only after the Crimean War, and that press would be subjected to extreme censorship in the Hamidian period.²⁷

Major changes continued to unfold in the military, but many of the reforms were blocked by the ongoing influence of Hüsrev Pasha. After the 1828–1829 war, Hüsrev was regarded as the most powerful Ottoman after the sultan. When Moltke saw him in 1836, Hüsrev was more than 80 years old. By that time he had served in various posts for over 33 years, and had survived and contributed to some of the most convulsive decades of the empire. He and his protégés controlled almost all the offices of the empire. (*Ottoman House*)

Reform of the designations and assignments of the officer hierarchy had been under way for some time, corresponding to the changes in organisation of the army. The problem of too many chiefs and no subalterns remained a significant aspect of the Ottoman command structure that continued until after the Crimean War. A true general staff was very slow to emerge. Literacy and training remained a significant part of the problem, but household politics and the extraordinary reach of Hüsrev Pasha dominated all else as the primary obstacle.

The Hassa was the imperial guard that replaced the old Bostancı palace guards and remained under the purview of the sultan. By 1835 there were 11,000 men in the Hassa, and it was there that the sultan set up the School of Military Sciences for officer training beyond Hüsrev's reach. After 1834, during the lull in the conflict with Mehmed Ali, Mahmud II used these reforms as a means of curbing the power of Hüsrev. After Grand Vizier and *Serasker* Reşid Mehmed, Hüsrev's protégé, was captured and sent to Egypt, Mahmud II appointed (Mehmed Emin) Rauf Pasha to the post. Rauf Pasha, five times grand vizier in this period, was known to be an independent. Mahmud II appointed his own courtier Said Mehmed to the post of *Müşir* of the *Asakir-i Mansure* in 1836 instead of Hüsrev's preferred candidate, Halil Rifat Pasha. Both Said and Halil had married daughters of the sultan. Hüsrev Pasha was dismissed as *Serasker* in early 1837.

Immediately thereafter, Mahmud established the Şura-yi Askeriye (Military Council). Inaugurated in July 1837, it was composed of 12 army officers from all the branches and 2 civilians, 1 of whom was a jurist. The role of the new council was to advise and oversee the office of the Commander-in-Chief. The orders for its foundation afford an interesting glimpse into the degree to which Mahmud II supervised the reforms: the new council regulations included instructions about using a round table and chairs, rather than the traditional divan-style low couches and pillows. Coffee and smoking were prohibited in the room. Attending servants were forbidden entrance and were not allowed to loiter or make noise outside the

room. Junior officers were to be encouraged to speak first, so as not to be intimidated.

Of most interest is the fact that the very first topic was the reduction of the term of military service to five years, a decision incorporated in the Gülhane decree two years later. The system of councils proved popular and proliferated across the military system, prompting the sultan to introduce further such consultative bodies at the top of the hierarchy: a Privy Council, known as the *Medis-i Valâ-yi Ahkâm-i Adliye* (High Council of Judicial Ordinances), and an equivalent for the *Sublime Porte*, the *Şura-yi Bab-i Âli* (Council of the *Sublime Porte*). All were in place by March 1838, and rather astonishingly, Mahmud II chose Hüseyin Pasha as chairman of the Privy Council. It must be said that regardless of his motivations, Hüseyin Pasha remained steadfast in his support of the sultan's reforms.²⁸

Within ten years, every aspect of the Ottoman administration had been touched by the sultan's sweeping reforms. Although most of the changes at the center remained tentative, the seeds of new forms of governance had been planted, allowing the following generation of reforming bureaucrats to continue the process and to dominate the first two sultan successors to Mahmud II.

Beyond addressing the excessive power of Hüseyin Pasha, two other problems plagued Mahmud II: fiscal crises and the acute lack of manpower. Devaluation, taxes on luxury items, the conversion of *timars* to crown lands, and the confiscation of estates of "enemies" were all methods used by Mahmud II to finance his reforms (even though he is also credited with eliminating the practice of estate confiscation). For example, the recovered land leases of Ali Pasha of Ioannina—valued at some 1,158,000 *kurş*—were the main revenues for a new Army Finance Secretariat established in 1827.

Mahmud II had also attempted to divert the revenues of the charitable endowments by creating a directorate for that purpose, which worked with some success under his successors and undermined the power of the ulema. Other measures included a surtax on the poll tax on non-Muslims, specifically for the army, and the increased use of *Rusûmati Cihadiye*, or Holy War duties. Mahmud II made a concerted effort to instill honesty and regularity in accounting methods and payments of salary, but the conflict with Mehmed Ali derailed this project. In early 1835, the sultan was spending 2,000,000 *kurş* a month on the army. By summer 1835 this sum had more than doubled, and by early 1839 it rose to 18,000,000 *kurş* a month, when annual revenues have been estimated to have been at somewhere between 300,000,000 to 800,000,000 a year.

Creation of the system of reserves (*Redif*)

As one solution to the failure of conscription, and in an attempt to minimize expenses, which continually outran revenues, Mahmud and his advisers proposed the idea of a national militia, first floated under Selim III. The new military organization, known as the *Redif* (*Asakir-i Redife-i Mansure*, or Victorious Reserve Soldiers, also known as *ihtiyat*, and later *yedek*), would survive as an organization

with various reforms until 1912, when it was merged with the regular army. It deserves particular attention for the lasting impact it would have on all of Ottoman society. It is also one of the better-documented reforms of the period because all the regulations were published in the new *Takvim-i Vekayi*.

The primary reason for establishing such a system was the perceived need to supply reinforcements to the armies of Anatolia where Egyptian occupation had considerably reduced the areas of the empire available to Ottoman recruitment. A secondary aim was to create a means of screening young recruits, and to ease the burden of rapid levies on the countryside. In May of 1834, Mahmud II assembled a large council of prominent statesmen and soldiers—coincidentally in Istanbul as his daughter's wedding guests—to discuss the creation of an empire-wide auxiliary force, likened to the Prussian Landwehr.

The regulation was published in *Takvim-i Vekayi* that August. The reserves, as the council defined them, were to be established to ensure provincial security and to guarantee a rapid means of levying troops in war. In peacetime, such troops would continue as agriculturalists; in war, they could be called to arms. Twice a year, the troops were to be assembled and drilled. The very first battalions were established in Ankara, Çankırı and Karahisar-ı Sâhib. Others followed, particularly in the same areas of Anatolia where *Asakir-i Mansure* had been most successful. By early 1836, 33 of the new battalions had been established. The following year, *Redif* battalions could be found from Cyprus to Urfa to Üsküb. By the end of 1837, 90 such new battalions were reported established, but they remained woefully under-equipped, poorly educated and inadequately trained. Although its initial effectiveness was questionable, the *Redif* organization undoubtedly had the potential for standardizing military training and presence in the provinces. As with other military initiatives of the period, the implementation was always hampered by insufficient funds time to mature.²⁹

Meanwhile, tensions between Cairo and Istanbul escalated. The dispute with Mehmed Ali simmered around a number of unresolved questions: Mehmed Ali was concerned with the large amount of tribute he owed the sultan, and was insistent on the removal of Hüsrev Pasha, his old rival, from any negotiations. Mahmud II demanded the tribute and the evacuation of Egyptian troops Urfa, which lay outside the jurisdiction of İbrahim in Anatolia.

But the status quo was not going well for either side. Maintaining the army in Syria proved to be costly in military and economic terms for Mehmed Ali and his son. İbrahim, although initially welcomed into Greater Syria and southern Anatolia, soon found himself at odds with the population as Syria began to experience the Egyptian style new order. In 1832 İbrahim established the first town council in Damascus, the *Majlis al-Shūrā*, comprised of prominent local citizens to deal with municipal questions beyond the jurisdiction of the shar'ia. The system was spread to every town of over 2,000 inhabitants. While self-governance was likely welcomed, increased taxation and conscription were not. Increasingly pressed at home for new recruits and new sources of revenue, in early 1834 Mehmed Ali insisted that his son impose a head tax, the *ferde*, on every male in

Syria between the ages of 12 and 60. Already burdened by a series of extraordinary taxes, the population resisted when the unwelcome head tax was followed in mid-1834 by conscription and *convée*. As taxes and the ill-paid forced labor of men and animals increased, so too did the resentment of the local populations.

As İbrahim began to impose conscription across Syria, rebellions broke out in northern Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, with the most severe in Jerusalem. By mid-June 1834, Egypt regained control of Jerusalem, but İbrahim found himself unable to control the rebellions, and called for reinforcements. Mehmed Ali himself, at the head of 11,500 infantry and cavalry, marched to Jaffa to the aid of his son. One of the results of putting down the rebellion was the disarming of the general population of Palestine, Damascus and Aleppo, but pockets of resistance in hard-to-reach regions such as Hawran remained unbowed. Partial disarmament made conscription somewhat easier, although resistance and the reassertion of communal networks resurfaced once the Egyptians departed. The Ottomans began the systematic application of both disarmament and conscription only after 1845, when regiments of the regular army began to be stationed in the provinces. Even then, it was sporadic and was resisted vigorously. Ottoman authorities were constantly forced to adjust the conscription regulations and numbers in Syria in response to resistance, especially as they failed to disarm the population after the Egyptian withdrawal in 1840. In urban areas they ultimately gained the upper hand over the remnants of the old para-military order; in the countryside, it took much longer.³⁰

The years following Mehmed Ali's intervention in Jerusalem in 1834 were spent in mediation, appeals to the European powers for support, offers and counter offers, and diplomatic missions to and from Istanbul and Cairo. By April 1837, Mahmud II began negotiating with Mehmed Ali concerning his dynastic rule of Egypt and Syria. Mahmud II appeared willing to concede that Mehmed Ali's family could inherit the rule of Egypt and Syria but would not budge on surrendering the cities of Damascus, Aleppo or Adana, which was unacceptable to Egypt. In September 1837, Mehmed Ali captured Aden in the Gulf, extending his power over Arabia from Suez to Mukha on the Red Sea and threatening the British steam trade routes from Egypt to India. However, at the end of 1837, another sustained revolt of the Druze in Hawran challenged İbrahim. An Egyptian army of 20,000 finally defeated the Druze only in June 1838. In the negotiations that followed, İbrahim granted the Druzes considerable autonomy and exemption from conscription. By that time, Mahmud II's commanders had amassed 50,000 troops at Urfa, while Mehmed Ali accelerated his build-up in Syria in response. Another international crisis loomed.

Most of the redif recruits in Urfa were Kurds, centered in the region of Diyarbakır. Diyarbakır was a city in a region with an even longer history of semi-autonomous rule than Albania or Bosnia, situated as it was along the fault lines of the early Ottoman state. Kurds, like Albanians, proved able but independent warriors. The history of the province followed many of the trajectories of resistance to centralisation and reform that we have seen elsewhere.

Kurds, like Albanians, did not speak Turkish. Also, like Albanians, most Kurds were of Shiite inclination, *Alevi*s. Kurdish tribal leaders, *mirs*, had acquired long established tax-collection rights from the Ottomans in exchange for military manpower and protection of the Safavid border. By the eighteenth century, much of the territory functioned as separate emirates, with official appointments from the Istanbul government such as the *mütesellim*, or tax collectors, who generally came from the local families. The governor of Diyarbakır, as with other provinces, was often an Istanbul appointee. The population was extremely diverse: Kurds, Jews, Armenians, Türkmen and Bedouins were native or migratory to the area. Isolated, mountainous and barren territory made incorporating the territory difficult—that is, until the time of Mahmud II.

In 1819, the city of Diyarbakır itself revolted against a particularly ruthless Ottoman governor, Behram Pasha. Mahmud II had appointed him to subdue the powerful local merchant family elites. Behram Pasha was besieged in the fortress at Diyarbakır for nearly three months before the superior fire of his forces demolished the rebellion. Revolts began again in the 1830s under a number of Kurdish leaders such as Mir Mehmed Pasha of Rawandiz in present-day Iraq. For another decade, the territory was engaged in a long resistance to conscription and incorporation into the reformed empire. Not until 1847, when a large Ottoman army subdued yet another revolt, did the Ottomans redraw the lines of the province of Diyarbakır, and station imperial troops on the Iranian/Russian border. This move was arguably one of the last phases of the Ottoman pacification and incorporation of the Ottoman-Iranian frontier territory, but hardly the last of its resistance.³¹

After 1834, the Ottoman military was simultaneously engaged in quelling significant centers of revolt and impressing large swathes of the Kurdish Muslim population, much as they had in Albania. In August 1834, the young officer Zarf Mustafâ Pasha (*Ottoman House chap. 6*) was in Siverek, east of Urfa, charged by his commander with negotiating with the long autonomous Kurdish tribes.

When we arrived in Siverek, the Milli tribe was there, which had taken control of the desert, and its leader was known as the Desert Padişah. They were just three hours from us. We needed to befriend them; because they were very numerous, and had so many camels, it was impossible to estimate their number. Miralay Rüstem requested a volunteer, and I said yes. As I approached the tents, the Arabs, seeing me, sent up a cry, and jumped up. [He was taken to the tent of one Eyup Bey. Everyone was looking at him because of his silver embossed jacket [epaulets]. They greeted one another courteously,] whereupon Eyup Bey asked: 'Why are you feeding your animals my grass?' 'We know we are, but you are the servant of God and the Padişah. They, too, are the Padişah's animals,' I replied. 'Your Padişah does not interfere with the desert, but you have come as a guest, and they sent you here. If you had not come to explain, I would have destroyed you all. Do the Padişah's soldiers always go around dressed like this?' he asked.

'Officers dress like this, but regular soldiers dress in a different fashion,' I answered. 'Aren't you at all ashamed? Such an outfit shows everything' — at which he called for a robe which they placed over my shoulders. If you come here again, do not come so naked, come with the robe, he said, and do not send your animals any further ahead [i.e. into Kurdish territory].³²

To Moltke, the Ottomans were engaged in no less than “brigandage” of the population. All the reinforcements for the Asakir-i Mansure army came from villages that resisted the government. Moltke gives one example: the town of Siirt, after being subdued by Reşid Mehmed Pasha, was enumerated as having 600 Muslim and 200 non-Muslim families. From the Muslim families, 200 recruits were impressed. When Moltke was writing his letter, the army was there again for another 200 recruits, but only the very old and very young remained on the streets. The young men had fled to the mountains. In addition, disease and desertion carried off many of those new recruits: in 12 months, some regiments were cut in half by deaths, even in a year of peace.³³

For close to three years, Mahmud II maintained large numbers of troops in Diyarbakır. However, quite apart from the added expense, and the quartering of thousands of troops on a restive countryside, Mahmud II was simply unable to push through more of his provincial reform, or take on Mehmed Ali's occupying army. By 1838, the Ottomans were clearly seeking a way to end the dispute with Mehmed Ali.

The 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Agreement

On 25 May 1838, Mehmed Ali announced his intention to declare independence from the Ottomans to the European representatives in Cairo. The British and French counseled caution; the Russians offered military support to Mahmud II. Alarmed, the British pursued the means for reducing the influence of Mehmed Ali and eliminating the Russian influence. The 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Convention, which resulted from this tense international crisis, satisfied two British demands: abolition of trading monopolies throughout the empire, including Egypt, and abolition of all internal tariffs. The former capitulations were renewed, but the tax structure, fixed for generations at 3% import and export, was changed. Export duties on Ottoman goods were set at 12%. Import duties were raised from 3% to 5%.

For a desperate Mahmud II, the agreement brought survival. It would deal a mortal blow to Mehmed Ali, whose economy was built on state monopolies and export, and presaged further British naval intervention on behalf of the Ottomans. It amounted to a free trade treaty mostly in Britain's favor, which neutralized the Russian influence in Istanbul and henceforth facilitated British informal colonialism in the Arab provinces. Ottoman trade had been bolstered; the British Mediterranean routes to India were secured. As a follow-up, in November 1839 Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid Pasha was dispatched to London with a request that Britain join the Ottomans in an attack on Mehmed Ali. Negotiations went on

from November to March before Palmerston's government offered a draft treaty of alliance, entirely defensive and hence of no interest to Mahmud II.

At the end of 1838, Mehmed Ali was known to be building up his forces around Adana and Aleppo. In January 1839, Mahmud II called a Grand Council on the question of war with Mehmed Ali, but discussions were inconclusive as Istanbul was awaiting the outcome of Mustafa Reşid's mission to London. In February, Hafiz Pasha assured his sovereign that his army was prepared to take Syria, and that the population was ready to rise up against the Egyptian occupation.³⁴ Against the advice of his court and the foreign community in Istanbul, Mahmud II ordered a massive Ottoman build-up in Diyarbakır, Malatya and Birecik. The sultan, cautioned by all sides to desist, would agree only if the foreign powers intervened to restore Adana, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Nablus and Sidon to him, and forced a reduction of Mehmed Ali's forces. By May, three corps of 80,000 effectives, the majority of whom were fresh levies or *Redif*, stood under arms on the Syrian frontier, but not under a single command. Half of the regular army were recruits. Most were Kurds who were treated as prisoners because of desertion and were unable to communicate with their officers. Kurdish recruits, Moltke observed, in spite of generally being well fed, and well dressed, never lasted more than two years under arms.³⁵

On the Egyptian side, some 60,000 were said to be stationed between Aleppo and Antep, with 20,000 more on the way. However, İbrahim was very short on money so there was misery in the Egyptian camp. Officers and soldiers deserting to the Ottoman side in early June reported 18 months arrears in pay, and rations in very short supply. The Egyptian army was surviving on one third of the rations of the Ottomans.

Frantic warnings and exchanges in the diplomatic community in Istanbul did not sway the sultan. On 9 June, Mahmud II ordered his navy to the coast of Syria. On 10 June İbrahim led his entire army to the plains between Nizib and Birecik. On the evening of 21 June, Moltke advised leaving the first line of troops in place, to allow the rest of the camp to rest, but Hafiz kept the entire force on alert for close to three days and nights. As a result, the troops were in a state of exhaustion when they were ordered to confront the Egyptians in the open plain, against the specific orders of the sultan and the advice of the Prussian officers in his camp.

On the morning of 24 June, İbrahim deployed his troops in three columns between Nizib and Birecik, so that he was situated between the Ottoman army and its stores. There was no place for retreat. The Ottomans had to regroup their lines to face the Egyptians, who advanced in admirable order. Moltke continued:

the depth of their reserve [troops] was probably around three-quarters of a league.... They arranged the artillery wisely, and used their cavalry to cover the artillery.... Hence, while our rapid fire scattered over a large space, without reaching the reserves, their guns covered our entire line with their shot. In a few minutes, we had hardly any battalions where courage was not shaken by losses. Seven-eighths of these men had never heard the whistle of

a gunshot; when a howitzer shell fell by chance on a column and exploded, entire companies began to disband. A short time later, almost all the battalions were praying, their hands to the sky.... Once morale was lost, the battle was lost.³⁶

The army began to melt away and the Kurdish recruits became the enemy. Some fired on their own officers and comrades. Others simply threw off their uniforms and fled. According to Moltke, only one-sixth of the army remained when they reached Malatya; the *Redif* forces simply went home enmasse. İbrahim proceeded to occupy Antep, Maraş, and Urfa by 28 June, and there he stopped, persuaded by his father's orders not to cross the Taurus Mountains. He too had watched his army melt away, which might also explain his reluctance to follow up the resounding victory.³⁷

Sultan Mahmud II died of tuberculosis on 30 June 1839, without hearing about the latest failure of his reformed army. On 14 July the entire Ottoman fleet surrendered to Mehmed Ali, largely because Admiral Ahmed Fevzi Pasha was fearful that the new sultan (and his new grand vizier, the implacable enemy Hüseyin Pasha) would surrender the navy to the Russians for a joint action against Mehmed Ali. By 27 July, the five great powers (France, Britain, Austria, Germany and Russia), through their diplomatic representatives in Istanbul, had indicated their willingness to help the new sultan end the conflict with Mehmed Ali. It seems an appropriate place to pause, as the events mark a significant turning point in the fortunes of the Ottoman Empire.

It is difficult to assess the contribution of Mahmud II, whose ferocity was matched by a vision not unlike that of Peter the Great. He inaugurated a process of reform and centralization that would continue into the next two reigns, but did so by violently attacking his own citizens, gutting local economies, and laying the empire open to economic colonialism. During his reign, Greece, Serbia, Moldavia and Wallachia broke free; Egypt, Syria, Crete, Adana and Arabia were up in arms. The Russians acquired Bessarabia and large parts of the Caucasus. Algeria was occupied by France; Tunisia achieved virtual independence. Bosnia, Albania and Tripoli obeyed in name only, and the Russians passed the Balkan range. An infidel army had to protect the sultan in his own home against a Muslim army. Finally, Mahmud II drew a line in the sand. With his journeys around the Balkans, the increasing reliance on "Turks," and his refusal to countenance Mehmed Ali's army in Anatolia, he defended the very territories that Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) claimed for the Republic after 1918. He also created a template for the modern army which would eventually come to fruition. With his premature death, he left an empire perilously close to implosion.

Sultan Abdülmecid (1839–1861) was a boy of 16 when his father Mahmud II died. In the first two years of his reign, quite apart from the pressing international crisis over Mehmed Ali and İbrahim Pashas, still camped with the Egyptian army on his doorstep, he had to deal with the internecine strife in his court over the question of reform. In a directive that Sultan Abdülmecid sent to his advisers, he declared his dedication to the principles of *shar'ia* law and its application in all the affairs of state. He also asked their advice concerning the problems he should address. His ministers

replied that three principles should guide his reign: that the guarantees for life and property and for the preservation of honor and dignity should be extended to all subjects; that taxes should be fixed according to the wealth and means of each subject; and that the burden of military service should be devised according to the size of the population in each province. Among the 38 signatories to this response were Grand Vizier Hüsrev Pasha, Chief Religious Officer Mustafa Asım Efendi and Commander-in-Chief Halil Rifa'at Pasha, as well as Foreign Affairs Minister Mustafa Reşid Pasha—all veterans of Mahmud II's reforms.

British Ambassador John Ponsonby (1832–1841) is given much of the credit for the language of the response, the essence of the later Gülhane Edict. Many of the narratives of this period make the influence of Anglophile Mustafa Reşid and Ponsonby (and later Ambassador Stratford Canning) paramount in all events that unfold. It has long been argued that the Anglo-Ottoman Convention of 1838 and Gülhane Edict were forced on the dynasty in order to secure Britain's commitment to end the Mehmed Ali crisis. There are equally strong arguments for seeing the Gülhane Edict as a statement of Muslim constitutionalism influenced both by the old guard and by new religious advisers in Ottoman ruling circles. Both sides had emerged in the debate over the dynasty's legitimacy and survival. *Naqshbandi* Sufi groups in Istanbul in the 1820s appear to have established their influence over court politics especially as the imams of the inner circles of sultans Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz, an arrangement that continued over the latter half of the nineteenth century. They preached a strict emphasis on the *sunna* and the *shar'ia*, and the supremacy of the *shar'ia* in the life of the community and state. Among those whose names were linked to the order were otherwise implacable opponents Hüsrev Pasha and Mustafa Reşid Pasha.

The text of the Gülhane Edict included a paragraph in which the sultan “pledged to take an oath in the hall of the sacred relics, not to act contrary to its stipulations, and that the senior ulema and state functionaries take a similar oath, an action no Ottoman sultan before Abdülmecid had ever undertaken.”³⁸ Read in public on 3 November 1839 in front of the European diplomatic corps for the first time in Ottoman history, the Gülhane Edict inaugurated the period referred to as the *Tanzimat-i Hayriye*, or the era of “Beneficial Reforms.” It was a new conversation between ruler and subject, and its meaning would be contested for the rest of the century.

Presenting the Ottoman House: Hüsrev Pasha and Mustafa Reşid Pasha.

Hüsrev Pasha, d. 1855.

One of the most enigmatic of the late Ottomans officials is Hüsrev Pasha, who died in 1855 at the age of 100. He was initially brought to Istanbul as a

Caucasian (Abkhazian) enslaved protégé of Said Efendi. In 1792, he was appointed as Deputy (Secretary) to Grand Admiral Küçük Hüseyin Pasha, Selim III's masterful reformer of the navy. Thus began his naval/military career in Egypt, in command of some 6,000 new order troops fighting the French in 1801 alongside the British troops. He distinguished himself sufficiently to be promoted to the rank of vizier, and was briefly made governor of Egypt. However, in the struggle that followed with the Mamluks, Albanian irregulars and Mehmed Ali, he proved unable to control the situation and was driven out of Egypt by 1803. Mehmed Ali consolidated his own power in the same chaos and was appointed governor of Cairo himself in 1805. Their lifelong rivalry is said to have begun at that point, and Hüsrev's reputation for blood-letting and poor administration is grounded in these events.

Thereafter, Hüsrev had several appointments in the European provinces, and served on the Danube River in the 1806–1812 War in command of some 2,000 reformed troops. From 1811–1818, he rebuilt the Ottoman fleet on the Danube, once again as grand admiral. He was then appointed to the east as governor of Trabzon, and in 1820, as commander of the eastern frontier of the empire bordering Persia. In 1821, after the death of Halet Efendi, he was reappointed grand admiral and came back to Istanbul. He had, in other words, extensive experience before the elimination of the Janissaries in 1826.

Hüsrev Pasha is a towering figure in all subsequent events around the destruction of the Janissaries and the introduction of the new reformed army after 1826. He remained a steadfast supporter of Mahmud II. He served as grand admiral again during the Greek revolt in the Peloponnesus after 1822, where he built and commanded a new fleet of small ships to counteract the piracy of Greek nationalist fame. He transported the 12,000 troops raised by Mehmed Ali in response to Mahmud II's request for help in the Morea and gave considerable logistical support and manpower to the land forces in the next two years or so. In 1824, İbrahim Pasha wrote to their agent in Istanbul, Necib Efendi, that the officers and men Hüsrev had delivered were pigs and undisciplined rebels; this was evidence of the inability of the two armies to get along during the Morea phase of the Greek rebellion, and just one more source of the bitter rivalry between Mehmed Ali and Hüsrev.

Mehmed Reşid Pasha, then in charge of Vidin, was appointed Rumeli Commander and Serasker in 1824. Reşid was one of Hüsrev's proteges, and his appointment is just one example of the ways that Hüsrev ensured his hand-picked officers were in the right place at the right time. Hüsrev's rivalry with İbrahim Pasha for control of the Ottoman campaign against the Greeks eventually forced Mahmud II to dismiss him in early 1827 at Mehmed Ali's insistence. Hüsrev's reputation as a poor commander who was ruthless to his opponents gained considerable renown in this set of events.

In February 1827, Hüsrev was in Istanbul, temporarily unemployed but accompanied by his hand-picked troops, which had been organized and trained along French and Egyptian lines. It was but a few short months after Mahmud II

had destroyed the remnants of the Janissary organization in Istanbul. By May 1827, Hüsrev was appointed commander-in-chief of the new army of Mahmud II, a position he occupied on and off until the death of Mahmud II in 1839. The reforms introduced in 1828 are so closely linked to Hüsrev that they became known as Hüsrev's rules or the "drill of Hüsrev's men." He was the official who managed to pull together the 20,000–40,000 strong new army that faced the Russians on the Danube in 1828–1829. That two-year war, it will be remembered, brought Istanbul close to occupation by Russian troops. British naval officer Adolphus Slade, well known author of a number of works on the Ottomans, was seconded as Admiral Mushaver Pasha to the Ottoman navy during the Crimean War. He has provided the fullest description of Hüsrev Pasha as Minister of War in 1828:

A more inefficient minister of war could not well have been found; his only merit was personal activity, which was remarkable for his years; on the same day I have seen him inspect the castles on the Bosphorus and review troops at Ramis Tchiflik. Avaricious as he is rich, cruel as he is artful, mean as he is powerful, Khosrew's fortune, in having so long escaped poison or the bowstring, is only equalled by his crimes, which are considered superlative, even in a country where such attributes are not held in horror.³⁹

Although dismissed as commander-in-chief early in 1837, he was briefly reappointed for a short period in 1846, at the age of 91, nine years before his death in 1855.

After the 1828–1829 Russo-Ottoman war, Hüsrev continued to be the most powerful Ottoman in Istanbul. It is in this period that the nascent general staff of the military assumed a parallel importance to the office of the chief religious officer. When Helmut van Moltke the Elder saw him in 1836, Hüsrev was 80, having served in various posts for over 33 years, and surviving some of the most convulsive decades of the empire. By the end of Mahmud II's reign he had managed to combine in himself the functions of the office of commander-in-chief of the Mansure troops with all other aspects of the military: Commandant of Istanbul, Chief of the General Staff, and Minister of War. Chief of Police of Istanbul was an appropriate position, continued Moltke, "for an individual who controlled vast wealth, had spies everywhere, and without whom it was impossible to operate. His sole passion was for power, and woe to those who stood in his way!"⁴⁰

Hüsrev Pasha maintained an exceptionally large slave/mentorship household that influenced later Tanzimat politics. (Of 50 male protégés, 30 became pashas, grand viziers and ministers of the late Ottoman state). Hüsrev and his hand-picked favorites controlled almost all the offices of the empire. He remained steadfast in his support of Mahmud II's agenda, while manipulating it to his own advantage.

His final infamy is tied to a last grab at power, in events surrounding the accession of the new, young sultan Abdülmecid I (1839–1861). Hüsrev is said to

have wrenched the seal of office out of then Grand Vizier Rauf Pasha's hands—an equally elderly rival—and assumed the office himself on the accession of Abdülmecid. He kept it for almost a year, until June of 1840. Hüsrev Pasha was thus grand vizier when the Gülhane Edict was promulgated on 3 November 1839. Removed from office amid charges of corruption by his successor Mustafa Reşid Pasha, Hüsrev was sent into exile.

Mustafa Reşid Pasha, 1800–1858, Tanzimat Man

Mustafa Reşid is often called the father of the Tanzimat. He is certainly one of the main reform figures of the period, along with his protégés Ali and Fuad Pashas. Reşid Pasha was born in Istanbul in 1800, the son of a financial clerk with roots in Kastamonu. While beginning his education in a medrese, Reşid moved into the scribal institution. He became associated with the Translation Bureau of the Bab-ı Ali, originally organized in 1821, and formally attached to the Foreign Ministry after 1836. Reşid thus represents the first of the transitional generation, younger than Hüsrev and protégé himself of Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, the other two well-known reformers of the period from 1840–1870. Hüsrev's interest in the Translation Bureau and in sending young Ottomans to Europe for education is well documented. All the reformers of these early decades emerge from the traditional patrimonial factionalism of the court.

Reşid served with the army in the entourage of his uncle Serasker Seyyid Ali Pasha during the Greek rebellion in 1821, and again as army clerk in the Balkan Wars of 1828–1829. Appointed to the correspondence office at the Babı-Ali, he was included in the Ottoman delegation to the peace negotiations with the Russians, and thereafter to important posts as part of diplomatic missions to Paris, London and Mehmed Ali's Egypt. He was sent to Paris to negotiate the return of Algeria after the French invasion. More importantly, he was then sent as full Ambassador to England in 1835 where he is credited with persuading the British to take up the cause of the Ottomans against Mehmed Ali.

While in London, Reşid met James W. Redhouse (1811–1892), linguist and translator, whose dictionary of Ottoman Turkish remains authoritative to the present-day. Redhouse's contribution as the medium of communication between the British and Ottoman cultures in this critical period cannot be underestimated. Hüsrev, Reşid and subsequently Ali Pasha all used him as a translator or supported his publications, making the Foreign Ministry the forge of Ottoman reforms.

Appointed head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 1837, and thereafter a marshal (Müşir) and subsequently Pasha, Reşid was instrumental in securing the Anglo-Ottoman Commercial Convention of 1838. He is also generally credited with convincing Sultan Abdülmecid to issue the formal Gülhane decree of 1839, which declared the young sultan's reform agenda.

Reşid Pasha maintained a lifelong connection to British officials and politics, especially Stratford Canning. Consequently, he remained a lifelong enemy of Mehmed Ali, who used bribery to have him removed from the Foreign Ministry in 1841. He returned as minister in 1845 after a brief exile and was appointed grand vizier for the first time in 1846–1852. This time around, his protégés-cum-rivals, Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha, collaborated with the French to have him removed as a British puppet. Thus, Reşid was not part of the government that negotiated the 1856 reform document following the Ottoman acceptance into the Concert of Europe.

The text of the Gülhane proclamation is said to be the work of Mustafa Reşid, Anglophile and Francophile, who represented the reform party of the empire. However, Hüseyin Pasha, arch conservative, was also among those officials who gave their pledge to the edict of the young Abdülmecid. Intense rivalries between the reformers in the grand vizierial offices (the Porte), and palace favorites of the sultan married into the royal family characterize the period. All members of the government benefitted by extensive networks of patronage and remained in office by royal fiat. Reşid, for example, schemed for the removal of Ali and Fuad Pashas and was restored as grand vizier two more times before dying of a heart attack in 1858.

Even though his role was most profound in foreign affairs, Reşid's initiatives extended far beyond the Foreign Ministry. He also founded the new Ministry of Education and the secular elementary schools (*rüşdiyes*); legislated a mixed commercial court in 1847; drafted a new commercial code in 1850; and established the High Council for Reforms (*Meclis-i Ali-yi Tanzimat*) which would continue to play an important role in the era of Sultan Abdülhamit.

Notes

- 1 Charles Macfarlane, *Constantinople in 1828: A Residence of Sixteen Months in the Turkish Capital and Provinces, with an Appendix to the Autumn of 1829* (2nd ed., Vols. 1 and 2) (London: Saunders and Otley, 1829), 500–5.
- 2 Howard Alexander Reed, "The Destruction of the Janissaries by Mahmud II in June, 1826" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1951). His work includes translations of the relevant sections of Mehmed Esad Efendi's, *Üss ül-Zafer*.
- 3 Quoted in Avigdor Levy, "The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II, 1808–39" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1971), 404.
- 4 Helmut von Moltke, *The Russians in Bulgaria and Rumelia in 1828 and 1829, During the Campaigns of the Danube, the Sieges of Brailow, Varna, Silistre, Shumla and the Passage of the Balkans*, trans. Marshal Diebitch (London: John Murray, 1854), 13.
- 5 Hakan Erdem, "Do Think of Them as Not Agricultural Labourers: Ottoman Responses to the Greek War of Independence," in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, eds. Thalia G. Dragonas and Faruk Birtok (London: Routledge, 2005), 67–85.
- 6 Macfarlane, *Constantinople in 1828*, 1, 59–60.
- 7 Moltke, *The Russians*, 58–59.
- 8 Moltke, *The Russians*, Appendix, 461–76. The habit of seasonal campaigning, and abandoning the battlefield in winter, a feature of Janissary history, may actually have inhibited such occurrences in former days.

- 9 Vernon John Puryear, *France and the Levant: From Bourbon Restoration to the Peace of Kutiah* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1941; reprint Archon Books, 1968), 85.
- 10 Andrew Robarts, "Nowhere to Run, Nowhere to Hide? Society, State, Epidemic Diseases in the Early Nineteenth Century Ottoman Balkans," in *Plague and Contagion in the Islamic Mediterranean*, ed. Nükhet Varlık (Kalamazoo; Bradford: ARC Humanities Press, 2017), 234.
- 11 Radu R. Florescu, *The Struggle Against Russia in the Romanian Principalities: a Problem in Anglo-Turkish Diplomacy, 1821–54* (Iași: Center for Romanian Studies, 1997), 152.
- 12 Hakan Erdem, "Recruitment of the 'Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad' in the Arab Provinces, 1826–28," in *Histories of the Modern Middle East: New Directions*, eds. Gershoni, Erdem and Woköck (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 198–99. In fact, it is more than likely that many of the former Janissaries had been incorporated into the local forces of cities such as Damascus.
- 13 Charles Macfarlane, *Turkey and its Destiny: The Results of Journeys Made in 1847 and 1848 to Examine into the State of that Country* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1850), 327.
- 14 Reuben Safrastjan, "Ottomanism in Turkey in the Epoch of Reforms in XIXc: Ideology and Policy I," *Études Balkaniques* 24, no. 4 (1988): 75, footnote 7.
- 15 Helmuth von Moltke, *Lettres de Maréchal de Moltke sur l'Orient* (2nd ed.), trans. Alfred Marchand (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1872), 111–12, 322.
- 16 Afaf Lutfi Marsot, *Egypt in the Reign of Muhammad Ali* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 211.
- 17 L.S. Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1985), 40–43.
- 18 Khalid Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 247–48.
- 19 Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856–76* (New York: Gordian Press, 1972), 31.
- 20 Muhammad H. Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question, 1831–41: The Expansionist Policy of Mehmed Ali Paşa In Syria and Asia Minor and the Reaction of the Sublime Porte* (Istanbul: Eren, 1998), 63–67.
- 21 Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 259.
- 22 The figures put total losses between 1826 and 1837 at 55.41% of the total army figure of 161,036. Significantly, 20,117 are listed as deserters, and 21,298 as missing in combat, which accounts for almost a quarter of that percentile. Veysel Şimşek, "Ottoman Recruitment and the Recruit 1826–53" (MA diss., Bilkent University, 2005), 92; Veysel Şimşek, "The Grand Strategy of the Ottoman Empire, 1826–1841" (PhD diss., McMaster University, 2015), Ch. 3.
- 23 Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 71, elaborates on this particular question, which is much debated. By 1838, Mehmed Ali does begin to refer to a hereditary independence, in a much-changed international situation.
- 24 Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, 95–105; Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*, 67–68.
- 25 Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, 106–11.
- 26 Roderic H. Davison, "Britain, the International Spectrum and the Eastern Question, 1827–41," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 7 (1992): 27.
- 27 Ahmed Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by its Press* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1914), 30–34. *Takvim* was eventually published in Armenian, Greek, Arabic and Persian as well as Turkish.
- 28 Avigdor Levy, "Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II, 1808–39" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1968), 479–86.
- 29 Levy, "Military Policy," 573–89; Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, "Sultan II. Mahmud devri yedek ordusu Redif-i Asakir-i Mansure," *İ.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi, Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12 (1982): 127–57.
- 30 Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, 112–20.

- 31 Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992).
- 32 Enver Ziya Karal, "Zarif Paşa'nın hatıratı, 1816–62," *Belleten* 4 (1940): 443–94. As with the other quotes from Zarif's memoirs, it is both inscrutable and naive. Zarif's biography is in the **Ottoman House** of Chapter 6.
- 33 Moltke, *Lettres*, 212, 264.
- 34 Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, Ch. 5.
- 35 Moltke, *Lettres*, 266–86.
- 36 Moltke, *Lettres*, 286–307.
- 37 Kutluoğlu, *The Egyptian Question*, 138–40.
- 38 Butrus Abu Manneh, "The Islamic Roots of the Gülhane Rescript," in *Studies on Islam and the Ottoman Empire in the 19th Century* (Istanbul: ISIS, 2001), 89.
- 39 Adolphus Slade, *Slade's Travels in Turkey: Turkey and the Turks and a Cruise in the Black Sea* (New York: William Taylor & Co., 1854), 32.
- 40 Moltke, *Lettres*, 26–29.

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6

IMPERIAL SURVIVAL: THE CRIMEAN WAR

The state of play

Sultan Mahmud II had begun the process of modernizing the dynasty. He re-configured the image of the sultan by personalising his rule and devising symbolic representations of ancient traditions, leaving behind the makings of the modern bureaucracy. His concept of justice (*adalet*) introduced the idea of equality before the law. Sultan Abdülmecid continued in like fashion, elaborating his ambitious reform agenda in the Gülhane Edict. The edict outlined his plan to eliminate tax farming; to address corruption in venality; to eliminate the confiscation of property; to guarantee property rights to individuals; and to institute a public and open court system. These entitlements were to extend to all subjects, regardless of faith. Abdülmecid pledged to reduce compulsory military service to four or five years. He also committed to continue the establishment of local reserve contingents (*redifs*) in order to mitigate the impact on agriculture and industry of drawing too much manpower from particular areas. The implication was that this too would be universally applied (Figure 6.1).

The Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Meclis-i Valâ-yi Ahkâm-i Adliye*), established in 1838, became the principal consultative and legislative body. Every aspect of society was to be subjected to scrutiny and reorganization. While most of the agenda was probably unachievable in 1839, the document did set the parameters for discussion about the nature of the late Ottoman society. The edict had a dual character—or more accurately, a split personality. It promoted a universality and equality of citizenship regardless of religion but grounded in the principle of a religious hierarchy between Muslims and the non-Muslim *millet*s. The reformers aimed at fostering a new “Ottomanism” that would rally support for the empire. After the initial fervor, however, the ambiguities about universal equality alienated many Muslims. Most members of the foreign community in Istanbul were



FIGURE 6.1 "Sir Fenwick Williams and the officers of his staff parting with the citizens of Kars," 1860, National Army Museum, UK

sceptical about the possibility of transformation. For the Ottomans, much of the next two decades was spent in working out what the edict actually meant. First however, the Mehmed Ali crisis had to be resolved and order restored.

Subduing Mehmed Ali of Egypt 1839–1841

Since the defeat at Nizib in 1839, negotiation with Mehmed Ali had continued. Abdülmecid sent a pardon to Mehmed Ali, requesting İbrahim to withdraw to Maraş. France stood behind Egypt and Mehmed Ali, who was bent on keeping Syria and obdurate about wanting Adana as well. In return, he would surrender the Ottoman fleet and Crete. In July 1840, Mehmed Emin Rauf Pasha replaced Hüsrev as grand vizier for his third time in the office. By mid-July, Austria, Prussia, Russia, Britain and the Ottomans signed the Convention of London (15 July 1840). The European signatories agreed to provide assistance in reducing Mehmed Ali's power, to use their fleets to cut off his supplies, to protect the straits, and to maintain the rule of closing the straits to foreign ships of war. Mehmed Ali was offered Acre—the city renowned for the 1798 holdout against Napoleon and the 1831 resistance against İbrahim Pasha—for the duration of his lifetime, along with the hereditary rule of Egypt.

By August 1840, much of the population of Syria was in arms against the Egyptians, stimulated both by British agents and by Commander İbrahim Pasha's efforts to disarm the population. On 12 August, British Admiral Sir Charles Napier was anchored before Beirut, announcing the Ottoman intention to retake Syria. Mehmed Ali was given an ultimatum that he ignored, rejecting the latest peace offerings. Beirut was bombarded by a British fleet of 30 ships on 11 September. By the end of September, a combined Anglo-Ottoman force drove the Egyptian army out of Syria step by step. On 3 November, with the destruction and recapture of Acre by Anglo-Ottoman forces, Mehmed Ali's Egyptian adventure in Syria was done. By the end of the month, the Egyptians abandoned Adana, Tarsus, Aleppo, Jaffa and Jerusalem. İbrahim himself took refuge in Damascus with 12,000 troops.

On 27 November, Mehmed Ali agreed to order İbrahim to evacuate Syria and restore the Ottoman fleet if the sultan granted him hereditary rule in Egypt. The sultan instead demanded an unconditional surrender. Mehmed Ali capitulated on 11 December, and Sultan Abdülmecid accepted his surrender on 27 December. On 30 December İbrahim evacuated Damascus, beginning a long and grievous retreat across Gaza to Egypt. By the time the Egyptian army arrived home in early 1841, it had lost an estimated 10,000 men to desertion and death and had been surviving on mule and donkey flesh.

In May 1841, the sultan's decree accorded Mehmed Ali hereditary status as Governor of Egypt (*Khedive*), but the sultan remained his suzerain, and retained the right to approve the heir. Mehmed Ali was to pay an annual tribute of one quarter of Egyptian revenues. The Egyptian army was to be reduced and maintained at 18,000 men. Sultan Abdülmecid's decree reveals how Egypt was to be subordinated within the Ottoman military structure. For example, the *Khedive*

would send contingents of 8,000 troops to the Crimean War battlefronts in fulfilment of the agreement. Egypt remained important to the Ottomans as the gateway to Arabia and Africa, so the titular suzerainty helped the Ottoman maintain the status as protector of Mecca and Medina.

On 13 July 1841, the five powers, now including France, and the Ottomans signed the Straits Convention, which reiterated the closure of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits to foreign warships, confirmed the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire, and extended the terms of the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Convention to Egypt. Mehmed Ali's regional empire was shattered, but his wish for his family was achieved. He had established a dynasty lasted until 1952. Britain achieved an overland route to India from Alexandria to Suez. Egypt was drawn into the world economy as a market for European goods and a source of grain and cotton. Mehmed Ali's reforms, like those of Mahmud II, foundered on the expense of a reformed army and bellicose regional ambitions, but laid the foundation for the modern state. The army came to represent the modernizing force of Egyptian society and an effective means of upward mobility. Egypt had been forcibly subdued and enfolded into the new global economic order.

Tanzimat reforms continued 1840–1850

The resolution of the Egyptian challenge gave the new sultan an opportunity to continue his reform agenda. However, his chief agent, Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid, had resigned in March of 1841. Ostensibly his resignation was because of his resistance to Mehmed Ali's demands, but it was equally because the more conservative forces regained the upper hand in the bureaucracy. An effort had already been made to prohibit the sale of offices, to regulate the salaries of the state employees, and to reduce the number of internal customs that were levied on a myriad of goods. However, the speed of the reforms and the unpopularity of many of them—including the fixed import and export tax rates dictated by the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman Convention—forced a reaction to the ambitious agenda of Reşid and his protégés. He was packed off as Ambassador to Paris for the next three years.

The decade before the Crimean War in Istanbul belongs to Stratford Canning, who would serve as British Ambassador—with only one visit home—until 1853. His belligerence, self-importance and religious zeal set a tone for diplomacy in Istanbul that did little to support the reformers or win the admiration of the city's foreign community. Canning is said to have had unprecedented access to Sultan Abdülmecid I, but his personal agenda was to establish a Protestant *millet* and church in Jerusalem. (The first Protestant missions had been allowed into Istanbul in 1831.) His method was to attack the Ottoman religious establishment and the *shar'ia* in the name of religious freedom, and promote the missionary activity aimed at Christians (largely Armenians) that was already considerable by 1853.¹

It was a moment of intense religious proselytizing, largely stimulated by the increased presence of missionaries among Ottoman Christian populations. On an empire-wide level, these were French, British and American men and women

promoting an evangelism laced with a progressive agenda. This combination resulted in hundreds of schools, from elementary to university, that fundamentally changed the landscape of the Middle East. But the imperial posturing, in particular of France and Russia over the protection of their co-religionists and over access to the sacred places of Jerusalem—Catholic and Orthodox—rose to a high pitch in mid-century and was one of the causes of the Crimean War.

After the intervention in Greece, the great powers simply assumed the position of protectors of their religious brethren, whether they were Ottoman subjects or not. What follows is from a conversation overheard in Istanbul in 1840 with Dimitri of Kayseri, a non-Muslim:

For all this time, as Ottoman subjects, our honour and property have been protected by the Sublime State. Our freedom is still intact. The other day when I was in Büyükdere, the British pestered me saying ‘come, let’s put you under British protection.’ I replied that ‘all my ancestors have always lived with Ottomans. It would be unseemly for us to become something else.’²

One of the great ironies of Ottoman history is that at the moment when Ottoman rulers wrestled with introducing universal citizenship and equality before the law,



FIGURE 6.2 Sultan Abdülmecid, 1839–1861, Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

the European powers seized on the religious *millets* as representing “national” groups requiring their protection. Non-Muslim communities were riven by conflicting loyalties between those who benefited from continuing ties with the dynasty and those who advocated revolt and separation from the empire. Among the Armenians, for example, sectarianism among Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant communities was exacerbated. For thousands of Muslims before and after the Crimean War, it was equally a period of immense upheaval. They found their former status undermined by the new laws concerning equality and their economic foundations crumbling as Anatolia and the Levant became part of the global economy.

Sultan Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz after him (1861–1876) carried on with the modernization of the palace and the image of the sultan. They both made public appearances in Istanbul, traveled in the countryside, enacted ceremonies, and presented certificates and medals of valor typical of their absolutist neighbours in Moscow and Vienna. They maintained four separate establishments and Abdülmecid built the extravagant Dolmabahçe Palace, completed in 1853. Both of their reigns are notable for increasing the size and power of the bureaucracy, the elaboration of the palace service (*mabeyn*), the profligate habits of the dynasty, and the financial scandals that created a crisis in 1861. Abdülmecid has the dubious distinction of accepting the first international loans for the empire when the Ottoman Bank, largely with British capital, was established in 1856 (Figure 6.2).

Military reform was carried on by the old guard who surrounded the young sultan Abdülmecid. They included the aging but still powerful Hüsrev Pasha and Halil Rifat Pasha, who had married into Mahmud II’s family, served twice as grand vizier, and continued as grand admiral for four different terms until 1855. Also part of the fold was Damat Mehmed Ali Pasha, another son-in-law of the royal household who was grand admiral five times, commander-in-chief twice (1849–1851, 1853–1854), and grand vizier in 1851–1853.

By 1842, the sultan himself seemed to exert some control over affairs of state. He was all of 19, assisted by Emin Rauf Pasha who had first been grand vizier in 1815–1818, part of Sultan Mahmud’s inner court at a young age. Damat Mehmed Ali Pasha (1853–1854) and Hasan Rıza Pasha (1854–1855) were the commanders during the Crimean War. The closed circle at the top of the military command is striking, as well as the much-attested parochialism, corruption and ignorance. Good military commanders were not produced in Istanbul or the Mekteb-i Harbiye, but in the provinces.

1843 military regulations

The army was renamed the *Asakir-i Nizamiye-yi Şahane* (or simply *Nizamiye*, Regular Army) in 1841. The Military Code of 6 September 1843 became known as the Rıza regulations, after Hasan Rıza. Much of the system survived until after the turn of the twentieth century. The Gülhane Edict had referred to spreading army command headquarters evenly across the empire, and the reduction of



FIGURE 6.3 “Bachi-Bouzouks, 1850,” Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection, Brown University Library

service to four or five years, recognizing the impact military service had on agriculture and industry and the depopulation of the countryside.

The new regulations created a system of five regional armies (*ordus*). These were located as follows: the first army were the guards in Üsküdar (the Hassa *ordusu*); the second in Istanbul (and latterly Ankara, called the Dersaadet *ordusu*); the third army for the European territories, in Manastır (Rumeli *ordusu*); the fourth army in eastern Anatolia, at Harput (Anadolu *ordusu*); and the fifth army to guard the Arab provinces at Damascus and Aleppo (Şam *ordusu*). The Egyptian contingent of 18,000 was to serve as reserve reinforcements for the Damascus army. A sixth army was added in 1848, in Baghdad (Bağdat *ordusu*), and was responsible for the Arabian Peninsula. Each of the first five armies was composed of two services: the *nizamiye* active and the *redif* reserve, plus auxiliaries and *bashibozuks*, the last to be called up only in times of war. Such irregular cavalry could be Cossacks or Tatars from the Dobruja, or Türkmén and Kurds from eastern Anatolia, as well as a myriad of ethnicities from the Caucasus (Figure 6.3).

In 1846, a new conscription law was enacted. Conscription was to be regulated by drawing lots. In order to maintain an adequate active force, 30,000 recruits aged 18–20 were to be added annually, while a similar number was to be discharged. The law included considerable exemptions: members of the scribal and



FIGURE 6.4 *Nizamiye* infantrymen uniforms, Auguste Raffet, 1854 © Art Collection 2/Alamy Stock Photo HR2B9E

administrative bureaucracy, ulema, *kadis* and religious students who had to prove their seriousness by examination in order to be exempt. As one can imagine, the new conscription law had the unintended effect of increasing the numbers attending the medreses.

Full strength of the *nizamiye* was estimated at 150,000–200,000 men, that is, at about 30,000 per regional army. Service in the *nizamiye* was reduced to five years, ultimately two, followed by seven years' service in the reserves. One of the striking changes with this reorganization was the introduction of military preparatory schools at each of the army headquarters to support the military college Mahmud II had created in Istanbul. The new schools would eventually serve as public education in many parts of the empire. By the end of the century, a military education and career offered upper mobility for many Muslims outside the ruling class, as attested by the biographies of the late leadership of the empire including Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) (Figure 6.4).

These recruits and students continued to be Muslim men only, although the reformers made ineffectual efforts to enlist Christians in the provinces, often engendering rebellions. Christian or Jewish officers continued to be unacceptable to the enlisted men, and Christian populations understandably preferred a buy-out tax or other forms of exemptions to enlistment. In 1855, non-Muslims became

eligible for army service, and the old poll tax, the *ciye*, was eliminated. A new exemption tax, *bedel-i askeriye*, quickly replaced it and continued to be used as one excuse to keep non-Muslims out of the army. By the end of the century, the list of possible exemptions was huge, and included Muslims as well as non-Muslims. The issue of military enlistment over-burdening the Muslim part of the population and Anatolia in particular continued to be a problem. Keeping the non-Muslims out of the army prompted British observers to accuse the Ottomans of violating non-Muslim rights by continuing to exempt them from service. During the Crimean War, foreign commanders with the Ottoman forces wondered at the practice when manpower shortages were so acute.

Other reform efforts aimed at replacing an indirect tax regime with direct taxation. In 1840, the tax system was standardized by implementation of a 10% cultivation tax, fixed head taxes on cattle and a (new) graduated *ciye* (or poll tax) for non-Muslims, based on individual incomes and the ability to pay. Salaried civilian tax agents were sent to the districts to assess and collect taxes. Local reorganization divided the provinces into *sancaks* and further subdivided into *kazas* (districts) in order to establish control over the countryside and replace the tax farmers, often the governors themselves.

Census data was to be collected on all the *kazas*. Furthermore, regional councils, representative of the local Muslim and non-Muslim populations, were established to act as a check on the governors. While the new taxes were imposed and collected with relative ease in urban settings, the new system utterly failed in the countryside. In fact, the first decade of the Tanzimat reform unfolded as a contest between the traditional rural landowners and the new centralising bureaucracy. It proved impossible to eliminate tax farming, as the net result was the drastic reduction of the revenues available to the sultan. State revenues collapsed so drastically that within the year, the tax-farming system was reinstituted. To meet expenditures, the Ottomans issued paper money (*kaime*) for the first time. This was later followed by state loans from wealthy local banking families, opening the way for foreign loans from Britain and other countries as the century wore on. In spite of the success of many other tax-reforms, the tax-farming system proved resilient, was modified again in December 1855 and remained in place for the rest of the empire.

Underfunded and undermanned, the provincial reforms faltered. In February 1845, Sultan Abdülmecid reportedly visited the *Sublime Porte* and read a proclamation aloud, an unusual intervention by the sultan in the affairs of state. He read: "One cannot deny that, in spite of the care brought to the realization of my desires, none of my projects, with the exception of military reform, have resulted as I promised. And even the military reform lacks a solid base, which is the general prosperity of the country. I am profoundly distressed."³ He ordered his ministers to discuss the problem, advising them that the solution lay in remedying ignorance with schools. The result of his personal appeal was the convoking of an assembly of provincial representatives to be held in Istanbul, itself an innovation. Another consequence was elocal councils that had a voice (although not always effective) in

the pre-Crimean War period, and who applied directly to Istanbul for funds for public works projects.

Inspection commissions were sent to the provinces; Abdülmecid himself went on such inspections in 1844 and 1846. It is in this period that a start was made on the establishment of public schools, and on the beginnings of a modern police force. In 1852 a new Provincial Regulation Law restored the authority of the governors, but in a further rationalization of municipal and country-side bureaucracies, retained the local council system. In 1848 mixed tribunals of Muslims and non-Muslims attended to interfaith commercial disputes. By 1850 a commercial code became the first western-style law. Of course, the utilitarian aspects of these reforms mask what was actually going on at the provincial level. A blizzard of enactments by the sultan and his Supreme Council characterize the period, but good intentions were not generally followed up through enforcement and inspection at the village level as was originally anticipated. The solution to unrest was to hand the local administration over to the commanders of the new divisional armies, which helped to stabilise the application of the Tanzimat. This could lead, and often did, to great brutality on the part of the Ottoman commanders.

Restoration and reform in greater Syria

Greater Syria had been restored to the Ottomans with İbrahim's withdrawal in 1841. The territory had been badly neglected even before the 1830s, then occupied for a decade by a modernizing and latterly draconian Egyptian army. İbrahim reportedly taunted an Ottoman general by saying: "You, with the assistance of the English, have expelled me; you have put arms into the hands of the mountaineers; it cost me nine years and ninety thousand men to disarm them. You will yet invite me back to govern them."⁴

Mahmud II had never been able to establish full control over the Syrian territories and delayed introducing conscription because of the mistrust and unruliness that inevitably followed. The harsh conscription methods of İbrahim Pasha were a more recent memory. Furthermore, the final confrontation with İbrahim had been facilitated in part by arming the countryside. Tribal leaders were loath to surrender their weapons. Entrenched notable families, who over the previous century had acquired significant control over agricultural resources, contested many of the new regulations.

The familiar provincial lines of Aleppo, Damascus and Sidon—absorbing the old province of Tripoli—were re-established. Sidon was the most changed: the new capital was Beirut, and it included most of Lebanon and Palestine. Beirut had gained considerable prominence as a port city and would continue to do so in this period as the administrative center of the newly drawn territories. The province of Damascus was also realigned to include the al-Biqa valley of Mount Lebanon within its boundaries. Emir Bashir II's rule of Mt Lebanon had ended with İbrahim Pasha's withdrawal from Greater Syria. The Ottomans deposed his successor Bashir III, ending the reign of the Shihab family. The power vacuum thus

created perpetuated tensions between the Druze, Muslim and Maronite communities. These tensions were often further stimulated by Ottoman governors, who, short of soldiers, set factional tribesmen against one another. The Ottoman army could not exert control over the warrior clans and bedouins of Hawran, Nablus and the Negev desert. Much of Palestine remained that way for the next decade.

Jerusalem (including Nablus and Gaza) and Mount Lebanon were accorded special status. Jerusalem was governed as a special district under a *mutasarrıf*. Mt Lebanon was divided into Druze and Maronite districts in 1843 after massacres and rebellions alarmed the international community and forced the Ottomans to act. Further negotiations around the special nature of these territories led to another set of regulations in 1845, on the principle that the religious communities could regulate themselves and collect taxes locally under two *kaymakams*. This was agreed to by all sides in 1846, but the basic tensions remained. Events on the European frontiers of the empire distracted both Ottoman governors and foreign representatives from Mt Lebanon until after the Crimean War.

European diplomatic harmony, briefly restored to allow for the settlement of the Mehmed Ali crisis of 1841, soon settled into the more normal Franco-British disharmony of the Eastern Question. Lebanon, Palestine and Jerusalem were territories that became special zones of interference by the European powers concerned with the brutality inflicted on non-Muslim communities. The French were known to act as provocateurs among the Maronite Christian communities, and the Ottomans were just as often accused of “letting loose” the Druze on the Christian communities. The *bashibozuks* irregulars, often the substitute for *nizamiye* troops, were just as capable of atrocities as the Maronite and Druze chieftains.

The Arab provinces continued to be ruled by centrally appointed governors, but after 1844 the *serasker* (*müşir*) of the fifth army in Damascus assumed authority over the governors. *Müşir* Namık Pasha served in that capacity from 1844 to 1849. There was a great deal of confusion about military and civilian authority, especially as Istanbul was given to merging and splitting the two centers of power at will.

Military administration in the Arab Provinces

As a result, the army was the instrument of the Tanzimat in the Arab provinces. To locals, it must not have appeared much different from the occupation by Egypt. The quality of the administration depended entirely on the quality of the army. Before 1843, insufficient numbers of regular troops (some 15,000–20,000 men) forced the officers to use the *redifs* and local irregulars. Many of the irregulars were deserters from Mehmed Ali's army, largely Albanians, and the ubiquitous *bashibozuks*. Namık Pasha apparently succeeded in dissolving the Albanian bands, telling local chieftains: “Formerly, we could not compel you to obey us. But now we are strong, and if you are insubordinate, I will ... throw you into the sea.”⁵ After 1845, he moved his headquarters back to Damascus, distributing about half the army across Syria and Palestine and leaving half in Damascus. The army was still only some 20,000 troops

who were ill-paid and ill-supplied. Acute financial shortages prevented further pacification of the territories.

In 1850, the Ottomans extended conscription to the Arab territories to remedy the insufficiency of men, but that prompted a rebellion in Aleppo. An earlier attempt had been made at a census in the years following the 1843 army regulations, but with little success. In 1848, a census survey was again attempted under Governor Mustafa Zarif Pasha, but thousands fled to the mountains. In 1850, rioters in Aleppo shouted, "We shall not give soldiers; we shall not pay the poll tax," as they had at İbrahim's recruiters. One of the major factors in the 1850 Aleppine revolt concerned the Ottoman attempt to collect tax-farming arrears and to wrench tax-collecting responsibility from Aleppine notable Abdullah, the civilian governor and *mütesellim*. The revolt itself was likely instigated by the wealthy notables, but the insurrection grew out of hand and resulted in attacks on Christian quarters. The city was occupied by rebels who demanded the abolition of conscription, the restoration of Abdullah as *mütesellim*, and conversion of the *ferde* (the Egyptian poll tax) to a property tax. Other demands referred to non-Muslim privileges: no church bells should be rung, no crosses in processions and Muslim servants were not to be employed in Christian households.⁶

When reinforcements arrived, the city was restored to order at the cost of 3,000–5,000 lives. Zarif Pasha was immediately dismissed. His successor arrived with more troops and imposed the Tanzimat reforms more vigorously than Zarif Pasha, who briefly resurfaced as the heavy-handed pacifier of Vidin in 1850–1851. Conscription was not fully imposed on Aleppo until 1861; in Damascus conscription was operational after 1860, although urban inhabitants found ways to escape, such as flight or self-mutilation. Here, as elsewhere, it soon became apparent that there were fairly easy ways of being declared exempt from service, the simplest by bribing the officials in charge of the balloting system or by finding substitutes. Apart from the Jabal Hawran Druzes who resisted conscription until 1896, after 1853 conscription was no longer a contentious issue for local populations but remained deeply unpopular.

Similarly, the efforts to impose direct taxation as described above foundered in the Arab provinces. Initially the Ottomans considered abolishing the *ferde*, the unpopular individual urban tax first imposed by the Egyptians, but it was reinstated at one-third of the Egyptian rate. As we have seen in Aleppo, it too was often the cause of rebellions. After 1852 it was converted to a generalized property tax (*vergi*), more in line with the principles of the Tanzimat.

The local councils, first established by İbrahim and part of the Tanzimat reforms as well, had many executive and judicial functions and exerted considerable power as an advisory body. Unlike those of İbrahim, the new Ottoman *medis* was less representative of the non-Muslim populations. Local Muslim notables and the ulema consolidated Syrian resources in the hands of the wealthy landowners. After 1852 the councils were returned to the authority of the governors, and their effectiveness was determined by the level of cooperation that could be achieved among the various constituencies. Muslim violence against Christian communities

in Aleppo, Nablus and finally Beirut and Damascus in 1860, was not only symptomatic of the state's inability to maintain order and stability, or of the new international trading regime imposed by the 1838 Anglo-Ottoman convention. It was equally emblematic of the turmoil within the old urban order and their militias, and the impact of the Tanzimat reforms on the equilibrium of both urban and rural populations.

Impact of the Tanzimat on the Northern Arc

In Vidin and other towns along the Danube, problems like those of the Arab provinces and later Bosnia emerged shortly after the promulgation of the Tanzimat. The social transformation in north-western Bulgaria, for example, was influenced by its strategic position as the Ottoman European frontier and by the convulsions occurring after the revolutions of 1848. Tanzimat reformers were dealing with the presence of a nascent nation-state in Serbia, and stirrings of constitutionalism and unification in the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. In addition, the 1827 Treaty of London had given the foreign powers *carte blanche* to intervene on behalf of their religious communities, which they did with regularity, both in the Arab provinces and the northern borders. However, external pressures influenced the confrontation of old and new Ottoman regimes in distinct ways in this European/Ottoman contact zone. Rebellions, first in Niş in 1841, and then in Vidin in 1850, focused on the question of property and taxation as might be expected. Attempts at land reform engendered conflicts between peasants and large landowners over rights to land. As elsewhere, the loosening of the bonds of the Ottoman land regime had the net effect of entrenching the power of the local landlords, largely Muslim families. Much of the old system remained in place. The Niş revolt in 1841 was linked to the fundamental conundrum of the old and the new systems: Christians were to be treated as equals, but Muslims benefited most from the land reforms. A petition from 1,000 Christians to the Prince of Serbia in 1841 noted: "People are not revolting against the legitimate government of the Sultan; rather they want that the benevolent terms of the Hattı Sherif of Gülhane be faithfully and exactly carried out."⁷ The Istanbul government was slow to respond, but after the rebellion had been pacified, sent commissioners to resettle the claims of returning villagers. Little actually changed to benefit the agricultural sector.

In Vidin, the situation was more complicated. Already divided between the Muslim garrison and the rest of the town, it had become predominantly Muslim as a result of the emigration of Muslims from surrendered lands. A later Ottoman census, which did not include the soldiers of the garrison, estimated some 23,000 inhabitants in Vidin, making it one of the largest cities along the Ottoman Danube. The fortress had been reconstructed according to the Vauban system during the Austrian occupation in the early 1700s, and it continued to be well fortified after it was returned to the Ottomans. Vidin was strategically important to

the Ottomans and was one of the flashpoints preceding the Crimean War, as with all the previous Russo-Ottoman wars we have seen.

In 1845, the government attempted to establish local councils and consultative bodies in the town, but with little success. The petitions of those who rebelled in 1850 stressed the abuses of local tax officials, tax farmers and village landlords. As in Niş, initial expectations of the Tanzimat decree were met with disappointment. Anticipating better treatment by the legal system and an amelioration of the tax burden, the peasants found that abuses continued and that reforms meant the consolidation of large Muslim landowners' holdings. The other source of peasant anger was the continuation of forced labor, contrary to the promise of the Gülhane Edict.

The Treaty of Adrianople (1829) between the Russians and the Ottomans had secured virtual autonomy for Wallachia and Moldavia. The Organic Regulations of 1829 set out the principles of self-government for the two territories. However, in effect the Principalities became subject to a dual Russo-Ottoman protectorate with the Russian army in occupation until 1834. Ottoman influence had been reduced to the collection of a fixed tribute and a say in the choice, later election, of the princes. Equally important, a quarantine zone was established along the Danube and the Ottoman monopoly on grain, animals and timber was eliminated.

The move towards self-government fundamentally changed very little for the peasants. *Boyars* were made the owners of the land, and still demanded labor services of the peasants on their farms. Serfdom had disappeared from Wallachia and Moldavia in the eighteenth century, but the peasants who remained had little freedom of movement. Still, with the Ottomans prohibited from exacting the agricultural products they had long come to expect from Wallachia and Moldavia, Romanian peasants did benefit from the demand for their agricultural products upstream from Vidin, and their increasing incorporation into the markets and cultural life of Europe.

In 1834, the Ottomans and the Russians signed the Convention of St Petersburg. The Ottomans recognized the new statutes, set the tribute at three million *kuruş*, and Russian troops departed. The two powers appointed new princes who ruled for the next seven years. Though they were years of prosperity and awakening, it was also a time of much struggle among the landed *boyars* of the assemblies, princes and Russian consuls who intervened at will in local affairs. Wallachians and Moldavians technically had the right of appeal to either Russian or Ottoman authorities. By 1840, the Russians were attempting to turn that right into a stipulation that the statutes could not be changed without the approval of the two empires, which especially threatened the greater autonomy of Wallachia. By 1842, Alexander Ghica, the appointed prince of Wallachia, had been deposed. George Bibescu was elected by the assembly, but his rule suffered the same interventionism of Russian diplomats and advisers. Moldavia, long drawn more peacefully into the Russian orbit, still chafed at the restrictive regime of the statutes.

Opposition grew as a larger number of *boyar* children experienced European life, especially in Paris. When the winds of revolution swept Europe in 1848, two territories were deeply affected: Hungary and Wallachia. The Hungarian problem in the Habsburg Empire was a long-standing one. Chancellor Clemens von Metternich was at the helm of Austria, a deeply conservative monarchist and adherent to the historic understanding of the Habsburg Empire as a federation of culturally distinct provinces. Austro-Hungarian peasants, like their counterparts in the Balkans, had much to complain of regarding their status and lack of voice. In 1848, the call to national liberation and constitutionalism swept from Sicily to Paris, where the monarchy of King Louis Philippe collapsed. The flames spread to Vienna and Budapest in March 1848, where Metternich was dismissed and a new government was appointed. The new constitution called for a single centralized regime, single citizenship, and for 18-year-old Habsburg Franz Joseph to be crowned as Emperor of Austria, but not as King of Hungary. Further reforms intended the division of the Kingdom of Hungary into new territories, which further stiffened the resolve of the Hungarian revolutionary government. Particularly sensitive for the Hungarians was the removal of Transylvania and its creation as a grand principality. While most territories of the Habsburg Empire had been subdued by the army in mid-1849, Hungary's revolutionary government, led by Lajos Kossuth and backed by its army, was in control of Budapest. Polish revolutionary General Bem, who had defeated the Habsburg forces, held Transylvania.

Meanwhile, revolutionary rebellion spread to Romania. Moldavia remained quiet except for some petitions by the *boyars*, but Wallachia became the centre of an international incident. In Bucharest, leaders of the rebellion—many of them *boyar* sons educated at the Collège de France in Paris—organised a rudimentary republican government, a united Romania, which lasted all of three months.

A peasant uprising never materialized, although many left their homes to march with their leaders to Bucharest. The revolt was less about peasant rights and liberation than about throwing off Russian control and liberating the administration. The revolutionaries turned to Istanbul, hoping to prevent a break with one protector while expecting an invasion from the other. Ottoman commissioners were sent to Giurgevo to investigate. The first of them, Süleyman Pasha, was induced to toast the new, illegal government, which prompted Russian protests in Istanbul. A new commissioner, Fuad Efendi, later Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha, was sent at the beginning of September as part of a joint occupation to accompany Russian General Duhanell to put an end to the revolt. With little difficulty, the Ottoman and Russian troops entered Bucharest in late September, and after a brief encounter with a handful of armed rebels, the revolution was over.

In January 1849, the Russians demanded a joint protocol with the Ottomans concerning the Principalities. The military occupation was to extend for seven years, and the two courts were to appoint the *hospodars*, a significant infringement on the autonomy previously guaranteed. More significantly for the rest of Europe, the Russians demanded Ottoman acquiescence to their invasion of Transylvania to

help Franz Joseph eliminate the rebellion there. The negotiations in Istanbul, led by Ambassador Canning, have been described as a rehearsal for the Crimean War. Throughout the negotiations, Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid intimated that a show of force by the British fleet would be appreciated. The request was consistently rebuffed by Palmerston. On 24 April 1849, the Russo-Ottoman Act of Balta Limanı was signed, allowing Russia to send an army of 150,000 troops to the aid of Austria. The princes of Moldavia were now to be appointed by Russia (effectively) and the Ottomans, rather than elected. Small advisory councils replaced the grander assemblies. The Russian occupation army would remain in the Principalities until 1851. Even more threatening to the tranquility of European relations was the flood of Hungarian and Polish refugees who entered Ottoman territories, with their leaders Kossuth and Bem among them.⁸ When Russia and Austria demanded the return of their subjects, Sultan Abdülmecid refused to extradite them. Fearful of war, Great Britain reacted swiftly in this instance and a joint French–British squadron headed for the Dardanelles. Meanwhile, Abdülmecid dispatched Fuad Efendi on a secret mission to Tsar Nicholas I. By November, Nicholas rescinded his extradition demands and the crisis had been



FIGURE 6.5 Ottoman Field Marshal Omar Pasha, Portrait Sitting in Doorway, Crimean War, Roger Fenton, 1855 © Glasshouse Images / Alamy Stock Photo M1T3JG

averted. Clearly the Eastern Question, exacerbated by revolutionary fervor, and the outcry of nationals and evangelicals alike, was not about to go away.

The military commander of the Ottoman troops with Fuad in Wallachia was Ömer Pasha (d. 1871), one of the most distinguished officers of the Tanzimat period. Born Michael Lattas of Croatia, Ömer Pasha deserted the Austrian army for Bosnia sometime in the mid-1820s. He joined the Ottoman army under Mahmud II after the elimination of the Janissaries in 1826, serving as an infantry captain and instructor in the new military school in Istanbul. An audience with Mahmud II changed the course of his career, when the sultan appointed him as tutor to his son Abdülmecid. After Abdülmecid's accession to the throne, Ömer Pasha was promoted to the rank of *mirliva*. Until that point he had not seen much actual service in the field, but that quickly changed. First, he served with the European naval officers during the pacification of Beirut. Next, in 1842–1843, he was in Damascus commanding 15,000–20,000 troops aimed at reducing the power of the Druze chieftains in Lebanon (Figure 6.5).

In 1846–1847, Ömer Pasha was charged with the pacification of Kurdistan, especially the rebellion of Bedir Khan. At the head of 12,000 troops he moved on Nizib, drew Bedir Khan and his forces into battle, and defeated them. For that triumph, he was promoted to the rank of field marshal (*müşir*) by the sultan. In 1848, as part of the occupation force in Wallachia, Ömer Pasha, *Müşir* of the Rumeli third army, was called upon to restore order in Vidin and then in Bosnia and Montenegro.

In the Vidin revolt of 1850, the Ottoman authorities were made aware of possible Serbian agitation, and of the revolutionary fervor which spilled over into Ottoman territories in the shape of Polish and Hungarian refugees. Discontent with the Tanzimat reforms made fertile ground for ideologues of liberation. On his way to Bosnia, Ömer Pasha was ordered to negotiate with the rebel camp on the Serbian border. This he appears to have done with success, persuading the Bulgarians who had fled to return home with amnesty. Ali Rıza Pasha was dispatched to restore order to Vidin, but local notables had already called in the *bashibozuks* in much the same manner as has been described for Aleppo. After the suppression of the *bashibozuks* by the regular army, a delegation of Vidin residents travelled to Istanbul to present their grievances to the sultan, and to request that Ali Rıza be made governor. They met with the Supreme Council in Istanbul in August. The Council installed Ali Rıza, promised the delegation that a redistribution of property, in accordance with the Tanzimat regulations, would be undertaken in Vidin, but equivocated about the ways in which it might be carried out. When the delegation returned, the word spread that the Ottoman land regime had been abolished. The reforms, however, proved very difficult to impose, and the problem festered for another decade.

In 1834, Bosnia was reorganized into six *sancaks* and smaller districts as elsewhere. In 1835, the Ottomans abolished the hereditary *kapudanlıks* of the Bosnian Muslim nobility, and replaced them with the office of *müsellim*. Many of the former members of the Bosnia militias, *sipahis* and *kapudans* were thus appointed,

so little actually changed. Discontent continued in the province sporadically throughout the 1830s and 1840s. After 1848, revolutionary fervor also complicated the picture in Bosnia and especially Herzegovina. The chief difference between Bosnia and Vidin was that the rebellion was instigated and sustained by Bosnian Muslim chieftains and their militias. The major issue for local populations continued to be tax revenues and the division of land. The largely Christian peasantry protested at the continued dominance and oppression of the Muslim landlords.

In 1850, Field Marshal Ömer Pasha was appointed as governor in Bosnia to replace Tahir Pasha. Word of his clemency in Bulgaria preceded him, and the Christian peasants laid down their arms. It was the Muslim landowners who continued to resist. Ömer Pasha had some 8,000 troops and several Hungarian and Polish officers who had joined the Ottoman army. He succeeded where others had failed, breaking down the traditional politics of the Bosnian Muslim notables by 1851. His appeals to the Christians for support were entirely successful. The few Christians taken in arms were liberated, and the mass of them ardently supported him. One by one the castles of their feudal tyrants fell before Ömer and his artillery. He announced the end of all feudal privileges. He built the first road in Bosnia between Travnik and Sarajevo. He repressed brigandage with a stern hand. He closed the frontier to Croatia and stopped smuggling. He proclaimed the forests to be crown property and cancelled the very profitable concessions for timber enjoyed by an Austrian sawmill company. He even attempted to construct a line of steamers for the rivers of Bosnia. Ömer's methods were as vigorous as they were rough. Ultimately it was his success that was most threatening to other powers, for Austria demanded and ultimately obtained his recall.⁹

Ömer's stern rule in 1850–1852 provoked protests, especially in Austria. He was defended by Great Britain and emboldened by his own government to take on the Bishopric of Montenegro, which the sultan claimed as part of his sovereignty. In 1852, massive Ottoman forces entered Montenegro and declared war on the new ruler, who had neglected to inform the Ottomans of his intention to secularize the state. The invasion provoked yet another international incident in which both Austria and Russia gave the sultan ultimatums to force Ömer to withdraw. By March 1853, Ömer Pasha was dismissed. Montenegro had become a Principality, but the tenuous threads of connection to the Ottomans were permanently broken.

Meanwhile, following the 1850 revolt, Bosnia and Herzegovina were subdivided into seven *sancaks* under *kaymakams* who each held military and civil powers. Under Topal Osman Pasha (1861–1869), the province made considerable strides in education and infrastructure. A local council was created in 1866. Sarajevo became the official residence of the governor. As we have seen in the Arab provinces, however, it proved impossible to institute significant reforms in the agricultural sector. Even so, attempts were made to respond to the peasant demands. In 1859, they were guaranteed certain rights to use of the land, but large estates continued to be run by their Muslim landowners as tax-farms. This tension

led to further discontent among the peasantry, as well as further rebellions in the 1870s that convulsed large parts of the Balkans and provoked increasing European intervention.

Menshikov Mission

The introduction of Tanzimat reforms, combined with revolutionary fervor among ethnic communities made for a volatile stew on the Ottoman Danubian frontier, one of the significant contributors to the outbreak of war in the Crimea. Diplomatic blundering—especially of Russian envoy Menshikov who was sent with ultimatums to Istanbul, and of British Ambassador Stratford Canning—were responsible for the curious conflict that unfolded after 1853. To the extent that the British and (less so) the French diplomatic communities misread the Ottoman environment of 1853–1854—which had turned hostile and bellicose—they should be held accountable. For they shortly found themselves in an alliance with the Ottomans and mobilizing large armies for the Crimean battlefield.

The focus of the diplomatic wrangling in Istanbul was Jerusalem, where a dispute was under way over the primacy of Catholic or Orthodox communities in the Holy Places. The Russian and French diplomats, respectively, argued their supposed rights to protection of the Ottoman Christian communities. They relied on referencing the language of the treaties of Küçük Kaynarca (1774) for the Orthodox and the Treaty of Belgrade (1739) for the Catholics. The religious question obscured what most interpreted as the thrust by Napoleon III (installed as emperor on 2 December 1852) to destabilize the European concert and reassert some influence over the Levant. By the end of December 1852, the sultan issued an imperial order giving the Catholics control of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem in preference to the Orthodox Greeks. This was the reversal of a previous order which had promised the Orthodox (and Russia) the same privileges (November 1851). Foreign Minister Fuad Pasha may have been impressed by French threats about invading Syria and argued a French alliance would follow.

This of course was a direct insult to the Russians, who had argued their right to protect the Orthodox Greek community since 1774. The Orthodox community was in fact substantially larger than the small Catholic community of the empire, and the 1851 decision was much more in keeping with Russo-Ottoman diplomacy of previous eras. Tsar Nicholas anticipated British compliance with his view that the Ottomans were on the verge of collapse and assumed that Russia and Britain had a gentlemen's understanding about the Eastern Question. That assumption may, in fact, have accounted for initial British reticence over the crisis as it escalated. Tsar Nicholas I, having survived a number of years of passivity and even cooperation with Sultan Abdülmecid, miscalculated about the possible impact of the Menshikov mission on Istanbul politics.

On 28 February 1853, Prince Menshikov, accompanied by a large number of naval and military officers, presented the sultan with several notes from the Tsar. The notes concerned the question of the Orthodox subjects in Ottoman

territories, especially in the Holy Lands. The most demanding was that an international agreement be drawn up to give Russia what amounted to sovereignty over all the Orthodox subjects of the sultan. Menshikov bullied his way around the Ottoman bureaucracy. He engineered the resignation of Foreign Minister Fuad Pasha, assumed to be pro-French, by simply refusing to meet with him. The sultan replaced Fuad Pasha with pro-Austrian Sadık Rıfat Pasha.

Grand Vizier (Mehmed Emin) Ali Pasha responded to the Russian demand on two levels: he told Foreign Minister Rıfat to continue negotiating, while Ali Pasha himself approached the British and French about naval aid. He also began secret communications with the military about Ottoman preparedness. The French responded immediately, and by April the French fleet was anchored near Athens. The British hesitated, misinterpreting the seriousness of the situation. Negotiations between Menshikov and Rıfat continued, but the Ottomans dug in. On 13 May, Ali Pasha's government was dismissed by the sultan, probably at the instigation of Menshikov's staff and in collusion with Mustafa Reşid, Ali Pasha's replacement. Reşid represented the peace party and was presumed to be more amenable to Russian demands, while Ali Pasha was secretly preparing for war. Ali's views were shared in the streets of Istanbul. Muslims of the empire had become more vociferous about the restoration of Ottoman prestige after decades of humiliating treatment by Christian powers. This sentiment, promoted by Ali Pasha and others on the council, would ultimately affect the decisions made there.

In a final gesture to save a diplomatic break with Russia, Reşid called a general assembly of 48 members of government—including both the ancient Hüseyin Pasha and the previously-dismissed Fuad Pasha—to deliberate on the possibility of war. The greatest impediment was the lack of the guarantees of great power support. A diluted response to the Menshikov ultimatum was crafted, which offered a sultanic order rather than a treaty, reasserting the existing privileges of the Orthodox Church and a return to the status quo over the Holy Places. This was flatly rejected on 18 May, and the Russian mission left with the entire Istanbul embassy by 21 May. Tsar Nicholas subsequently threatened to occupy the Principalities, and if that did not force a capitulation to the ultimatum, to blockade Istanbul. Menshikov blamed Stratford Canning for the failure of the mission.

Meanwhile, the Ottoman bank was established specifically to organize state finances in the case of war. A £450,000 loan was negotiated in London. By the time the Russians rejected the sultan's response on 18 May, the entire empire had been put on naval and military alert, including the reserves. Orders were issued by the sultan that all measures should be taken to protect the Christians of the empire from Muslim abuse during the crisis. On 2 July 1853 50,000 Russian troops, under Prince M.D. Gorchakov, crossed the frontier into the Principalities, and had occupied Bucharest by the middle of July. The Ottomans stalled for time. Some 10,000 Egyptian troops, three battleships and six other vessels joined the Ottoman fleet by August.

Ambassador Canning, who had returned from a short absence in London just as Menshikov arrived, had begun to distance himself from the reformers and from the Ottoman reform agenda altogether. In 1852, a financial scandal involving the

sultan's closest advisers including Reşid had discouraged the ambassador. His attitude was hardly unique, as it was an era when British attitudes hardened against the Ottomans in general. Prime Minister Aberdeen was known for his hatred of Muslims and Ottomans, confiding to his Lord Admiral: "I should as soon think of preferring the Koran to the Bible, as of comparing the Christianity and civilization of Russia to the fanaticism and immorality of the Turks."¹⁰ British and French discord, and inflexible British diplomatic attitudes, meant the two powers were initially powerless to influence the drift to war. Still, British policy aimed at maintaining the Ottoman status quo, while the Russians were already envisioning its demise and partition among the great powers.

By mid-June, both British and French fleets had anchored just outside the Dardanelles. The Russian occupation plan depended on continued good relations with Austria, which failed to materialize after mid-1853. In July, with the Russian occupation in the Principalities, the Austrians proposed a four-power diplomatic conference in Vienna to solve the crisis. The discussions would produce the Vienna Note, which became the central document of controversy in the next stage of the crisis.

Istanbul's solution to the crisis was to call another general assembly to discuss the Russian occupation. The ultimatum of 23 July, as it is called, reiterated Ottoman sovereignty in relation to its own subjects, and promised to grant the same rights to the Orthodox Greeks that other *millets* already had, once again rejecting Tsar Nicholas's demands. The ultimatum sounds remarkably like that of Mahmud II on another occasion (1828) and was considered by the diplomatic community to be the last concession the Ottomans would make. Should the Russians accept the condition, the Note would go with a special Ottoman envoy to St Petersburg, and the Russian troops could then be withdrawn from the Principalities.

Meanwhile, negotiators in Vienna had crafted a similar Note by the end of July, but without consulting Istanbul. Their version had significant variations, which favored the Russian view of its right to intervene, drawn from the language of the Küçük Kaynarca Treaty, and insisted that any changes to such language be approved by both France and Russia. While the 23 July 1853 Ottoman Ultimatum preserved the fiction of Ottoman independence from foreign intervention, the Vienna Note did not. The Vienna conference gave preference to the great power version. The Austrian representative is said to have repressed the Ottoman version on orders from Franz Joseph, hardly the behavior to gain the confidence of the Istanbul government.

The historical moment is punctuated with a blizzard of textual variations and attempts to intercede between Russia and the Ottomans. The diplomatic community had miscalculated (or simply dismissed) the strength of Ottoman resistance to the question of Russian intervention in what Ottoman negotiators insisted was a matter of sovereignty.

There was very general irritation with the Ottomans who, according to *The Times*, were in themselves of no more account 'than the red Indians of Yucatan,'

but the very circumstance that they were perceived as the cause of the crisis reflects the fears routinely evoked by any new installment of the Eastern Question.¹¹

On 18 August, the Ottomans rejected the Vienna Note and offered another one of their own, which was also rejected by Nicholas. A diplomatic impasse had been reached. Paramount concerns among Ottoman bureaucrats were fears of Russian intentions concerning Serbia and Greece, as well as the tense atmosphere in the northern border areas. Much discussion centered in council on the Caucasus frontier as a place where the Ottomans could make a stand against Russia.

By early September, the war party, stimulated by Ali Pasha and his entourage, had begun to dominate street politics in Istanbul. Foreign Minister Reşid pressed for a four-power guarantee of the Ottoman Empire, which was resisted by both France and Britain. News spread that Nicholas and Franz Joseph intended a meeting at Olmütz to discuss differences. This was interpreted as a war council. Petitions calling for holy war were submitted to the sultan, from prominent members of the ulema, in the midst of disturbances in Istanbul in the second week of September. Reşid pressed France and Britain to move their ships into the Bosphorus strait. Foreign observers gauged that an influx of refugees from the Balkans, largely Christian, and war-enthusiastic volunteers from all over the empire might have numbered a quarter of a million.

Sultan Abdülmecid convened a large general council on 26 September. They were as yet without news of the Olmütz meeting on 22 September, when Nicholas I made further concessions which might have made the Vienna Note more palatable to the Istanbul government. An extensive discussion ensued, but neither side had proper information to make a considered decision about the Ottomans' ability to defeat the Russians. Mustafa Reşid was unable to persuade the council to wait for guarantees from Britain and France. They concluded that accepting the current Russian version of the Vienna Note was tantamount to drinking a poison chalice.

The Ottomans Declare War

On 29 September, Abdülmecid accepted a recommendation from the council to declare war, and 40,000 reservists were ordered mobilized. The war manifesto avoided the call to holy war and spoke instead of the protection of the sultan's subjects:

This declaration of war, which concerns Russia, is required by the need to work for the defence and interest of the Exalted State. Even more care and attention than previously will be taken to defend and protect the Christian subjects of the Exalted State. It will be of the utmost importance and a primary responsibility of government to evade anything which would invite the hostility of other states by reason of bad treatment of them.¹²

As the hostilities escalated, the official gazette recorded speeches by leaders of the various Christian *millets* attesting their loyalty and commitment to the conflict. Ömer Pasha, stationed at Şumnu, gave Russia two weeks to withdraw from the Principalities on 6 October. Instead, Nicholas I and his military advisers made plans to take the war to the Caucasus, aiming at Kars. On 22 October, Istanbul instructed Ömer Pasha to begin military operations against Russia in the Principalities immediately.

For the rest of 1853, further attempts were made to bring the sides to the negotiating table while the British and French fleets hovered for further orders. British public opinion grew “fanatic” as anti-Russian sentiments had escalated, stimulated by old Ottoman hands such as pamphleteer/statesman David Urquhart. Describing Anglo-Russian relations, and excoriating British administrators, he wrote:

You [Britain] discover that she [Russia] is illogical—in rhetoric which has convulsed an Empire; you denounce her to be insane—in marching with your aid on the Bosphorus; you send your men-of-war to the Dardanelles—she seizes the Sound; she grasps the Danube—you send—no, you do not send, a note; she usurps the vastest plain of Europe, and you do send an apology. When she has overrun a province, you convoke a conclave ... And



MAP 6.1 The Crimean War 1853-1856 (The Map Project courtesy of Justin McCarthy (2003) Middle East Studies Association)

all this is peace; two campaigns and a dozen fortresses are offered up for the sake of the tranquility of Europe ...¹³

On 22 October, as Ömer Pasha and his army began to cross the Danube, Stratford Canning summoned the British fleet from the Dardanelles to Istanbul. Hostilities had already begun in the Caucasus. For more than a month, Foreign Minister Mustafa Reşid urged the French and British fleets to move into the Black Sea, while diplomatic efforts in Vienna were revived with little result. Mustafa Reşid argued for an enlargement of the London Treaty of 1841, which would guarantee the freedom of the straits as before but establish buffer zones between Russia and the empire (map 6.1).

The Ottoman army won the first contests of the war, at Vidin and Oltenitsa on the Danube, raising hopes in Istanbul. In late October, the Ottoman navy made an attempt to maintain a token force in the Black Sea, as news of similar patrols by the Russian navy reached Istanbul. The British issued an ultimatum to Russia not to venture out of Sevastopol to attack the Ottoman navy, yet another provocation to war. By mid-November, the remainder of the British and French fleets in the Dardanelles had moved to the Bosphorus, and the entire Ottoman navy was anchored at Sinop. On 30 November, six Russian vessels and two frigates (716 guns) overwhelmed and defeated the Ottoman force of seven frigates and four light ships (472 guns) in two hours. Some 4,000 are said to have perished in the bombardment and fires that followed. As the news of that disaster sank in, word arrived in Istanbul of a Russian victory on the road to Kars. The European allies had reached the point of no return: either they would support the Ottomans, or they would watch an uncertain dissolution of the empire following certain Russian victory.¹⁴

Taking advantage of a moment of uncertainty in Istanbul, Stratford Canning is said to have pressed Reşid to commit to international negotiations for peace in order to engage the joint Franco-British expedition into the Black Sea. Hints of such a capitulation set off riots in Istanbul. A squadron of French and English ships made a show of force in Istanbul, the sultan and his advisers quelled the resistance, and a grand council agreed to continue negotiations.

On 12 March the Ottomans, French and British signed an alliance. On 27 and 28 March, Britain and France declared war on Russia. Palmerston argued at that time that British aims ought to include

[T]he restoration of Poland as of 1772; the union of Finland with the kingdoms of Sweden and Norway instead of with Russia; Austria's retention of the Danubian Principalities, with the surrender of Lombardy and Venice; Turkey's enlargement through the acquisition of the Crimea and Georgia, and the enlargement of Austria and Prussia in a Germany free from the domination of the tsar.¹⁵

The Crimean adventure had begun.

Of all the wars of the pre-modern Middle East, the Crimean War of 1853–1856 has probably attracted the most attention. This was not only true at the time, but in every generation of historians since, and most recently in the 150th anniversary of the conflict. As the first major conflict documented by daily telegraph, photograph and newspaper reports, it brought a new age of immediacy to global conflicts and has assumed the role of the first major global war among military historians. But it was equally a colonial enterprise, a classic example of too many inept generals, leftovers from the Napoleonic wars, campaigns run by foreign cabinets and a colossal waste of life.

The stories of the Franco-British alliance—including the failure of logistics and supply systems and the incompetence in military command on the Russian, French and British sides in particular—have been repeatedly told. Indeed, tales of the troops' suffering and much revisionist history concerning the myths of the battles in the Crimea, have exposed even more starkly the folly of the enterprise. In the Crimean Peninsula, the Ottoman troops were heartily despised and poorly treated by their allies over the first disastrous winter at Sevastopol. The rivalry of British and Ottoman imperial views was starkly evident on all sides.

Smaller arenas such as the Ottoman–Russian confrontations in Vidin and Silistre in 1853–1854 and then in the Caucasus, ending with the siege of Kars in 1855, remain important to this narrative. Kars and Erzurum were immensely important to the Russian–Ottoman confrontations from 1800 to the collapse of both empires in 1918. The siege of Kars is particularly illustrative of the failure of the regular Ottoman army in that region. Of particular note were the irreconcilable cultural barriers of British and Ottoman military styles, no more evident as when British commanders assumed charge of the Kars campaign. There are myriads of British first-hand accounts of this war, most of which exude contempt for the Ottoman high command. Small wonder, then, that Ottoman military reformers looked elsewhere for inspiration after the Crimean War, and found ready advisers among the Germans, especially after 1870.

The Russo-Ottoman war of 1853–1854 began with small confrontations in the Balkans. These were hailed as great victories in Istanbul, but soon escalated into the contest for the control of the Danubian fortresses that had characterised all previous campaigns in Bulgaria. Ömer Pasha began the war with 18,000–20,000 regulars under his command at Şumnu. His primary strategy was to defend the lower passes of the Danube River Basin. Additionally, he would cross the Danube to harass the Russian troops that had moved into Wallachia in July 1853, and to prevent their communications with Serbia. It was not until January 1854 that Russian reinforcements could be brought to bear on the northwestern frontier of Bulgaria. Dispatches about Ottoman victories filled the London newspapers. British officers with Ömer Pasha on the front commended both infantry and artillery for their steadfastness and accuracy.¹⁶ By February 1854, however, the Russians attacked the Ottomans entrenched at Giurgevo and pushed them back to the south of the Danube. In spite of considerable Ottoman resistance, the Russians proved successful in occupying Tulcea, Maşin, İsakçı and Babadağı on the lower Danube, and by early April they stood in much the same position as they had in 1828–1829.

By the end of March, France and Britain had declared war on the Tsar. Thirty thousand French troops, the bulk of them from Algeria, left for the east in March. Twenty-seven thousand British troops shipped out soon thereafter, both contingents disembarking first at Gallipoli. The whole British force eventually camped at Üsküdar in Istanbul at the Selimiye Barracks that later served as the famous military hospital of Florence Nightingale.

Sporadic Greek revolts erupted, spreading from Epirus to Macedonia. They usually involved small bands of 500 to 1,000 Greek irredentists, encouraged by King Otto I and pro-Russian elements of the population. These small bands engaged in guerrilla tactics throughout 1853 but became a serious threat in confrontations with Ottoman regulars and irregulars (mostly Albanians), from January to May 1854. The French and British found themselves in the peculiar position of supporting the Ottomans against Greek partisans; first by using their ships to transport Ottoman troops to the places of insurrection, and then by threatening economic sanctions, blockading Piraeus with warships and landing troops to reinforce the threats. King Otto of Greece was forced to submit, but the allied occupation would continue until after the Crimean War when the financial affairs of Greece were submitted to an international commission. An estimated 40,000 inhabitants of Piraeus, Athens and environs succumbed to the cholera which accompanied the French troops.¹⁷ Meanwhile, the Russian siege of Silistre dragged on. Russian forces had been withdrawn from Wallachia and concentrated on the lower fortresses of the Danube. Şumnu and Silistre were the main targets for the establishment of bases for future deployment. Both Sultans Mahmud II and Abdülmecid I had paid particular attention to the defenses of Silistre, which included an outer ring of forts, one of which, the Mecidiye, still stands.

As the town was not completely surrounded, the garrison had access to food and supplies, much as in the 1828–1829 siege. By May, the siege was reduced to a daily Russian bombardment in what became a monotonous and lethal routine, as the new explosive shells being used for the first time on these battlefields caused considerable damage. A major assault by the Russians at the end of May was repulsed. A contemporary account noted:

The Turkish army may well talk with pride. Their opponents had an army on the right bank of the Danube, which at one time amounted to 60,000 men. They had sixty guns in position and threw upwards of 50,000 shot and shell, besides an incalculable quantity of small-arm ammunition. They constructed more than three miles of approaches, and sprang six mines: yet during forty days not one inch of ground was gained, and they abandoned the siege, leaving the petty field work, against which their principal efforts had been directed, a shapeless mass from the effects of their mines and batteries but still in the possession of the original defenders.¹⁸

It would appear that the military transformation had finally borne some fruit. Peace might have been achieved with the withdrawal of the Russians from the

Danube region, but the wartime build-up began to exert its own logic. By August 1854, the allied commands required some major demonstration of force to justify the expense and human loss. By that time, the British, French and Ottoman troops numbered some 130,000 at Varna. For over six weeks, they remained in bivouac at the pestilential harbour, as cholera raged among their troops. In a month, 5,000 of the French and 850 of the British soldiers had succumbed. In late July, French Commander St Arnaud decided to send a new unit called the *Spahis d'Orient* to be the advance guard of the French troops. It was made up of 4,000 *bashibozuks* and regular cavalry recruited from among the Ottomans. These included Albanians, Kurds, Türkmén and Arabs. The expedition wandered the marshes of Dobruja for almost a month, with 150 dying daily as time went on. Some 3,000 *bashibozuks* deserted, raided villages, and died of cholera. Such was the French effort to instruct the Ottomans how to deal with the irregular *bashibozuks*.

After the singular ineptitude of the French in the Balkans, and seeking some success in the time that remained of the campaign year, Napoleon III and the British Minister of War, the Duke of Newcastle, decided to attack Sevastopol. By late July 1854, the assembled allied officers were ordered to proceed to the Crimea, much to the dismay of seasoned soldiers who were without detailed maps, charts, or knowledge of the strength of the enemy. Politicians in London were already planning on the disposition of the territories after the fall of Sevastopol: "Palmerston thought the Crimea ought to go back to the Ottomans, probably with Georgia, Circassia, the Sea of Azov and the mouths of the Danube. 'An adverse critic might say catch and kill your bear before you determine what you will do with his skin, but I think our bear is as good as taken.'"¹⁹

Competing imperial visions on the battlefield

In the fall of 1854, European armies confronted one another on the battlefield for the first time in 40 years, in strange, unpredictable terrain. Most historians agree that the entire enterprise suffered the lack of strategic definitions of war aims and exposed the limitations of poorly centralized and badly managed auxiliary systems, such as transport and medical care. The Crimea was terra incognita in 1853–1854; misinformation and botched communications abounded, exposed by the immediacy of reporting. It bears repeating that this phase of the war both closed the Napoleonic Age and opened the imperial surge to the total war of the First World War. It was closely followed by the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the American Civil War 1861–1865, both of which had global consequences. Equally evident is the attitude to ethnic troops, or "warrior nations" as the colonial age intensified in the Mediterranean. British admiration for the *Mamluk* and latterly the Bedouin stretched from 1799 to 1918 as part of colonial rhetoric and an impenetrable hierarchy of race and class. The French had taken the measure of the Cossacks, the Russian irregulars, during Napoleon's disastrous assault on Moscow. The British had their first experience with Ottoman tribal irregulars, the *mamluks* of Egypt, in the campaigns to remove Bonaparte from Cairo. In the Crimean War, where

exceptional numbers of hussar and ethnic heavy and light cavalry units assembled, it was enterprising British East India Officers who saw an opportunity to experiment with the *bashibozuks*. By that time, Britain was already engaged with the world-wide creation of colonial (native) troops, most notably Indian soldiers, 1,250,000 of whom served on the late battlefields of the British Empire.

Ottoman commanders spent the latter half of the nineteenth century trying to impose their own civilizing rhetoric of equality and citizenship on Arab, Kurdish and Turcoman federations of tribesmen from Yemen to Basra after several centuries of autonomy and self-rule, as described in subsequent chapters. Their rivals in the Gulf continued to be the British, well established in Basra by 1914.

British contempt for the Ottoman command was nowhere more apparent than on the battlefields of the Crimea when they were nominal allies. The participation of the Ottomans was minimal, first by deliberate policy of the allies, and then by a poor showing at the Battle of Balaklava. On 25 October, the Ottoman infantry battalions as well as Tunisians were stationed on redoubts in a critical place in front of the allied army where they performed badly. It had been the last opportunity for the Ottomans to distinguish themselves, but they were branded as cowards and left to peripheral assignments. Thereafter, the Ottoman troops largely sat out the siege of Sevastopol, from late November to early 1855, freezing, starving and dying of various afflictions as did their French and British allies over the exceptionally brutal winter of 1854–1855. The Ottoman troops were turned into labor battalions or left to die. The European allies had agreed to feed the Ottoman troops, but could only offer them biscuit, rum, and salt pork, leaving the Muslims only the biscuit to eat.

Turkish bodies lay in grisly rows until famished comrades could gather the strength to bury them under a few inches of dirt. Each night, wild dogs dug up the bodies and ate their fill. The Turkish surgeon in charge, who had been trained in London and spoke very good English, showed [correspondent] Woods the hospital: ‘The deadly fetid air which issued from this charnel-house made me involuntarily shrink back from the door with loathing.’ The building had previously been used for the Russian prisoners, many of whom had died of cholera, the “hospital” was given to the Turks, but despite “ankle-deep” blood and faeces, it had never been cleaned. Hundreds of starving Turks now lay in this filth without bed, blankets, or even clothing.²⁰

A six-gun Ottoman frigate had been turned into a 300-bed hospital ship, with four surgeons and other medical personnel. When it arrived in the Crimea, it stood at anchor for ten days waiting for a berth in any of the harbors of the allies, but returned empty in the end, having been refused a place to load the sick and dying. Of course, Ottoman officials were just as culpable for the lack of supplies as were the allies, but doubtless prejudice against the ‘cowardly’ Turkish soldiers and sailors also contributed to the miseries of the exceptionally harsh winter.

In February 1855, the situation changed. Stratford Canning procured an agreement with the Ottomans for an additional 20,000 troops—what became

known as the Turkish Contingent—to be paid for and commanded by East Indian Company veteran Lieutenant General Robert John Hussey Vivian. In February, an Anglo-Ottoman convention was signed to that effect. It was a signal moment, when a foreign power was allowed to create essentially a colonial unit of Ottoman “Turks” and place them under British command, with the promise to supply and feed them. By mid-1855, Ömer Pasha was pressing the allies to be allowed to take his own troops to the Caucasus, where Russian General Muraviev had begun the approach to Kars. As the allies, especially the French, opposed it vigorously at first, Ömer Pasha decided to press his case in Istanbul where he went in July.

The entire effort to relieve the siege of Kars in mid-1855 suffered from the vexing problem of command and communication. Operating on three separate and obstinate agendas were British Commissioner Colonel (later General) William Fenwick Williams (1800–1883), in command of Kars garrison during the siege; Ömer Pasha stuck in the Crimea with some 20,000 troops, and little prospect of engagement and/or relief; and Ambassador Canning in Istanbul. Canning was fielding angry communiqués from Williams and much criticism from London, while Ömer Pasha lobbied to have his troops sent to the Caucasus. This was, after all, Stratford Canning’s war.

There was little apparent reason for keeping Ömer and his men in the Crimea, except perhaps as reserves, because of the prejudices against the utility of the “cowardly” Turkish soldier. Stratford Canning alludes to intrigues in Istanbul around the disgraced War Minister Ali Pasha, which may or may not have involved Ömer Pasha. However, it is more likely that the focus on Sevastopol, the hopes for the new Turkish Contingent, and matters of transport and manpower played a greater role in the allied commanders’ delay in releasing the troops to be sent to relieve Kars.²¹ Ömer Pasha did not leave the Crimea until late September 1855. By that time, General Muraviev had launched an all-out attack on the fortress at Kars.²²

For half a century, the Russian and Ottoman armies had confronted one another in the Caucasus, home of myriad mountainous peoples who sometimes sided with the Russians, sometimes with the Ottomans. But the sustained resistance of the Muslim murids of the North Caucasus had lasted over several generations of leadership, continuing most famously under the third Imam of Daghestan, Shaykh Shamil (1797–1871). From the 1830s until the Crimean War, Shamil posed a borderland threat to the Russian expansion in the region as well as a convenient arms-length ally for the British, who grew increasingly alarmed at the spread of Russian influence.

Successive Russo-Ottoman wars had given the Russians access to significant Caucasus ports from Anapa near the Azov Sea to as far south as Poti just above Batumi, as well as control of Georgia and much of Daghestan. The unrest and fierce resistance by the Circassians continued to play a role in the fortunes of both Ottomans and Russians in this round of confrontations. Russophobe British journalist Urquhart took up the cause of Shaykh Shamil and the Circassian leaders during a trade mission to the area in 1834, admiring their bravery and warlike

attributes, supporting them in their appeals for British aid in their fight against the Russians, but for naught. British policy preferred not to antagonize Russia.

Driven from Daghestan, Shamil took his cause to Chechnya, where his tribal recruits destroyed a Russian column in 1845. His assaults on the Russians in the summer of 1853 and the following July of 1854 were ultimately unsuccessful, however, for without British and/or Ottoman assistance, his troops achieved little when moving further afield from their mountain homes. Ottoman commanders were unwilling or unable to turn Shamil into an ally against the Russian advance. Shamil surrendered finally to the Russians in 1859.

At the beginning of the Crimean War in the fall of 1853, the Ottomans had reinforced Trabzon, Erzurum and Batum. They manned the garrisons, in theory from the Harput headquarters of the Fourth Army, which existed mostly on paper. In fact, Erzurum, with a population of perhaps 50,000 in the period, remained the pivotal fortress for Transcaucasian defense and supply. Kars gave access to Tiflis, which made it strategically important to the Transcaucasus. Mountain passes were tracks and transportation was limited to horse, camel and donkey. Even more than in the Balkans, the Caucasus frontier remained untamed. The shelling of the Ottoman navy at Sinop on 30 November 1853 left the Russians masters of the Caucasus and Black Sea ports over the winter, until the allies moved ships into the Black Sea in early 1854.²³

The siege of Kars

The summer of 1854 proved no different in terms of the Ottoman ability to regroup and take the war to the Russians. The allies chose to concentrate on the Crimea, rather than the Caucasus, which meant another round of Ottoman–Russian fighting in and around Kars before the arrival of Ömer Pasha's troops. Under newly appointed Field Marshal of the Army of Anatolia Zarif Pasha's command were Generals İsmail Pasha (Hungarian Kmety) and Hurşid Pasha (British–Hungarian Guyon), veterans of the 1848 revolt in Hungary in Ottoman service. In August, a fierce battle ensued,

made up of three separate consecutive actions, in each of which the Turks were defeated. The Turkish nizams, particularly the Syrian battalions, fought with great courage; the fire of the new Turkish rifle battalions was excellent; the new regular cavalry units attacked with boldness and a spirit of sacrifice; and the guns were served competently but with a certain lack of mobility. It was clear to the Russians that the newly organised Turkish army was not yet capable of a war of manoeuvre but might be a serious enemy behind fortifications.²⁴

By late summer 1854, Colonel Fenwick Williams arrived in Erzurum. He was the head of a British Commission, under orders from Raglan and British Foreign Minister Clarendon. Pugnacious, resolute and arrogant, Williams was the first foreign officer to carry his own name with the Ottoman rank of *ferik* (lieutenant-general).

Shortly thereafter, Williams moved to Kars, where he was joined in March of 1855 by three more officers: Colonel Atwell Lake, author of *Narrative of the Defence of Kars*, the best known of the memoirs; Captain Henry Langhorne Thompson; and Captain Humphrey Sandwich, an army surgeon who served as Williams's military adviser and left a journal of his observations. Sandwich eventually headed up a team of some 50 surgeons and pharmacists, both foreign and Ottoman.²⁵

Zarif Pasha had been dismissed in disgrace after the most recent defeat. Williams's first report to *Serasker* Ali Rıza Pasha condemned the entire Ottoman general staff for widespread corruption and venality, including false muster rolls, skimming of accounts, and collusion with local suppliers. As a result, perfectly good soldiers were dying of starvation and a lack of proper clothing. A quick roll call of the actual troops in the fortress revealed that some 10,000 troops registered in the muster rolls were unaccounted for.²⁶

Williams then began a campaign to punish the culprits and demand the re-supply of the frontier with men and equipment, while continuing his condemnation of the entire military organization of the *Serasker*. He was particularly acute about the problem of old school officers raised from the ranks, and the new military school graduates:

Fourteen of these young men, after completing their studies at the Galata Serai, were sent to this army; they found themselves exposed to every description of insult and degradation; not one of them received a paid appointment in the état major, and several have, in consequence, disappeared altogether from this army. [I]n short, the officers at present in command, as well as those in subordinate posts, will always endeavor to keep the young cadets out of employ in order that their own promotion may secure for them those illicit sources of peculation on which they at present fatten, at the expense of the unfed and badly-clothed soldiers.²⁷

Effective command lay in Williams's hand. An acute lack of supplies, and especially horses, forced him not to reorganize a field army, but to fortify Kars as the main defensive barrier to the Russian route to Anatolia. For example, in January 1855 an inspection of the horses within the garrison resulted in 700 of them designated for slaughter, as they were unfit for service. "Cavalry outpost duty thenceforward became a dead letter."²⁸

Neither side was particularly flush with manpower, but in contrast to the previous campaign season, the Russians now had the advantage and sufficient forces to press the operation against Kars and Erzurum.²⁹ *Bashibozuks* poured into the fortress. On 16 June, the Russians made the first exploratory attack on the fieldworks, only to be repelled with heavy losses. They faced the best troops the reformed Ottoman army had to offer, as acknowledged by Williams himself. Russian Commander Muraviev, fully apprised of the supply difficulties of Kars, operated with a strategy that understood that the fortress would starve by November if not substantially relieved. By 20 September, Muraviev had word that

Ömer Pasha had made a first landing with 8,000 troops at Batum, at last given permission to leave Crimea. At dawn of 29 September 1855, hoping for a surprise attack, the Russian forces encountered stiff resistance. In spite of the Ottoman victory on that occasion, Muraviev continued the siege of Kars, which was eventually starved into submission. The garrison capitulated in early November at a time when 100 people—including citizens—were dying of famine every day.

The siege and its collapse generated great interest in the international press of the time, an indication of the global currency of the conflict. The siege itself was subject to an investigation in the British Parliament about costs and blame. The defenders were commemorated in numerous paintings created after their release from Russian captivity. One of these paintings, entitled *General Williams and the officers of His Staff Parting with the Citizens of Kars*, (Figure 6.1) a massive canvas 252 cm x 440 cm, painted by Thomas Barker (1815–1882), is now in the National Army Museum in London.³⁰

No such honor awaited the Ottoman survivors of Kars. An attempted relief of Kars and Erzurum never happened. The force under Ömer Pasha was stuck in the mud in Batum, crippled by the time of year, the lack of horses, and Ömer's belief in the assistance of local Çerkes and Abaza irregulars that failed to materialize. They had lost an opportunity to cement the relationships with the Muslim mountaineers even as the flood of refugees into the Ottoman territories from this war drastically altered the political and ethnic landscape of greater Anatolia. It was a singular blot on Ömer Pasha, and the blame for the Caucasian disasters, rightly so, fell on the Ottoman command. And then the war was over.³¹

The Crimean War was a classic case of diplomacy interrupted by warfare, largely because the Vienna Conference continued to offer solutions to the impasse between the Russians and the allies. Protracted negotiations, as well as the lack of a definitive victory, prevented all sides from overcoming the inertia of the battlefield. In the end, the Sevastopol humiliation and the Kars victory sufficiently convinced the Russians to capitulate. The Treaty of Paris, signed on 30 March 1856, left European cabinets in a position to intervene even more directly in Ottoman sovereignty over its Christian subjects. The autonomy of Moldavia and Wallachia was guaranteed under Ottoman suzerainty. The Ottomans did recover control of the mouth of the Danube, the single territory the Russians lost, and the fortress of Kars. The Russians and the Ottomans agreed separately on the neutralization of the Black Sea, and the number of vessels allowed by either side was severely restricted.³²

The human costs amounted to the greatest loss of life between 1815 and 1914, with the deaths of 450,000 Russians, 80,000–95,000 French, 20,000–25,000 British, 2,000 Piedmontese, and 200,000–400,000 Ottomans.³³ Most see the Treaty of Paris as an ongoing territorial rearrangement of central Europe. Further ordering would next make itself felt in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871 and play out even further in the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War in Bulgaria. Keeping the Crimean War out of the Balkans may have “cushioned” the Austrians, who were largely neutral, but “it also led to their own almost unbearable responsibilities for the Balkan ethnic mess.”³⁴

Undoubtedly, 1848 revolutionary fever coupled with the presence of two armies on the Danube and the Caucasus had the effect of stimulating further Ottoman unrest and resistance to reforms. Similarly, while Ottoman success on the Danube and the return of territory gave them a respite from warfare, Ottoman indebtedness crippled the war recovery and guaranteed the continued semi-colonialism of external financing. The cost of sultanic autonomy, however subscribed, was a reiteration of promises to reform. The Treaty of Paris was not signed until the Ottomans decreed their commitment to reform in the *Hatt-i Humayun* (Imperial Rescript) promulgated on 18 February 1856. It was only then that they were assumed to have joined the Concert of Europe though the hollowness of that achievement quickly made itself apparent.

Muslim constitutionalism reasserted

In the 1856, rescript Sultan Abdülmecid confirmed the equality of his subjects before the law, irrespective of class or religion. All privileges granted to non-Muslims were to be continued. Non-Muslim communities were to be given the opportunity to reaffirm those privileges. Freedom of religion was proclaimed, which guaranteed the rise of sectarianism among Christians and Muslims alike. This reiteration of intentions declared freedom of access to government offices and the military, mixed tribunals for Muslim–Christian disputes, the codification of penal and commercial laws, and direct taxation instead of tax farming. Over the next few decades, the sultanate proved unable to keep all of the promises but made a determined effort to see the reforms properly implemented.

In effect, the new document was an absolute guarantee of continued resistance, prompting sustained revolts in Damascus, Armenian and Kurdish borderlands, Bosnia, as well as in Albania. Refugees poured into Ottoman territories, from the Crimea and the Caucasus, most settling in Anatolia in the decade after the Crimean War. The new Istanbul bureaucratic elite continued to press for reform, such as provincial reorganisation, regular inspection of municipalities and the countryside, and the sorting out of the rights of the *millets*. The post-Crimean War period is known as the era dominated by the bureaucracy headed by Ali and Fuad Pashas. Both originally were protégés of Mustafa Reşid Pasha, who held the offices of grand vizier and foreign minister for over ten years. All three were representative of Ottoman statesmen imbued with western educations and contact with the foreign communities of the Istanbul.

Both Ali and Fuad Pashas have left small political testimonies as to their understanding of reform. Fuad wrote that the aim of the Ottoman administration should be the absolute equality and fusion of all races. Separatisms based on religious differences should be stifled. To achieve effective equality would require a new system of justice and public education. Neither felt that the aims at reform contravened Islamic law. Sultan Abdülaziz's (1861–1876) throne speech confirmed the continuation of reforms. He also stressed—as had his predecessor—the primacy of shar'ia law as the Ottomans reconstrued themselves as Muslim constitutionalists. Not

all politicians signed on wholeheartedly, but the reality of survival pressed them into service. Hence, it is possible to see a commitment in Istanbul to the promised equality, which resulted in giving considerable power to local councils and appointees. Such minor improvements occurred against the increasing clamor and resistance of the Muslim populations, whose economic and cultural prominence in the empire continued to slide. The deterioration of relations between Muslim and non-Muslim communities across the empire evinced itself in major riots in Lebanon, Crete and Bosnia–Herzegovina. Outbreaks occurred in many other parts of the empire as well, such as among Anatolian Armenians and Kurds in eastern Anatolia, with increasing frequency and ferocity after 1856.

The Ottoman population ranged from 30,000,000 to 40,000,000 in this period. Evidence for the Crimean War indicates that a maximum of 250,000–300,000 men were raised by the Ottomans of whom some 50,000 were irregulars, a high point in terms of numbers as less than half of that were mobilised in the later decades of the nineteenth century. The *bashibozuk* irregulars became synonymous with barbarity in the Balkans and Anatolia under Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), especially during the 1876–1878 Russo–Ottoman War. Abdülhamid then created the Hamidiye Kurdish cavalry regiments in the 1890s, perhaps the most notorious of putative *bashibozuks*, as a partial remedy to the unrest in colonial Yemen, and provincial disorders across the empire, setting the stage for a more lethal confrontation between the Kurdish, Armenian and Circassian communities in eastern Turkey.

The impact of conscription fell heaviest on the Muslims of the remaining Ottoman territories, particularly in Anatolia, which grew by perhaps more than 2,000,000 refugees in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The Christian population and at least one quarter of the Muslim population was exempt from service, leaving some estimated 12,000,000 Muslims available for conscription. Attempts to create special forces of ethnic groups—such as the one made in Bosnia—were repeatedly made in Albania and the tribal areas in Syria and Iraq, but with little success. Revolt inevitably followed. The exemption tax (*bedel*) could produce more revenue than the previous non-Muslim poll tax, which had been abolished in 1846, a large incentive for not conscripting Christians. Some proposals were made by the reformers, among them Ömer Pasha, to enroll Armenians and Bulgarians—but not Greeks or Christian Bosnians—but these proposals went nowhere. The additional obstacle was the resistance of the Muslim recruits to serve under Christian officers, a problem that would persist into the First World War. Not until 1909, under the Young Turks, is it possible to speak of a universal conscription law, evaded by those who could.

In 1869, under Hüseyin Avni Pasha, the Ottomans introduced another round of military reforms that were overtly modelled on the Prussians. Initially the reorganisation was intended to increase the capacity of the Ottoman army for external defence. The Ottomans were continually hampered by the lack of finances and a shrinking tax base, preventing them from investing properly in the reformed system. In 1869, the Ottoman army budget was 4,700,000 pounds sterling, of which 3,600,000 pounds were intended for the *nizamiye* and its overhead alone.³⁵

The new Sultan Abdülaziz (1861–1876), who initially pledged to curb palace spending, continued to view state funds as a personal patrimony in much the same fashion as his predecessor. Under Abdülaziz, the levels of corruption and cronyism continued in the bureaucracy as well as in the royal household. In 1861, the financial crisis came to a head. The Ottomans were barely able to cover the interest payments they had accrued on loans from Europe made during the Crimean War and after and could raise no further loans. By 1863–1864, with further aid from France and Britain, the Ottomans created the Imperial Ottoman Bank, backed by European financiers and local investors, but the fundamental problem remained.³⁶

In short, after the Crimean War, while imperial aspirations may have aimed higher, the fact was that the Ottomans quickly slipped behind their major military rivals. As Grand Vizier Fuad Pasha noted in a conversation with a European visitor, “Our state is the strongest state, for you are trying to cause its collapse from without, and we from within, but still it does not collapse.”³⁷ For the Ottomans it proved impossible to separate internal from external enforcement, even though a national police force, the *zaptiye*, was introduced in the post-Crimean period. Most European monarchies succeeded to varying degrees in removing the army from such internal disciplinary activities, but the late Ottomans never managed to rid themselves of the need for regular and irregular forces for security purposes. It was not so much a technological gap as an internal security and manpower gap that inevitably led to the levels of violence appearing the 1870s and after.

Defending the Ottoman House: Zarif Mustafa Pasha; Ömer Pasha, Generalissimo; Beatson's Horse

Zarif Mustafa Pasha³⁸

Müşir Zarif Mustafa Pasha (1816–1861) was commander of the Anatolia army in the spring of 1854, a position he had resisted along with many other candidates because of the dismal conditions of the Caucasus front. His training appears to have been scribal, for he joined the Hassa regiment as a scribe at the age of 14.

Hamdi Bey [unknown] came into the office, and began talking to his acquaintances, and I [Zarif Mustafa] was among them. I've been made a major, he said, and I am looking for a secretary to replace me. Is there anyone having such a wish, he began by asking. Me, I said. Let me see your writing, he said. Is your father willing? Whether he is or not, I want to be a soldier, I said. Well, let's go, he said. From there, we mounted up and went straight to the barracks. The late Sultan Mahmud II was there. Hamdi Bey took me directly to the office of Ahmed [Fevzi Pasha, later Grand Admiral]. Here is my replacement, he said. This is his handwriting. My son, do you want to be a soldier? he asked. Yes I do, sir. Come, follow me, he ordered.

He was given a uniform and a sword. Once in a while, they were drilled. He was assigned as *mülazım* (lieutenant), and a substitute for a captain of the *Hassa* (sultan's guard). His first action was a year later in the entourage of *Reşid Mehmed's* campaign in the far reaches of Albania (1831). It was his first journey outside of Istanbul. He next fought in the campaign against *İbrahim* in 1832. In 1845, at the age of 30, he was made a *ferik*. All those around him, with few exceptions, were raised and promoted this way. The striking thing about the *Konya* campaigns is the youth of all of the commanders. In his memoirs, *Zarif Pasha* speaks of his experience in *Aleppo* as follows:

In 1848, I was appointed as Governor of Aleppo. I was very happy and expressed my profound thanks [to the sultan]. We went by steamship to Rhodes. From there we arrived at İskenderun, disembarked and prepared the animals. We arrived in Aleppo via Antioch. Namık Pasha, shortly to be appointed Müşir to Baghdad, was there. [His first instructions were to apply the Tanzimat reforms to Urfa, starting with taking a census, nine years after the Gülhane Edict.] First, I sent two battalions. Then the census-takers. At the same time, I went to Birecik with two squadrons of cavalry and 300 başıbozüks. The census was completed, but the local [financial] records were only partially revealed. I assembled 2,000 of the elders and leaders of Urfa and surrounding villages, and announced the institution of the reforms. [They brought the remainder of the records, which revealed further local expenses. Zarif then set a tax bill for the state and negotiated exemptions with the elders and tribal leaders.] I spent 140,000 kuruş on ceremonial robes, watches, and other gifts, and returned to Aleppo.... The Bedouins started to attack and I stopped them with the başıbozuk. I was ordered to collect some 30,000 kese that İbrahim Pasha had left in Aleppo and send 14,000 kese to the [sixth] army in Baghdad. I was then ordered to confiscate any property and goods of anyone in arrears. That was followed by an order for conscription. Arabistan [his word] did not want to give soldiers; as for the rest, they are Aleppo bandits. Abdullah Bey had only 4,000 kese. [In the midst of trying to impose the new regulations, a riot broke out.] I rode out with a few servants, police and a few guards to the area of the disturbance. Three to five thousand people stood in front of me with weapons in their hands. 'Do not approach or we will shoot,' they said. 'Hey you, it's me!' I shouted. They said, 'Whoever you are, we'll shoot!' I said, 'Oh yeah? Go ahead and shoot!' All those men shot at me.

He retreated to the front of the inner fort and called on the guards to close the gates. Then he assembled a company of soldiers, but they told him they did not have any ammunition. Arriving at the barracks, he learned that the soldiers had prepared a few artillery pieces, but that there were only 250 men in the place. The rebels then attacked the Christian districts. He had no choice. Without soldiers, Zarif was forced to summon Abdullah Bey, and with much pleading,

begging and promises, he asked him to put a stop to it. By the next morning, the crowd had increased by his estimate to 40,000–50,000. He sent his 250 infantry and two companies of cavalry into the Christian quarters, but they could do nothing. He surrendered the city to Abdullah and the ulema, and retired to the palace for 20 days, having secretly sent for reinforcements. Müşir Emin Pasha sent three battalions of infantry, a regiment of cavalry and about 500 başıbozüks. As the nizamiye troops approached the city, the inhabitants got wind of it and shut down the market. Ultimately, 2,500 soldiers and ten cannons faced down the revolt. For the most of the next three days, the marketplace was a battleground. Zarif burned down the houses of the insurgents. He praised the regulars who struggled so bravely as they conquered the house of Abdullah. 'Long live our padişah, they cried!' In three days, 8,000 cannonballs were shot but with little effect. The troops behaved well. Zarif claimed to have distributed 1,000 kese as encouragement for those who were fighting. He reclaimed some of the goods stolen from the Christian quarters. He also raided the Bedouin camp, and took some 20,000 sheep, camels and oxen. It was over, and business was resumed. The consuls and the Christians came to thank him. He cautioned that they needed 10,000 soldiers to keep order in Aleppo. Relief forces arrived and Zarif Pasha left Aleppo for İskenderun with 150 prisoners, among them Abdullah Bey, who died before they arrived in Istanbul. While Zarif Pasha is no stylist, the story conveys his methods as well as the inadequacy of the forces under his command. He exemplifies the continuation of a system of deep corruption and patronage that continued to plague the Ottoman military command.

Ömer Pasha (1806–1871), "Generalissimo"

Ömer Pasha was a convert to Islam and Ottomanism whose military prowess was much admired by European military elites of the period, as reflected in Figure 6.6. Knowledge of him comes from other sources as he apparently left no memoirs. Like Zarif Pasha, his passage into the entourage of the sultan was through the patronage of (in his case) Hüseyin Pasha. He began at the rank of Yüzbaşı (captain) as tutor to the future sultan Abdülmecid, a connection that he continued to use long after leaving Istanbul for various military assignments. He also taught writing in the military school. By the evidence of his earlier career, he was clearly ruthless and effective, having participated in pacification campaigns all over the Ottoman territories by the time of the Crimean War. Much has been written about his effort at reform in Bosnia. His experience on the Danube gave him full understanding of the Russian troops and tactics, and he is remembered as maintaining discipline and enforcing a respect for local inhabitants, always with a fierce hand. One anecdote has him allowing his bands to play the Marseillaise



FIGURE 6.6 “Les Défenseurs de la Turquie, Crimea,” Bibliotheque Nationale

among revolutionary ditties to annoy the Russian officers who had punished local gypsies for playing the subversive melodies. In one of the few contemporary profiles that survive, he is commended for his talents as a strategist, for his intimate knowledge of the geography of the Danube region and as having commanded the affection of his men.³⁹

All that changed with his proposal to take his army (at 20,000) in the Crimea to the relief of the siege Kars, which he personally represented to the War Ministry in Istanbul in July 1855. While there, he was much celebrated and is depicted as falling back into the corrupt intrigues of the palace, even though it was clear that the allies had little use for the Turkish troops languishing in the Crimea. He was treated contemptuously by French Commander Amiable-Jean-Jacques Pélissier, and very likely had grown tired of playing the part of the colonial subject. The debate over sending a relief army to the Caucasus is recorded in numerous contemporary works: Satirically by Oliphant for example: “Of Vivian’s [Turkish] Contingent take 20,000, stir it up with 3000 of Beatson’s Bashi-Bozouks, throw in the Batoum garrison, garnish with 2000 Albanians, add 5000 drawn from Bulgaria and season with Egyptian regular cavalry and Tunisian horse.”⁴⁰ Stratford and Vivian ended up with a relief army similar to the Ottoman plan, using the Turkish Contingent under British command, which in the end failed to relieve Kars. The episode, as with Beatson’s attempt to

*organize the ungovernable bashibozuks illustrates the extent to which the Ottoman territories had become a British laboratory for the evolving racial views of the warrior nation, fully articulated after the Indian Mutiny of 1857. In the histories, Ömer Pasha then becomes one of those unreliable converts whose loyalty to his sultan and the Ottoman way must always be peeled back like an onion to find his true Bosnian essence.*⁴¹

Beatson's Horse: A colonial performance⁴²

William Ferguson Beatson was born in England at Rossend Castle, Fife, in 1804. He entered the service of the East India Company (EIC) in 1820, and at age 16 sailed aboard the Waterloo to join the 2nd battalion 25th Bengal native infantry as an ensign. Beatson did not achieve his first command in India until 1837, when he was appointed captain of the Bundelkhand Legion, an irregular cavalry unit stationed in central India.

Under Sir Charles Napier (Commander in Chief of EIC from 1849 to 1850), Beatson was appointed acting commander of the Nizam's of Hyderabad's Army, a position he retained for three years. After attaining the rank of brigadier in 1850, he retired to England with his full pension. Beatson became restless in his retirement though, and when the Ottoman Empire went to war against Russia in 1853 over Russia's incursions into the Danubian principalities, Beatson applied for permission to travel to the Danube, like many of the military tourists of the period, and attach himself as an observer to Ottoman General Omer Pasha's army. It is there that he first observed the bashibozuks, whose undisciplined behavior was remarked by all. Disgusted with their ungovernable behavior, Ömer Pasha released them from service, most of them without pay, naturally increasing their locust-like behavior of the countryside as they returned to their homes.

Beatson then formed the idea of creating a British led force of irregular cavalry of bashibozuks modeled after the Sillidar units of India, which he intended to call Beatson's Horse. He petitioned the war department and was given permission to proceed under the direction of Ambassador Stratford Canning.

Beatson's Turkish irregulars (4,000) were to be raised by levy throughout the Ottoman Empire and would be commanded by British officers ranked captain or higher with native officers underneath them. Beatson argued that the bashibozuks could be used as skirmishers, advanced patrols and harriers to the Russian forces, in a manner somewhat similar to the Cossacks. The benefit of such a force was that the men would become attached to their superior British officers, and in a short time an efficient cavalry could be assembled out of the currently useless troops. Lord Raglan, newly appointed as commander-in-chief of the British forces, was appalled at the idea and managed to stall the enterprise for almost a year until mid-1855.

Almost immediately, the project ran into trouble. Recruitment, rations and mounts all proved extremely difficult to assemble and Beatson argued continuously with the war department about terms of service. Everything was in short supply as the war dragged on into 1855, when recruitment got underway. The officers were all EIC veterans such as Edward Money, who was made a captain on the spot when he arrived in the Dardanelles in July,⁴³ and explorer and journalist Richard Burton, an old EIC friend of Beatson who kept all of London apprised of the adventures of the bashibozuks via his newspaper articles.

Originally to be quartered in Salonika, the troops harassed local citizens to a degree that prompted Governor Osman Pasha to officially protest concerning the egregious conduct of the irregulars, which Beatson vigorously denied. Eventually, the troops were assembled in the Dardanelles, a poor decision as it turned out because they were then basically stranded there without transport to the eastern Black Sea. By mid-1855, Kurds, Albanians, Bulgarians and Syrian Arabs had been recruited, but remained idle and were the constant source of complaints of misbehavior. Beatson has been accused of not training and disciplining them sufficiently. The general consensus was that the Albanians were incorrigible, and the Arabs made the best irregulars.



FIGURE 6.7 “General Beatson,” engraved by D.J. Pound, from a photograph by Mayall, 1860 © Engraved By D.J. Pound, from a photograph By Mayall / Alamy Stock Photo G5YGKG

By the end of September 1855, Sevastopol had fallen, and Ömer Pasha was steaming to Batum. Beatson's Horse was redirected to the command of General Vivian, who was ordered to invest Kertch with the Turkish contingent, and Beatson threatened resignation. Stratford Canning was fed up. The Ottomans surrounded the bashibozuk encampment with regular army troops in late September, and Beatson was removed from command on 5 October 1855. Beatson's Horse itself was disbanded without ever seeing service.

*This story is well known because it was a sensation of the British press and because Beatson would not give up his grievances. Burton published a long defense of the project in the Times in December 1855, and Beatson himself published his own version of events in a pamphlet called *The War Department and the Bashi Buzouks*.⁴⁴ Beatson paraded around London in the excessively red and gold gaudy uniform seen in Figure 6.7 even as he was under investigation for mutiny. Cleared of that charge, he continued his calumny against his accusers in the newspapers which threatened to end his career altogether, but the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny called him back into service, saving him from a court-martial.*

Read as colorful side-story of the war, the experience was one more building block of the martial race theory famously argued by Burton. Burton settled on the Bedouin as the pure Arab warrior of the later nineteenth century and the bedrock of Sir John Glubb's Arab Legion of Jordan organized after WWI.

Notes

- 1 Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable Stratford Canning* (Vol. 2) (London: Longmans, 1888), 96–97.
- 2 Cengiz Kırılı, *Sultan ve Kamuoyu: Osmanlı Modernleşme Sürecinde "Havadis Jurnalleri" (1840–1844)* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), 64.
- 3 E. Engelhardt, *La Turquie et le Tanzimat, ou Histoire des Réformes dans l'Empire Ottomane* (Paris: A. Cotillon et Cie., 1882), 75–77.
- 4 Moshe Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform in Syria and Palestine 1840–61* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 85.
- 5 Ma'oz, *Ottoman Reform*, 78.
- 6 Dick Dowdes, "Reorganizing Violence: Traditional Recruitment Patterns and Resistance Against Conscription in Ottoman Syria," in *Arming the State*, ed. Erik J. Zürcher (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 121–5.
- 7 Mark Pinson, "Ottoman Bulgaria in the First Tanzimat Period – The Revolts in Nish (1841) and Vidin (1850)," *Middle Eastern Studies* 11 (1975): 109; Svetlana Ivanova, "Widin," *EI2*, 9 (2001): 205–8.
- 8 Howard W. V. Temperley, *England and the Near East: the Crimea*. (New York: Longman, 1936; North Haven, CT: Archon Books, 1964), 260–8. He cites 3,600 Hungarian and 800 Polish refugees, most of whom returned to Austria by 1851. The leaders either joined the Ottoman army or emigrated to the United States.
- 9 Temperley, *England and the Near East*, 212–28.
- 10 Clive Ponting, *The Crimean War* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2004), 11; Ann Pottinger Saab, *The Origins of the Crimean Alliance* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1977).

- 11 Allan Cunningham, "The Preliminaries of the Crimean War," in *Eastern Questions in the Nineteenth Century: Collected Essays*, ed. Edward Ingram (London: Frank Cass, 1993), vol. 2, 196–7. There were perhaps as many as eleven variations in circulation.
- 12 Ali Fuat Türkgeçdi, *Mesail-i Mühimmiye-Siyâsiyye*, ed. Bekir Sıtkı Baykal (Vol. 1) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1960), 321.
- 13 Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable*, 317.
- 14 Saab, *The Origins*, 114–7.
- 15 John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979), 236–7.
- 16 [report from Bulgarian battlefield] *London Evening News* (The British Newspaper Archive), 3 December 1853, 479.
- 17 Ponting, *The Crimean War*, 61.
- 18 Quoted in James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse 1839–1878* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2000), 260–1.
- 19 Ponting, *The Crimean War*, 84.
- 20 Robert B. Edgerton, *Death or Glory: The Legacy of the Crimean War* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2000), 168–71. Of the 14,000 Egyptian reservists sent to the Danube, half died, surviving a 28-day voyage from Egypt on dry biscuit and water. Of the 10,000 Tunisians in the Crimea, 7,000 died.
- 21 Lane-Poole, *The Life of the Right Honourable*, 408–9.
- 22 Tim Coates, *The Siege of Kars, 1855. Defence and Capitulation Reported by General Williams* (London: The Stationery Office, 2000), 41–46. The entire operation is described in detail in Chapter 3 of Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853–1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
- 23 Allen, David, and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, Ch. 4.
- 24 Allen, David, and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 76–80.
- 25 Colonel Atwell Lake, *Narrative of the Defence of Kars, Historical and Military* (London: Richard Bentley, 1857).
- 26 Allen, David, and Muratoff, *Caucasian Battlefields*, 81.
- 27 Lake, *Narrative*, 62.
- 28 Lake, *Narrative*, 155.
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PART IV

The final curtain: Imperial reordering and collapse 1870-1923

After 1870, Ottoman intellectuals and bureaucrats wrestled with the merging of Ottoman–Islamic political traditions and European constitutionalism. Ottoman Tanzimat statesmen had access to Vienna, London, Paris and Berlin, where a similar and vigorous debate over alternative systems of law was under way. The roots of these debates reach back to the 1840s, when Ottoman intellectuals began to discuss the Ottoman place in the pantheon of civilizations. They later asserted a civilizing mission over their rebellious nomads and tribes in the last years of the century: Druze, Arab Bedouin, Kurd, Albanian mountaineers and latterly, Yemenites. In particular, the conquest of Yemen was explicitly argued on the model of British India.

The picture is complicated by the arrival of the seaborne powers of France and Great Britain in the eastern Mediterranean. Following the Treaty of London in 1840, the British had established consuls in every major port city of the Arab southern tier of the empire. Foreign powers had in effect established an informal colonial rule over a large part of the Ottoman territories, establishing an international market regime that continues albeit in different guises into the present. In 1882, the British occupied Egypt and turned it into a colony, arguing about the temporary nature of their stay for the next 50 years. The beneficiaries of the new colonial relationship were largely the non-Muslim communities. At the turn of the century, the British found themselves contesting territory in Yemen with a rival colonial power, the Ottomans themselves. The competition for global recognition among “civilized” empires was waged with new signifiers of status: urban reform, international conferences and exhibitions, and representation in newspapers and monuments.

That contest for the Ottomans hinged on loyalty to a chimeric ideal, Ottomanism. This idea played itself out in inter- and intra-religious quarrels, a confusing spectacle of sectarianism and nationalism. The clamor for autonomy and

self-determination continued, as anarchic individualism and violent revolutions of a new world order spread east across Europe to Eurasia. Missionaries of all faiths became instruments of colonial power as well, stoking the fires of difference with the compliance of the foreign representatives in Istanbul.

The reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1908) is generally characterized as an era of extreme despotism, tremendous political upheaval, countryside violence and destruction, and a severe identity crisis. This chaos is in part what led to the Armenian Genocide, brought on by the “turning Turk” of the military class. But it is also the era of pan-Islamism, a call to Muslims across the world to recognize Abdülhamid as caliph. The Ottoman crisis and ultimate collapse in 1918 had its antecedents in the previous century of reform, liberation, constitutionalism, and international law, as the empire refashioned its ideological premises.

Chapter 7 begins by surveying select Ottoman cities and the Tanzimat reforms as they unfolded following the end of the Crimean War but before the final storm of violence and collapse in the Balkans in the 1870s. The cities served as laboratories for the development of an “Ottomanism” that historians have long struggled to describe. One hundred fifty years after the final curtain rose in the 1870s, “who was an Ottoman?” is still worth asking. The remainder of the chapter assesses Ottoman efforts at reform and constitutionalism in an international context that was growing increasingly bellicose and financially unstable. It ends with the declaration of the first Ottoman constitution in December of 1876.

Chapter 8 returns to the northern frontier to discuss the 1877–1878 Russo-Ottoman War and the subsequent events leading to World War I in the Middle East by taking a close look at the Hamidian era that lasted for 32 years. The escalation of violence all over the empire is linked to Ottoman reform initiatives, systematic banditry, sectarian quarrels, revolutionary anarchism, and Great Power intervention, with the final and tragic events centered in Macedonia and Eastern Anatolia. The dethronement of Abdülhamid II in the 1908 coup signals the end of the experiment in Ottomanism.

Chapter 9 describes the era of the Committee of Union and Progress, military reforms and the German mission, the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. The Epilogue summarizes events from 1914 to 1923 including WWI in the Middle East, the Armenian genocide, the Treaty of Sevres in 1918, and the 1918–1923 events that began with the British occupation of Istanbul and end in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.

7

OTTOMANISM AND ITS RIVALS

Tanzimat reforms mid-century

In the early days of the Tanzimat era, reforms were haphazardly applied in many Ottoman cities with varying degrees of success and failure. These reforms were largely limited to the remaking of an imperial army and the reorganization and consolidation of imperial territories and revenues. In reality, the halting attempts at enforcing the state's law and establishing public order and just rule was unfolding in the midst of the endless Russo-Ottoman waltz on the northern border, and the Mehmed Ali crisis to the south. Stability and security remained elusive, primarily but not entirely because of financial difficulties.

Concentrating on maintaining and manning the frontiers of conflict, the post-Janissary army command was forced to rely on local tribal affiliations and the warrior traditions of certain populations to serve as the frontier forces and later police. For a long time, contractual relationships had benefited both parties, but such ad hoc arrangements encouraged the continuation of militias/mercenaries, a pattern similar to other Mediterranean societies such as Italy and Spain in the post-Napoleonic period. The Tanzimat articulated revolutionary ideas and visions of interracial and religious harmony that were simply unenforceable. When the time came to discipline and “civilize” the nomadic and semi-nomadic ethnicities of the peripheries—both for the purposes of conscription and the imposition of the Tanzimat regime—the newly-organized army had neither the manpower nor the resources to do more than restore order temporarily. Bargaining with Ottoman subjects over military service and citizenship became a contest between reforming Ottomans and interfering Europeans.¹

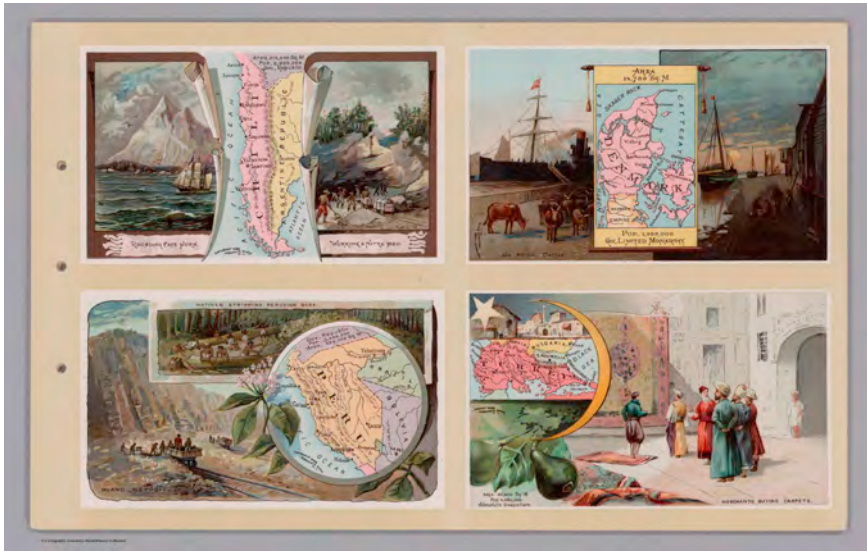


FIGURE 7.1 Chile, Denmark, Peru and Turkey, 1890, Arbuckle souvenir, David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford University Libraries

In the post-1860 decades, despite these insuperable odds, a professionalized bureaucracy oversaw reform projects across the Ottoman urban spectrum that were reflected in new architecture, roads, streetcars, railroads and steamships. By mid-century, official Tanzimat correspondence reveals an emphasis on the responsibility of the state to achieve security and balance (*adalet*—translated as justice) through the enforcement of the law, and to educate Ottoman subjects (*tebaa*) through discipline and civilization (*inzibat ve medeniyet*). This language continued to play an important role in representing the Ottomans on the international stage. As many historians have pointed out, the new language of order was “deeply embedded in the tradition of Ottoman patrimonial rhetoric. The traditional stress on obedience, however, is transformed into a quest for control and discipline as reformed variants of obedience.”²

Although most evident in the great cities of Cairo and Istanbul, versions of the Ottoman civilizing mission are visible across the cities of the remaining Ottoman territories. Beginning in the final decades of Ottoman existence, the evidence points to urban life transformed by new schools, railways, administrative buildings, great wide streets and parks. Surviving archives and memoirs document the diversity of pre-WWI life. Photographs, books, annual yearbooks (*salnames*) published by the government, newspapers and literary and satirical journals reflect a vibrant intellectual life. This book began with a trip down the Danube and a introduction to the borderlands of the Ottoman Empire. This chapter begins by examining the status of the major Ottoman cities when, as a subject of the sultan, it was still possible to imagine being a part of an Ottoman imperial identity.

The Istanbul–Cairo axis

In 1836, Mahmud II was the first Ottoman sultan to cross the Golden Horn by carriage. The pontoon bridge had been built on his orders to connect Beyazit Square in the imperial precinct of Istanbul to Beşiktaş, where the sultan maintained a residence on the grounds of the present-day Dolmabahçe Palace, up the Bosphorus strait from the landing in Galata. While Mahmud II is most often remembered for the elimination of the Janissaries, he also envisioned remaking his city to reflect the new order he had created. For example, the Nusretiye (Victory) Mosque, located in the district of Tophane, was built in 1823–1826 by the Armenian architect Krikor Balyan. The mosque became associated with the sultan's reforms, and especially the destruction of the Janissaries, hence its name celebrating the victory. It is notable for its immensity, baroque decorations and its prominence in the section of the city that was historically non-Muslim (Figures 7.2 and 7.3).

Beyazit mosque and the square in front of it represents another of Mahmud's projects to create public spaces meant to demonstrate the power of the dynasty. Istanbul University, to one side of the square, rests on the grounds of what once was the headquarters for the new army, itself built on the ruins of the Janissary



FIGURE 7.2 Bridge and Galata area, Istanbul, Turkey, Abdullah Frères, circa 1880–1893 © UtCon Collection / Alamy Stock Photo KXNG74



FIGURE 7.3 Nusretiye Mosque and the Tophane Square, James Robertson, mid-nineteenth century © Art Collection 3 / Alamy Stock Photo HYE5EF

barracks. The fire tower that dominates the hill even today dates from that time. Mahmud's successors would continue the modernization of the city, replacing narrow, impassable streets with great boulevards and monumental government buildings. The first Galata bridge at the mouth of the Golden Horn, known as the New Bridge, was financed by the mother of Sultan Abdülmecid. The sultan himself founded a French theatre, restored Saint Sophia (Aya Sophia), and built Dolmabahçe Palace at enormous expense as previously described. He also renovated the *Sublime Porte*, or *Bab-ı Ali*, the entrance to the new administration offices.

Changes to the city continued under his successors Abdülaziz (1861–1876) and Abdülhamid II (1876–1908). The latter engaged in a massive urban renewal campaign that stretched across the empire. The push for renewal on a such ascale, coupled with insufficient tax revenues and corruption, increased the Ottoman dependence on foreign investors. The Ottomans had first contracted major international loans during the Crimean War and public debt escalated to the extent that the dynasty faced bankruptcy by the 1870s. The Public Debt Administration, established in 1881 to manage the Ottoman debt with European creditors, ultimately employed more than 9,000 officials, making it larger than the Ottoman finance ministry itself (Figure 7.4).



FIGURE 7.4 “Egypt, Cairo, Citadel with Mosque of Mohamed Ali,” photograph by Zangaki, circa 1885 © INTERFOTO / Alamy Stock Photo BA24YM

Egypt too was undergoing a transformation. Mehmed Ali’s remaking of Cairo—begun during Napoleon’s brief but violent invasion—included demolition of the city center, and the building of the great mosque in the heart of the citadel between 1830 and 1848. Mehmed Ali’s successors commissioned the Suez Canal (1869), and built broad boulevards and new urban neighborhoods, largely financed by foreign capital. By mid-century, Egyptians, particularly the peasants, were living under a tremendous burden. They were not just subject to conscription in a deeply militarized society but were also suffering from a huge array of onerous taxes and foreign debt that could not forestall national bankruptcy. In 1876, *Khedive* (Viceroy) Ismail (1863–1879) was forced to sell Suez Canal shares to the British, effectively ending Egyptian control of the waterway. Thereafter, Egypt’s debt was managed by a Public Debt Commission that responded to the demands of foreign creditors until 1940.

Although the sultan no longer directly ruled the province of Egypt, the Cairo–Istanbul connection remained a global trading and cultural axis even after the British occupation in 1882. Mehmed Ali’s mosque represents only part of a late Ottoman aesthetic. It existed alongside new housing districts built by a diverse population of westernizing, generally non-Muslim elites from all over the empire drawn to Egypt’s cotton industry. European merchant families in large Mediterranean networks with long histories settled in the growing city of Alexandria—the gateway to Cairo—which by the end of the century boasted

100,000 inhabitants. Printing houses and theaters sprang up as they did elsewhere, and the new language of constitutionality circulated in vibrant settings.

In the remaining territories of the empire, late Ottoman reformers undertook large-scale engineering projects to reform society at large. Inhabitants of cosmopolitan urban settings were dependent on their countryside, which, unlike Europe, was not heavily industrialized. The countryside was generally controlled by the networks of Muslim families who had dominated the eighteenth-century landscape. The 1856 Hatt-ı Humayun edict had reiterated the rule of law concerning equal rights of citizens and their communities, but the primary task for the government continued to be the reassertion of Ottoman central control across the remaining provinces. This had meant not just maintaining an army and expanding conscription (1843–1844), but the further reorganization of government offices (1840), new commercial and international law codes (1850), public schools (1845) and the creation of a professional class of bureaucrats. In the decades following the Crimean War, the government enacted land reform (1858), provincial reorganization (1864) and a citizenship law (1869) with varying degrees of success and contestation. The period was also marked by severe dislocation of populations, immigration from surrendered territories, intercommunal violence and continuous intervention by the great powers, all of which are reflected in landscapes of Ottoman cities.

Ottoman cities transformed

The newly emerging cities of global commerce were a phenomenon of the eastern Mediterranean region. Beyond Cairo and Istanbul, cities such as Salonika, Trabzon, Izmir, Beirut, Aleppo, Damascus, Baghdad and Basra were becoming flourishing centers of global trade. The Tanzimat reforms were contentious for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was the challenge they posed to the historic trading systems that operated with a high degree of autonomy. In the early nineteenth century, Ottoman consuls, largely from Greek Orthodox merchant families, had been established in Mediterranean cities such as Palermo, Marseille, Naples, Trieste, Lisbon and Barcelona.³ These informal, largely self-regulated communities operated outside significant government oversight, and calculated state identities to their advantage. Such merchant communities were increasingly subjected to global economic realities, such as the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, revolutionary convulsions, and international maritime law. At the same time, municipal reforms appeared to offer residents the possibility of increased participation in urban life and the public sphere in the reenergized Ottoman Empire.

The dialectic of autonomy versus centralization of cities had long historic roots in Ottoman governance, but the late nineteenth century added colonialism to the equation. As a consequence, in the last decades of its existence, the empire was both colony of the European powers and colonizer of parts of Africa and the Middle East in the great global territorial grab of the 1880s. The contest among a

reforming central government, the powerful forces of the colonial powers, and their mercantile and missionary allies is palpable on the streets of Ottoman port cities such as Izmir (Smyrna) or Salonika (Thessaloniki). Immensely diverse, polyglot and historically connected to both Mediterranean and Asian markets, they were populated as in Alexandria by Muslims, Ottoman non-Muslim trading families with networks with Europe, and foreign nationals. Increasingly, the trading families were protected by foreign consulates through a system of licenses, known as *berats*. These licenses gave the buyer tax exemptions and access to the laws of the issuing embassy, as well as a putative passport with the accompanying protections of a foreign government. The entire trading system continued to operate by the favorable treaties (capitulations) between the Ottomans and foreign powers that were not abolished until abrogated by the Committee of Union and Progress in 1914, officially recognized in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne.

Our knowledge of these cities has been greatly colored by travelers' accounts in an age when travel to the east became increasingly fashionable and accessible, generated by an insatiable appetite for all things "oriental." John Murray published the first travel guide to Istanbul in 1840 at roughly the same time that Thomas Cook established his travel company that offered the first tour of the Nile in 1869. The Danube too was opened to steam travel in the same period as evident on the Danube map (Map 1.1; Figure 7.1) from the period.

European travelers in the middle of the nineteenth century were imbued with a wide range of images of the Ottomans such as the "lustful," or "barbaric" Turk (Muslim) or the "romantic," "nomadic," Bedouin. Veiled women exuded the mystery of the Orient, and the harem was its locus of sexuality. Visitors aimed to walk the lands of Homer and Plato and overlaid the map of Christianity on Jerusalem. Translations of the Arabian Nights infused European artistic and literary productions aimed at an expanding reading public. In circulation since the beginning of the eighteenth century, by the mid-nineteenth century newspapers, lithography, and photography had made images of the exotic prolific. Personal views on the Ottoman Middle East as Bible-land were pervasive from members of literary and missionary societies to the highest offices of the European capitals. This vision spread to the general population in the countries of Europe, and increasingly to the United States.

"Oriental" cities were invariably described as divided into ethnic districts, such as those of the Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Turks (Muslims), Arabs and foreigners, with each group enacting its cultural preferences. European visitors were predisposed to seek out the European in-the-midst of the exotic, as Mark Mazower has noted about the Balkans: "Railways are European, cart tracks are not; technology is definitely European, but not religious observance. The social fabric is almost always divided into a modernizing surface and a traditional substance."⁴ This patronizing view, accompanied by assumptions about progress and modernity, cast the "east" as the repository of tradition and folklore, awaiting awakening by the "west." It is impossible to read most of the observers of the late nineteenth century without understanding the colonial gaze.

One impact of the Tanzimat reforms was the opportunity of such urban, mostly non-Muslim communities with European connections, to participate in the new Ottoman municipal councils, and foster civic pride when local elites could be persuaded to sign on. Simultaneously, equality before the law translated into the liberation of religious communities, self-government, and the proliferation of intra-faith disputes very much in evidence in the period 1860–1880s. Cities also became refugee centers for Muslims and non-Muslims alike as more and more of Ottoman lands “especially in the Balkans” were surrendered by treaty. In the Arab provinces of the empire, violence erupted as the new order disturbed the traditional Muslim privileged status and “freedom of religious affiliation” licensed sectarianism and mini nations.

Late Ottoman cities hence embody both the possibilities and contradictions offered by the historical moment, immediately observable in the matter of dress. The new military uniform, especially the tight pants, frock coat and fez, became the ubiquitous outfit of men, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. In 1842, an imperial order had tried to outlaw the use of the fez by anyone other than military personnel, but to no avail. It, along with unveiled women in colorful dresses, had already replaced the ethno-religious costumes that had determined status in pre-Tanzimat Ottoman cities. Charles Macfarlane, who visited Istanbul in 1826 and 1847, noted the change: “In the European quarters, Turks in their blue frock-coats, tight-fitting pantaloons and varnished boots, [were] sitting and talking with Franks [European and Levantine non-Muslims] and their ladies. Bands, playing waltzes and polkas, and operatic pieces from Rossini and Bellini—all the ladies in European garb—no old Greek dresses or turbans to be seen.”

Crossing the Golden Horn to the imperial district, Macfarlane continued:

[T]he Turks over in Constantinople certainly looked much less like Turks and were far more civil than in 1828. They were incomparably less picturesque and imposing in their outward appearance. The forced change of costume has transformed them into a rather mean, shabby-looking people. But for the glaring red fez (a mean, ungraceful head-covering in itself) they might pass for Franks who employed bad tailors and seldom got their cloths brushed. A blue frock-coat, buttoned up to the chin, and dirty duck pantaloons not wider than we wear them, were the prevailing fashion ... now every man’s breeches were narrow in Stamboul except among the common people, Oulema, dervishes, and a few old-fashioned country-people from the mountains in Europe or from the interior of Asia Minor.⁵

Social gatherings often featured as part of visitors’ observations of city life. Moses ben Isaac Edrehi, Moroccan Jewish Rabbi and scholar described Pera (Istanbul) in the 1840s as follows:

Manufactured ices are sold in many shops at Galata and Pera.... During summer evenings, the walk is crowded with idlers of all nations save those

who perhaps foreigners might naturally expect to meet—the Turks. Loungers seat themselves at tables placed in the road, and, defying dust and disagreeable emanations arising from the contiguous cemetery, smoke, drink punch, and eat ‘gellati,’ furnished by the adjoining Greek coffee-houses. This is the principal solace of those who are detained during summer within the scorching and dusty precincts of unwholesome Pera. It is impossible not to be struck with the absence of everything oriental upon these occasions. With the exception of a few old Armenian schismatics, who adhere to the monstrous black kalpak, and some scores of Catholic Armenians and Greeks in fez, the crowd is composed of Franks or of Perotes [of Pera] of both sexes, all attired in exaggerated European costumes, making dress hideous ... a stranger might suppose himself in some retrograde Frank town suddenly peopled by the denizens of Babel; for, though his eye can scarcely discover a trace of the graceful East, his ears are assailed with the most confused mixture of languages. French, Italian, Armenian, English, German, Sclavonian, Romaic, Turkish, Spanish and half a dozen other tongues or dialects, more-or-less mutilated, are chattered around.⁶

Kinglake’s *Eothen* furnishes a typical response to veiled women on the streets of Istanbul, but with a twist:

[P]erhaps as you make your difficult way through a steep and narrow alley, shut in between blank walls, and little frequented by passers, you meet one of those coffin-shaped bundles of white linen that implies an Ottoman lady. Painfully struggling against the obstacles to progression interposed by the many folds of her clumsy drapery, by her big mud-boots, and especially by her two pairs of slippers, she works her way on full awkwardly enough, but yet there is something of womanly consciousness in the very labour and effort with which she tugs and lifts the burthen of her charms. She is closely followed by her women slaves. Of her very self you see nothing except the dark, luminous eyes that stare against your face, and the tips of the painted fingers depending like rose-buds from out of the blank bastions of the fortress. She turns, and turns again, and carefully glances around her on all sides, to see that she is safe from the eyes of Mussulmans, and then suddenly withdrawing the yashmak, she shines upon your heart and soul with all the pomp and might of her beauty. And this, it is not the light, changeful grace that leaves you to doubt whether you have fallen in love with a body, or only a soul; it is the beauty that dwells secure in the perfectness of hard, downright outlines, and in the glow of generous colour. There is fire, though, too—high courage and fire enough in the untamed mind, or spirit, or whatever it is, which drives the breath of pride through those scarcely parted lips. You smile at pretty women—you turn pale

before the beauty that is great enough to have dominion over you. She sees and exults in your giddiness; she sees and smiles; then presently, with a sudden movement, she lays her blushing fingers upon your arm, and cries out, 'Yumourdjak!' (Plague! meaning, 'there is a present of the plague for you!') This is her notion of a witticism. It is a very old piece of fun, no doubt—quite an Oriental Joe Miller; but the Turks are fondly attached, not only to the institutions, but also to the jokes of their ancestors; so the lady's silvery laugh rings joyously in your ears, and the mirth of her women is boisterous and fresh, as though the bright idea of giving the plague to a Christian had newly lit upon the earth.⁷

Naturally meant to entertain, these lines represent the pervasiveness of the European imagination of the Orient that masks the significant and deadly differences that piecemeal Ottoman urban reform and continuous foreign intervention engendered as French and British colonial practices surrounded and penetrated surviving Ottoman territories.

Beyond Istanbul: Salonika, Izmir and Trabzon

The following descriptions are meant to offer impressions of the array of the urban settings in the era of the possibility and difficulties of a proposed universal Ottomanism before the final conflagration and forced exile of populations of the Balkan Wars, World War I and its aftermath.

Salonika, "City of Ghosts," situated on the northwest Aegean coast, is a Byzantine city second only to Istanbul. It was most important Ottoman-European trading city from its conquest in 1430 until its surrender to Greece in 1912, and one of the few cities ever visited by a sultan in the nineteenth century (Sultan Abdülmecid in 1859). Salonika was long one of the largest Jewish cities of Europe, from an original population that took refuge in the city from the fifteenth century onwards and contributed to its prosperity well into the twentieth century.

The population of the city included a detachment of 7,000 Janissaries. Historically a center of the wool trade, the city supplied Janissary uniforms that ultimately became part of the tax burden to Istanbul. New Jewish immigrants, largely from Livorno contributed to the commercial networks essential to the prosperity of Ottoman merchants. Apart from raw wool, Salonika was a center for wheat, cotton, tobacco, raisins and served as an internal link to Izmir, Egypt, Crete and the Greek Islands. By the end of the eighteenth century, trade to Vienna was dominated by Greek merchant families.

As with so many of the other urban centers, fires in 1890 and 1917 destroyed much of the wooden city. In the eighteenth century, the city suffered waves of the plague once in every three years. After the establishment of the quarantine stations in the early nineteenth century, plague was less of a problem, but bad harvests, and

the constant arrival of migrants and refugees constituted a different kind of plague. The city's population grew from 30,000 in 1831 to 150,000 in 1913. Labor was cheap and poverty escalated.

Long considered a center of a particular blend of mystical Islam, Sufism and Spanish Judaism, Salonika was home to a community of Jewish converts to Islam in the seventeenth century, calling itself the *Ma'min* (faithful) but known commonly as the *Dönmes* (converts). By the 1870s, the Macedonia problem escalated into extraordinary communal violence, and Salonika had become a hotbed of Bulgarian, Greek and Turkish revolutionaries, among them the powerful, westernized *Ma'min* intellectuals and newspapermen who supported the military coup of the Young Turks in 1908. The latter included Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk).⁸

Salonika suffered significantly in the turmoil of the wars with Russia in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In the Tanzimat period, as elsewhere, the struggle over education, largely French-influenced, was particularly intense in the large Jewish community. Salonika benefitted from the erection of an Alliance Israélite Universelle school (1873) for both boys and girls, but it faced resistance from the traditional Talmud-Torah institutions. The city prospered with the tobacco and textiles trades, boasting the largest number of industrial workers in the empire at the turn of the twentieth century, enabled by the railroads that connected Salonika to Belgrade, Vienna, and Istanbul after the 1880s. The city was occupied during the first Balkan War (1912) and was ceded to Greece in March of 1914.

A population census from 1913—after the city was occupied by the Greek army—offers a snapshot of the city's diversity prior to the massive demographic shifts to come: a total population of 157,889, with just under 40,000 Greeks (Christians), 45,867 Ottomans (Muslims) and 61,439 Jews. In 1923, 30,000 Muslims were exiled, and 100,000 Greeks took their place in the city as part of the remaking of the landscape in the Greco-Turkish population exchange. In 1942, under Nazi occupation, more than 50,000 Jews were transported to Auschwitz.⁹

Izmir (Smyrna) situated on the Aegean Sea was known as the “infidel city” by Ottoman Muslims, because of its status as an international port city dominated by non-Muslims and foreign nationals. Its growth and prosperity were emblematic of the new empowerment of the westernized Ottoman citizen in the 1870s. The city was also the symbol of the tragic Greek-Turkish struggle that began in the 1820s. In the early 1800s, Greek refugees left the Peloponnese Peninsula for the relative safety of Izmir and continued to dominate the city until the catastrophic 1922 fire during the Turkish Independence War of 1919–1922. Of the estimated 300,000 inhabitants in the late nineteenth century, non-Muslims numbered more than half the population of the city. Some 50,000 of the inhabitants were identified as foreign nationals, mostly representatives of all the nations trading with the empire. In 1852, Izmir boasted 6 newspapers in 5 different languages, 17 printing houses, and one of the first public theaters.

In mid-century, Izmir had been a thriving city without the basic port infrastructures for the increasing traffic of international sailing ships and had served

largely as the entrepot for the internal trade of Anatolia. In contrast to Aleppo and Bursa, whose silk and spice industries declined as a result of the global economy, Izmir's growth was precisely because of the new international environment.¹⁰ Collaborative trading systems existed uneasily in an environment of dominant local elite families and ethnic tensions occasionally broke out in riots. Yet the essential free trade nature of the port—largely in the hands of Greeks, Armenians and Jews—managed to dominate the economy until the Tanzimat, when Mahmud II's ferocious policies broke the back of the powerful provincial coalitions. As a result, the multicultural community of Izmir invested in tax farming and became the de facto landlords of the Anatolian countryside.

By the 1870s, steam and rail had transformed Izmir—alongside the other cities of the empire—with moderate success. Large urban projects, overseen only in rare cases by the Ottoman government, were more generally contracted out as concessions to foreign investors. While undoubtedly improving the urban environment, these contracts were the object of fierce competition among the colonial powers. In Izmir, for example, three British merchants obtained the concession for the new quay, though ultimately completed in 1875 by a French company, Dussand Frères. The completed quay featured wharves, customhouse and bonded warehouses, and a 3.5 kilometer embankment that included trams and links to railways.¹¹ Such Ottoman concessions on railroad, streetcar, natural gas and tobacco increased the wealth of the international community, and attracted large numbers of immigrant workers to one of the largest of Ottoman cities.

Trabzon's situation on the eastern Black Sea, its links to the Crimea, and its proximity to an unstable Ottoman-Russian border all had a tremendous influence on its prosperity. An ancient city, the successor to the Byzantine Empire of Trebizond (1204–1461), its economic fortunes depended on trade with Persia. The city was conquered by Mehmed II in 1461. Sultan Selim I, son of Beyazit I, served as the governor of Trabzon in his early years and his son, Süleyman the Magnificent, was born in the city.

Historically, Trabzon was known for its wines and gold. After its conquest, resettlement islamized the city, although Christians remained part of Trabzon and the surrounding area until 1923 when they were included in the Greco-Turkish population exchange. In 1835, the city's population stood at 30,000 inhabitants: the majority Muslim (Turks, Lazes, Tatars, Circassians, Kurds and Persians), with some 4,000 Greeks and 2,000 Armenians.

Early in the nineteenth century, Trabzon was beset with rivalries among the provincial *ayans*, provoked in part by Mahmud II's attempt to reduce their power. By the mid-nineteenth century, British traders had begun to change their route to Persia, stopping at Trabzon instead of sailing through the Persian Gulf. Soon, steamers and sailing ships from all over the Mediterranean called at Trabzon. Exports included livestock, silk, fruit, nuts, tobacco and beans. In the 1840s, 70% of the trade was bound for the Persian market.

The Crimean War was instrumental in Trabzon's further growth as the city served as a supply depot for the campaigns and troops in the Caucasus. During the

height of the war, Trabzon's population grew to 70,000, but by the end of the century, and especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, when the overland route to Central Asia was eclipsed, the population had dwindled to 35,000. Present-day mosques in the city are largely former Byzantine churches. Trabzon exhibited the characteristics of many of the other port cities of the empire: most international import and export trade was in the hands of non-Muslim or European family firms. It had a highly literate and cosmopolitan culture.¹²

Post-1841 Syria and Iraq

Following the international settlement of the Egyptian question, the reassertion of Ottoman control over Arab cities like Beirut and Damascus was complicated by an explosion of intercommunal violence from 1850 to 1860. What began as random acts of violence between Maronite Christians and their Druze overlords became an international incident when thousands of Christians were massacred by Muslim mobs in Mt Lebanon and Damascus. The Ottomans were blamed for instigating the riots and inadequately protecting the Christian population, though the roots of the rebellion lay equally in new land laws as well as provincial sectarian struggles. Under international pressure, the Ottoman government agreed to the intervention of 12,000 troops, mostly French, to restore order to the region.

On 5 October 1860, an international commission composed of France, Britain, Austria, Prussia, Russia and the Ottoman Empire met to negotiate a solution to the Mt Lebanon problem. The commission devised an administrative and judicial system for Lebanon to prevent the potential recurrence of such events. Foreign Minister Fuad Pasha signed the 1861 agreement that turned Mount Lebanon into a semi-autonomous *Mutasarrifiya*, run by a non-Lebanese Christian governor appointed by the sultan with two representatives from each of the six religious groups of the area (Maronite, Druze, Sunni, Shiite, Greek Orthodox and Melkite). This system survived until 1918.

Beirut prospered under the new regime, becoming the intellectual center of the Arab world. Education appears to have been a key factor in the prosperity, as the city invested in new schools and attendance soared. In 1869, the number of schools had more than tripled since the beginning of the century, reaching a total of 75. Of these, 48 were for boys and 27 for girls, serving a total of 5,150 students in a city of 80,000 inhabitants. Of those students, 2,669 were in Catholic/Orthodox schools; 1,679 were in Protestant schools; 702 were in Muslim schools; and 100 attended Jewish schools.¹³ These various schools represented the long established religious institutions and myriad newer missionary societies, such as The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM). The Syrian Protestant College, established in 1866 with 16 students and renamed the American University of Beirut in 1920, was followed by the Jesuit Université de St Joseph in 1875. Beirut proved central to the emergence of the late nineteenth-century Arab intellectual renaissance that envisioned an ecumenical community reflected across the Ottoman Arab provinces.

Damascus, by contrast, did not prosper to the same degree. Established as the capitol of the Ottoman province of Syria in 1864, and located at center of the caravan trade, the Ottomans had allowed the Mawali tribal confederation considerable autonomy in the region as long as the caravans and hajj route pilgrims were protected. When a new Bedouin confederation called the Anaza challenged the old contract with the dynasty in the early 1700s, the sultan broke the traditional arrangement by appointing members of the Azm family as governors. The dynasty ruled Damascus into the early 1800s.

The Damascus Muslim-Christian riots in 1860, when the numbers of Christian massacred may have reached 3,000, reflected a growing discontent with the Ottoman extension of control over the region, but equally arose as a response to complications as the city was drawn into the global marketplace, bringing rural and urban populations together. Explanations for the violence generally note that those under attack were the more prosperous elites whose fortunes had improved with the Tanzimat laws and connections with the colonial powers, while the poorer mixed neighborhoods were left untouched. Following the withdrawal of Mehmed Ali's occupation forces in 1840, the caravan trade declined steeply. Hajj pilgrims increasingly preferred traveling by sea over the historical, unsafe caravan route. This transition had an impact on the economic fortunes—especially in the textile industry—of both Damascus and Aleppo. In contrast to Beirut, the Ottoman army restored order in Damascus, in part to prevent French troops from doing so, but also because Foreign Minister Fuad Pasha acted swiftly and fiercely. He quickly put some 700 of the rioters on trial and executed over 150, including then-Governor Ahmed Pasha. Urban rebellions were generated at least in part by the expectations and trepidations wrought by the new Tanzimat laws and taxes, and it became the pattern rather than the exception for the Ottoman military to respond fiercely, often brutally from the 1860s forward.

While Damascus remained generally peaceful after 1864, it did not prosper as quickly as Beirut did. This changed when a new governor was appointed in 1878. Ahmed Midhat Pasha was by then a seasoned Tanzimat administrator and inaugurated a flurry of modernization projects such as new schools, roads, telegraph lines and a public library in a city estimated to have over 100,000 inhabitants. Despite these new projects, Damascus never fully recovered its former prosperity. The building of the Hijaz Railway completed in 1908, and subsequently destroyed by the Arab Revolt in 1916, failed to restore Damascus as the pilgrimage city of old.

Aleppo offers yet another example of the challenges faced by the post-1850 Ottoman reformers. Aleppo, dubbed the Ottoman caravan city, was the capital of the province with the same name from 1534 to 1918. Aleppo owed its fortunes to its strategic location between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean, as well as to its thriving olive and silk industries. The city was equally renowned for its tents, swords and saddles, resulting from its proximity to Bedouin, Kurdish and Turcoman tribal confederations. It served as the English Levant Company's headquarters until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Textiles, as with

Damascus, remained a primary economic stimulator. As elsewhere, local, largely Muslim notables increased their ownership of uncultivated land surrounding the city in spite of the attempts to redistribute property in the application of the 1858 land law reforms.

Aleppo's non-Muslim communities were equally distinctive by the nineteenth century, including rival communities of (Latin) Catholic and Orthodox Arab, Greek, and Armenian churches, who were also influential in Damascene politics. Similar interconfessional splits occurred in the Jewish community, both amongst Sephardic and Arab Jews, making the preponderance of religious affiliation as a marker of nationhood a feature of the constitutional period.

The rivals for control of the city's fortunes had included the official governor and the Janissaries in the fortress that dominates the landscape of Aleppo. As we have seen previously, by the eighteenth-century power had coalesced around a number of influential local families who periodically resisted Ottoman attempts to extend more formal control and hired their own local militias as protection.¹⁴ One measure of the city's significance to the dynasty was its pivotal role in the negotiations with Mehmed Ali, and Mahmud II's resistance to any agreement that removed Aleppo from Istanbul's orbit.

After the Ottomans assumed control in 1841, local Aleppo families collaborated across sectarian divides, and regional trade (to Baghdad largely) predominated. Aleppo prospered, but the imposition of Tanzimat reforms stimulated resentful Muslim rioters to attack the Christian neighborhoods in 1850 as later in Beirut and Damascus. The intervention of the Ottoman army restored order. Aleppo experienced a revival of its fortunes in the 1890s due in part to an increase in local trade, when the population was estimated at 116,000. Christians and Jews served on post-Tanzimat administrative councils and were represented in the post-1908 Ottoman parliaments. The cityscape of both Aleppo and Damascus, until the 2012-2013 bombings during the Syrian civil war, evoked a certain neo-Ottoman nostalgia among residents and visitors alike.

Baghdad in 1850 exhibits similar characteristics to other cities of the era, though offering its own variation on Ottomanism. In terms of population, the Arabs were drawn largely from the tribal confederations of the hinterland. Roman Catholic missionaries oversaw a large Christian population, and the Muslim population was made up of both Shiites and Sunnis. One exception in Baghdad, like Salonika, was the very large population of Jews. By 1908, in a city of 150,000, 53,000 were estimated to be Jewish.¹⁵ Baghdad had been a Janissary garrison city and housed the Sixth Army of the *Nizamiye* after 1848, a bulwark against both Iranian hostilities and Bedouin raids from Arabia. Although frequently decimated by plague, Baghdad's location on the Tigris River gave an edge to the city, though its position upriver made it uniquely dependent on Basra on the Shatt al-Arab waterway for access to the Persian Gulf. Rivalry between the two ports grew fierce in the steamship age, as the latter became an important nexus for the British in Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf trade, while Baghdad dominated the internal trade.

The Ottomans had appointed a military governor to Baghdad in the early 1700s. The *pashalik*, as it was known, came to dominate the territories that roughly equate to contemporary Iraq, and incorporating the administration of the Tigris and Euphrates channels used for navigation and irrigation under its regime. The administration was based on military slaves (*Mamluks*), largely Georgians, who were professionally trained and ran the city for the founding family. The Ottoman imposed direct rule in 1831, when the *Mamluks* were replaced by centrally appointed military governors.

A notable exception to the military appointees was Ahmed Midhat Pasha, who was governor of Baghdad from 1869–1872. A reform enthusiast in thought and action, having inaugurated provincial reforms previously in Bulgaria, Midhat Pasha brought Tanzimat administrative and structural changes to Baghdad, including the first secular public and military schools. He also established an arts and crafts school, largely for Muslim orphans, and was instrumental in organizing the publishing of official publications, such *al-Zawra*, and the provincial yearbooks (Figure 7.5).

According to the official writings and memoirs of the Ottoman (Turkish) reformers, including Midhat Pasha, Baghdad remained a prime example of a city that needed the Ottoman civilizing hand. Midhat Pasha's very first task was to quell an



FIGURE 7.5 Midhat Pasha, Vanity Fair, 1877 © Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo A310KF

uprising of in the city against conscription. He had been trying to enlist Arab tribesmen into the Sixth Army that grew from 7,000 to 12,000 to support the reconquest of Yemen and stabilization of the Hijaz.

To support the corps, he founded a textile factory and mill. Steamship passenger lines, like those sailing on the Danube, were established in his time as governor. The Babil, for example, had sleeping space for 280 passengers and made the trip from Istanbul to Iraq once every three months. Smaller ships used for traffic between Qurna, Basra, Kuwait, Bushire and Bahrein were less successful, as was the attempt to dredge the Euphrates, which remained difficult to navigate. Such enterprises were in competition with foreign steam lines established in the same period and dependent on coal, which they acquired from English shipping companies.¹⁶

Midhat Pasha also attempted to impose the property reforms of the Ottoman 1858 land law, which envisioned individualizing ownership. As elsewhere, this had the effect of entrenching the tribal chieftains—money lenders to the agrarian class—and contributed to continued unrest among the tribal groups. Tenuous Ottoman control of the Tigris-Euphrates remained vulnerable to the problems caused by a lack of leadership. At the beginning of WWI, Baghdad had not modernized to the degree of more fortunately placed Ottoman port cities.

Basra, situated on the Red Sea, had long benefited from trade with India including wool, grain, dates and horses, and imports such as sugar, rice, paper, glass and iron. The small port attracted tribal merchants from the interior as well as members of overseas trading families. The population reflected these trading networks and included Persians, Afghans, as well as Indians and Arabs. Although the Ottoman/Qajar Persian border dispute over the Shatt al-Arab River had been settled in 1847, the tribes in the hinterland of Basra increasingly were Shiite rather than Sunni, and Wahhabi in the Arabian Peninsula. This Basra-Baghdad circuit became the battleground between British and Ottoman colonial projects. The competition accelerated in the 1870s, as part of Sultan Abdülhamid's attempts at reasserting imperial control over Britain's monopoly on local trade, foreign concessions and the Shiite and Wahhabi populations of the area. Certain quarters of the city carried marks of Hamidian policies, such as the Arnavut (Albanian) Muhacirun or Uzbekh Quarters, where refugees/emigrants from Russia, Crete and the Balkans were settled. Still, by 1907, British penetration of the local trading networks accounted for 96% of the trade in the Iraqi provinces. Britain had occupied Basra by 1913 and it would play a significant role in WWI.¹⁷

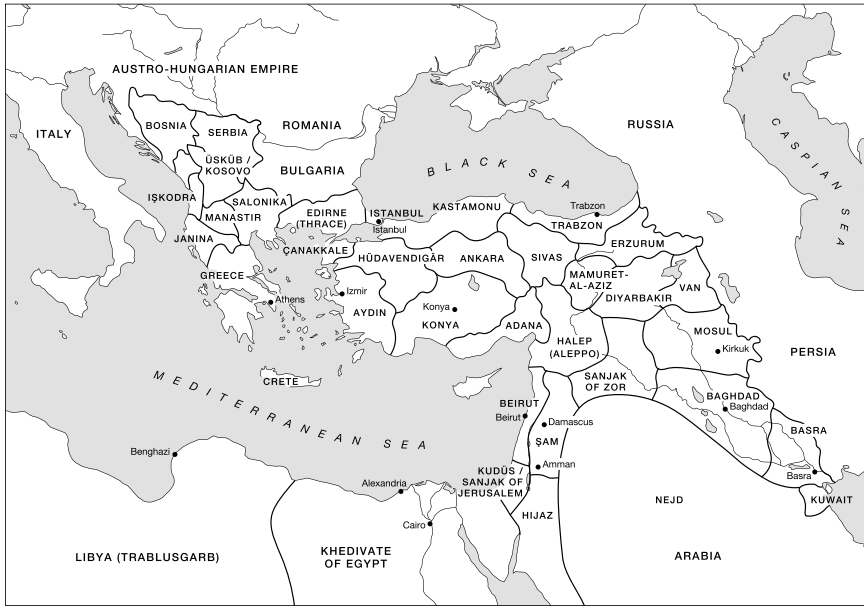
Basra had long served as a seaborne and military campaign base. In 1871, Nizam troops and tribal forces of the Muntefiq confederation and other provincial notables—led by Crimean War veteran Commander Ahmed Muhtar Pasha—reoccupied Najd and northern Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula. After 1872, the newly reconquered territories of Yemen, with its new Governor Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, joined the list of Ottoman provinces and the capital Sana'a served as a laboratory for Tanzimat reformers and colonial practices. Conscription was not imposed. The city's fortifications, a new military hospital and barracks complex,

and new Muslim public schools changed the urban landscape. As elsewhere, a municipal council was established, and representatives were selected for the first parliament in 1876. The city's center, including a seventeenth century mosque and public square (*meydan*) were restored and a postal and telegraph service initiated. In 1881, the council established local troops, called the *Asakir-i Hamidiye*, that were fashioned after the British practice of tribal regiments in India.¹⁸ In Southern Arabia, as in Baghdad and Basra, the Ottomans were confronting Muslim sectarianism, specifically of the Zaydi Shiites, which became part of the discourse and conflict in the constitutional period. Basra, with its deep connections to India, was one of the Iraqi cities receptive to Hamidian-style Islamic universalism.

Ethno-religious differences in the Arab provinces were not just about Christians and Jews but also Sunni and Shiite Muslims who were the primary target as conscripts for the late imperial armies. Sultan Abdülhamid II's pan-Islamist campaign—which has been described as “resunnization,” but perhaps is better understood as a colonial project—was aimed both internally and externally, as Abdülhamid II became increasingly alarmed about the loss of the Arab provinces. Part of pan-Islamist appeal was to Muslim countries worldwide, but especially to India, with its centuries-long trading networks to the Gulf. As the century came to a close, the ethnic divide between Arabs and Turks also assumed a place of primacy in the debates about the Ottoman future. Still, it is safe to say that the populations of the Arab provinces, in contrast to the Balkans, considered themselves part of the empire even into the first decade of the twentieth century (Map 7.1).

Who was an Ottoman?

By 1876, the reorganization of the empire's territories was essentially complete apart from Egypt. Provincial reorganization, deployment of the army, and efforts at urban and land reform had made some impact on improving living conditions, though that varied by location and those in charge. The very first provinces created by the 1864 law, for example the Danube Province of Bulgaria, was intended to serve as a model of the Tanzimat reforms. Ahmed Midhat Pasha was Bulgaria's governor from 1864 to 1868 before his appointment to Baghdad and is remembered for his energy and enthusiasm in creating dozens of schools, roads and bridges, often by public donation. But elsewhere, the forces of change were complicated by foreign intervention that affected all aspects of individual lives, as well as by deeply entrenched and autonomous tribal and ethnic confederations as described in the urban examples above. Ottoman bureaucrats, especially after 1856, were engaged on all fronts in modernizing the late empire and reasserting Ottoman sovereignty according to evolving international standards in law. These efforts played out across policies in municipal governance, immigration, education, conscription, taxation, prosecution, mobility and latterly, nationality, or the question of belonging. It is here that local autonomy or self-rule particularly served as a negotiation tool as the reformers struggled to save the empire.



MAP 7.1 Ottoman provinces after 1865 *Vilayet Law* © Gregory T. Woolston

Two of the most pressing issues for the Ottomans of the 1870s were the defining of ever-shrinking imperial borders and the attempt to control movement inside and outside the empire, as illustrated by the adoption of the passport. The mobility of huge armies, pilgrims, caravans and nomadic tribes had long been characteristic of the Ottoman landscape. However, the mobility question was exacerbated following the Russo-Ottoman wars of 1828–1829 and again in the Crimean War, when millions of refugees uprooted by violence and the subsequent redrawing of state boundaries criss-crossed previously more fluid borders. By the 1870s, populations with means, such as Lebanese Arabs and Armenians, were using new pathways to immigration. Peasants were generally tied to the land by tax regulations, but punishment for flight was haphazardly imposed and varied widely across the empire. Nineteenth-century visitors often commented on abandoned fields and towns. The struggle for arable land—exacerbated by Ottoman attempts at land reform—pitted peasant, nomad and refugees against one another and is one of the major contributors to late Ottoman unrest prior to WWI. Censuses began in 1831 but were primarily conducted to gather information about potential conscripts. The census was irregularly applied until 1893, when the first empire-wide census for demographic data (rather than for taxes or conscription) was completed. By that time, large migratory shifts had fundamentally altered the Anatolian, Syrian and Iraqi landscapes.

Itinerant populations in Istanbul were always subject to greater scrutiny and while expulsions intensified as part of Selim III's reforms, their presence in the city

remained a problem of the Tanzimat period. In the reordering of Istanbul after 1826, regulations concerning internal movement required subjects to possess a *mürur tezkiresi* (travel document). Reissued in 1844, the regulations specified the need for local approval even to leave one's own district and were introduced across Ottoman territories. The requirement that residents, travelers and visitors carry such internal documents continued in Ottoman territories until 1910 when the *tezkiye* was abolished.¹⁹

In 1869, the Foreign Ministry promulgated the new nationality law (*tâbbiyyat*, subjecthood), referring to *tebaa* (subjects). It consisted of nine articles, of which the first and last are the most important. The first stated that "every individual born from an Ottoman father and an Ottoman mother, or solely from an Ottoman father, is an Ottoman subject," defining the *homo ottomanicus*. Articles two and three elaborated on non-Ottoman birth and residence of foreigners who could acquire Ottoman status at the age of majority, and foreigners who could acquire the status after five years of residence. The middle articles dealt with the right of the Imperial Council to grant or strip Ottoman nationality. Articles seven and eight dealt with wives/children of different nationalities than their husbands/fathers. The final, ninth article stated that "anyone inhabiting the empire is considered an Ottoman by default unless they can demonstrate otherwise."²⁰

The law is modeled on many such enactments already in place in the Ottoman neighborhood, such as Greece, Iran and Europe in general, but is equally reflective of a long Ottoman practice. It is novel to the extent that Ottomanism was represented as a generic civic nationalism that assumed the equality of all inhabitants regardless of religion. The final article, however, proved to be the most controversial, as it required making a choice of homeland in an empire that thrived on the ambiguity of identities. The nationality law has been described as "reactive" to an environment where other national identities such as Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian and Iranian, and increasingly Armenian, were already making inroads in Ottoman territories; this is at least one explanation for why the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was responsible for the legislation and enforcement of such documents.²¹

The struggle for the "hearts and minds" of Ottoman citizens is humorously represented by Macfarlane in his description of an Armenian and Greek altercation on the streets of Istanbul in the 1840s. It began with a Greek tearing up an Armenian's cloak, with the latter bringing down the police on the hapless Greek: "the cavasses [çavuş], *More Turco*, cudgelled the Greek unmercifully, called his wife all manner of ill names and then whisked him down to the dreaded prison in the Arensal." The advice given to the wife was that she get protection from one of the foreign consuls, and

[N]ot be a Rayah subject of the Sultan! If you were protected this would not have happened. You cannot hope to make money and keep it without foreign protection. If you cannot be Russian, or French, or English, why not try to be Spanish or Swedish, or Sardinian or Neapolitan, or Tuscan or Roman, or Danish! Danish protection is very good, why not try and get

that? You have money, you do washing for the Danish Legation, why not be a Dane?²²

As the anecdote suggests, Ottoman bureaucrats were already coping with possible abuses of thousands of the trading licenses governed by the capitulations and under foreign government protection—a practice that arose from webs of intercommunal mercantile networks that knew no “national” borders. In 1860, for example, the American legation in Istanbul estimated that as many as 50,000 residents benefitted from foreign protection.²³ The debate about the size of this so-called “protégé” population may never be settled, but it certainly had an influence on an increasingly alarmed Ottoman central administration. In fact, one of the contributing factors to the mounting internal criticism of the Ottoman administration was the detestation of the capitulatory regime.

Furthermore, intense proselytizing activities of Christian missionaries” specifically the American Protestant (largely Congregational) organizations run under the aegis of the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions—repeatedly challenged Ottoman legal authorities after the 1860s around conversion and education of Ottoman nationals. For many Ottoman officials, the missionaries were the face of the encroaching European powers; missionaries could generally count on Britain and later the United States to extract them from difficulties created by their proselytizing under the guise of doing good work in schools and clinics. To give some scale of the operations, in 1909, the Board reported that their stations were staffed with 169 American missionaries, more than half of them women. The mission community consisted of 65,240 native workers and adherents, 57 schools, 20 hospitals, and 125 churches—along with \$99,111.07 in locally collected donations.²⁴ The Board’s greatest concentration of activities was in Central and Eastern Anatolia, and though they initially thought to convert the Jewish community, their converts were almost invariably drawn other Christian denominations, notably Armenians. It is difficult to judge the impact of the missionary presence on the Ottoman landscape, as the history is very much tied up with the Armenian genocide in the early decades of the twentieth century. What is apparent is that the Ottoman authorities only took action when excessive zeal caused public unrest, or when they were persuaded to intervene by the foreign counsels. Such was an incident in Istanbul in 1860s, when declaring the Prophet Muhammed an imposter, missionaries set up print shops in rented rooms and distributed leaflets in front of Aya Sophia, including “Proofs of the Falsehood of the Mahometan Religion.” The government closed them down. Other proofs of missionary success were the printed convert stories, such of that of Selim, a resident of Salonika who found his way to the American missionaries in Bebek. His story is prefaced with the following verses:

Kind reader No fiction of marvellous power
Here woos thy attention to wile a dull hour;
But ‘tis marvellous truth, and it comes from afar,
From the bright, glowing clime of the Crescent and Star!

Though that banner blood-red has long ceased to affright
 The pale Franks with its boastings of Mussulman might,
 Heroes live still, and glorious conflicts there are
 Going on in that land of the Crescent and Star!
 If faint is the dawn, and all trembling its ray,
 The mountains are tinged with the saffron of day
 There's a sunrise, in rosy light, bathing each hill,
 Though the Star and the Crescent float over them still.
 And't must come to meridian splendour at last,
 And the Crescent and Star in obscurity cut;
 For the conquering Cross, in the distance looms proud, Shouting,
 "Peace and goodwill, and to God glory!" loud.
 Then, as Christians, let's hail it, and fervently pray
 That the Turks, as a nation, may not pass away
 But as brethren join us in our joyous hurrah
 At the Cross rising over their Crescent and Star!²⁵

For the most part, the missionaries were more circumspect, though their most intense rancour was reserved for fellow believers of the ancient Christian rites. Protests from rival church organizations intensified as the ABCFM influence spread, especially from the historic Catholic (Latins) and Greek Orthodox rites, forcing the Ottoman government to intervene. Armenian Protestants, numbering only a few thousand, were given *millet* status in 1850. New regulations followed in the 1860s for the Greek Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish communities. These regulations that included the establishment of lay and religious councils and assemblies, resembled constitutions, again with unexpected consequences including the creation of independent, national Orthodox churches in Bulgaria (1870) and Romania (1885) and increasing interest in ethno-religious "nations" among Muslim and non-Muslim populations alike.

Another unintended consequence of the missionary presence was the circulation of secularist ideas in the curriculum of universities. This occurred in schools such as the American University of Beirut, or Robert College—now Bosphorus University in Bebek, which was established by Cyrus Hamlin in 1863 for the education of Bulgarian Christians. Both Fuad and Ali Pashas were deeply concerned about the need to expand secular education for Muslims, as they realized the extent to which missionary schools could serve as centers of revolutionary ideas. As early as 1845, an empire-wide system of education had proposed primary (notably the *rüşdiye*), secondary, and post-secondary schools. In 1867, the Minister of Education reported that 11,008 primary schools with 242,017 boys and 126,454 girls had been established. The secondary schools numbered 108 with 7,830 students. This did not include either the military preparatory academies or a count of the medreses. By contrast, non-Muslim *millet* primary schools numbered 2,495 with 125,404 students.

Higher education was another story. In 1846, the Darülfünün (Academy of Sciences), the predecessor to Istanbul University, had opened. In 1870, after restructuring of the curriculum from its medrese base, the university was re-inaugurated. However, it subsequently shut down over lack of teachers and students, and vigorous protests by the ulema, and remained closed until 1900. Education and the spread of schools across the empire remained a priority to the Tanzimat reformers, evident in the efforts to improve the civil service discussed below, but a significant, post-secondary system of secular universities eluded Ottoman reformers.²⁶

New arrivals from the Caucasus—The Muhacirun Commission

The constant Russo–Ottoman warfare on the northern border had produced a system of protections based on treaties that was quite different from the capitulatory licenses offered by foreign consuls to Ottoman non-Muslim families. From the mid-eighteenth century onward, the treaties that followed each of the major confrontations included clauses around prisoners-of-war, stragglers, refugees and migrants. The Russians proved particularly adept at forcing Ottoman officials to seek out potential “Russians” in the contested lands along the Danubian and Black Sea borders particularly, and to hand out protection papers to Greeks and Armenians, urging them to emigrate to Russian cities especially after the 1828–1829 war.

As definitions of belonging and passage rights tightened in the 1860s, such protections were complicated by the question of native Russian Muslims versus converts. One of the little-known stories of the late empire concerns the Crimean and Caucasus refugees who were expelled from their homeland and sought refuge in shrinking Ottoman lands. Refugee numbers are estimated at three to five million, making it the largest such voluntary/forced migration before WWI. It included Tatars, Laz, Inguseti, Ossetian, Circassians, Chechens, Daghestani, Abhazi (Abkhazi) and Abaza, and after the turn of the century, Muslims from all the Balkan states. The Tatars were relocated twice following the Crimean War, chased from the Crimea, and again following the Balkan Wars 1912–1913, and were finally resettled around Ankara, Izmir and Konya.

The Caucasus produced its own wave of refugees from 1860 to 1864, when Russian detachments emptied the villages of the northwest Caucasus and the eastern Black Sea Coast. Russian diplomats repeatedly assured their European colleagues that the expulsions were not meant to be bloody, arguing that removing the highlanders [shades of Ireland and Scotland] was the only to extinguish banditry and organized rebellion.²⁷

Russian settlers were encouraged to take their place. Following the 1877–1878 war, some two million were forced to leave the Caucasus, and similar numbers driven from Bulgaria then and after the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars. The impact on Trabzon and Samsun may offer an insight as to the scale: in 1864 Trabzon, with 7,000 refugees already in the city, saw 3,000 more arriving in just three days; by

May there were 25,000 camped around the city as well as 40,000 in Samsun. An estimated 150 were dying daily of disease and hunger. Refugees who were counted by health inspectors on the Bosphorus the same year numbered 74,000.²⁸

In 1857, the Ottomans had instituted a refugee code that amounted to a resettlement act. The code promised a plot of land with tax and conscription exemptions should refugees settle in Rumelia and Anatolia. The refugees were guaranteed religious freedom even though most were Muslim, but they had to agree to remain on and cultivate the land for upwards of 12 years. It is neither hard to imagine the difficulties such settlers had in the often hardscrabble and pastoral landscape assigned to them, nor the potential for conflict with long settled populations especially, eastern Anatolia, homelands of Armenians and Kurds. Slow to respond at first, the government created a Refugee Commission (*Muhacirun Komisyonu*), which operated as an independent agency with responsibility for overseeing the well-being of the new arrivals after 1861. The result over time was a systematic distribution of Muslims over all of Anatolia, Syria and Iraq. The number of arrivals indelibly altered the Muslim/non-Muslim balance in Bulgaria, Anatolia and the Arab provinces, especially in Iraq, and contributed to increasing levels of violence. Many were recruited into the army and used in pacification.

In 1864, for example, as part of the reform and resettlement initiatives, a special army, called the *Firka-yi Islahiye* (Army of Reform) was raised of soldiers from Albanian, Georgian, Circassian and Kurdish populations (7,500 infantry and 10,000 cavalry) and equipped with modern rifles. Renowned historian and administrator Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (*Ottoman House*), and Fourth Army Commander Derviş Pasha were put in charge of the expedition which embarked on a campaign of pacification and settlement among the (chiefly) Türkmen tribes of the Âfukorova (Adana) plain. Local tribes supplied not just soldiers but animals, shelter and other resources. Tribal confederations that did not cooperate were forced out of the area, dispersed widely or retired and given land grants. The Rehaniye confederation of Türkmen cooperated as did some Kurdish tribes. Cevdet persuaded the tribes with money and by purchasing rather than confiscating food and supplies. The Firka created new towns for subsequent resettlement of refugees. Farther East, in Gavur Dağ, the Firka built 3,800 homes in 35 villages. As part of the settlement project, town councils were established, infrastructure, schools and government offices were built. The new town of Hassa, for example, represented the population of Armenians and Kurds. Elsewhere it might be just Kurds. One of the chief tasks of these new municipalities was to record landholdings and registration of populations for future censuses and conscription.²⁹

Military reforms revisited

Not coincidentally, in 1869, Ottoman officials introduced a new conscription law and further military reforms, known as the Avni reforms (after Hüseyin Avni Pasha, a famed graduate [Mektebli] of the Military Academy). Sultan Abdülaziz,

on the throne since 1861, did not possess the elegance of his French-speaking younger brother Abdülmecid. In fact, he has been described as vulgar, rude, mentally unstable, and deeply suspicious of the societal reforms of his brother. Pledging to curb palace spending after Abdülmecid's ruinous expenditures, the sultan did little to alter the levels of corruption and cronyism that characterized the royal household. His anti-reform sentiments tapped into and reflected a reactionary mood in Istanbul that had started to generate unrest in Muslim military and religious circles after the debacles of the Crimean War.

Abdülaziz may have been an anti-reformer, but as with many autocrats, he was also an avid admirer of the military, its parades and rituals, which meant that the *military* reform agenda could be taken up once again. In 1861, Abdülaziz appointed Namık Pasha, veteran of Syria and the Crimea, as commander-in-chief. Namık Pasha immediately stepped up the educational system of the military by adding free high schools in all the core provinces and cities housing field army headquarters, meant to serve as preparatory schools for the Military Academy (Harbiye) and Military Engineering School (Mühendishane) in Istanbul. The initiative theoretically inaugurated educational paths for all citizens, creating an elite corps of men who would dedicate their lives to the military. All of it was costly: in 1869 military expenditures accounted for 75% of the annual budget of 4,700,000 pounds sterling.³⁰ Regardless, these initiatives continued to be supported by Abdülhamid II after 1876. As had been abundantly evident in the Crimean War, however, the Mektebli officers were few in number, a problem that continued into the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, when there were only 1,600 academy-trained officers out of 20,000 regular officers.³¹ The military had not created a non-commissioned officer corps (NCO), relying instead on officers promoted from within the ranks (*Alaylı*), notably more conservative than their academy-trained superiors, and often rebellious.

The Avni reforms of 1869, prompted by continuing Prussian successes against France, were based on the Nizam/*Redif* system of 1843, and remained tied to the conscription/citizenry models that had become the normal intake in all of Europe. The reforms represent an incremental stage in the transformation of the Ottoman military as little was fundamentally altered. The major change was to turn the Hassa special corps into a normal field army, the First (Dersaadet) among equals, stationed in Istanbul. A Seventh field army, assigned to Yemen and the Gulf, joined the Second Army in Âzumnu (Tuna/Daube), the Third Army in Manastır (Rumelia); the Fourth Army in Erzurum (Anadolu); the Fifth in Damascus (Suriye) and the Sixth in Baghdad (Arabistan). Forty-two fortresses across two fortress regions were organized independently around local troops. Three independent guard battalions guarded the Bosnian, Greek and Montenegrin borders, where insurrections and banditry were constants.

The *Redif* reserve system, based on Prussian models, was never a complete success. It proved impossible to sustain for lack of structure, trained officers, insufficient and poor equipment, and lack of coordination with the main army. Avni's reforms increased the number of *redif* troops without addressing the problems but instead doubled the numbers required from each of the provinces.

Drawing of lots remained the selection process, and the unfortunate recruit was now liable to four years as a regular, followed by two years in the *İhtiyat* (active reserves) and six more in the reserves. A total of 343,000 *redifs* were raised for the 1877–1878 war by following the letter of the 1869 rules, with a total disregard for preparedness and reliability. This was still a Muslim army, relying on more and more of the immigrant populations that had been arriving in larger numbers since 1829. The non-Muslim buyout tax (*bedel*) remained an important source of revenue for the Ottoman administration, but resistance to non-Muslim officers also came from the Muslim ranks. Armenians and Jews could be found as teachers in the military schools, and doctors in the military hospitals, but insufficient numbers meant that were just as many foreign doctors hired for the 1877–1878 campaign as had been the case in the Crimean War.

It was a system beset with financial and regimental insufficiencies, inadequate leadership and significant problems of sectarian violence, banditry, tribal unrest, resistance to the reforms and increasingly, separatist (nationalist) rebellions across remaining Ottoman territories. As Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson note, “the new field army structure and the demands of counterinsurgency operations collided,” resulting in “mission-oriented groupings” of independent detachments (called *Müfreze*). These detachments were named after their commander or particular mission, such as the *Firka-i Islahiye* described previously that was established around the veteran Albanian battalions, cavalry, artillery and *bashibozuks* who were involved in Montenegro in 1863–1864, redeployed to Kozan (Cilicia) and then were used to suppress rebels in Lebanon.³²

Such ad hoc forces became permanent groupings in the volatile post-1860 countryside, further eroding trust in the official regimental and brigade structure. It also meant senior officers spent a good part of their careers fighting rebels, tribal confederations and collecting taxes rather than conventional warfare. This was particularly true of the armies in Anatolia, Syria and Iraq, but insurrections stimulated by the rising cacophony of constitutional/nationalist movements would embroil the Ottomans once again with the Russians in the Balkans and the Caucasus. It is small wonder then that resistance to the sultan grew significantly among the officer class as well as the bureaucratic class with the concatenation of crises in the 1870s.

Who’s minding the store?

When Ali Pasha died in 1871, he and Fuad Pasha had dominated the offices of the grand vizier and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs since 1857 (*Ottoman House*). Those years of leadership saw the tremendous expansion of population, bureaucracy, and educational infrastructure as well as a new working relationship, in theory, with the great powers after the Crimean War. However, Istanbul faced its own set of problems driven by this massive reconstruction across the empire. Between 1850 and 1914, the city almost tripled in size from 350,000 to over 900,000. From the first civil census of Istanbul in 1885: 44% Muslim, 17% Greek

(Rum); 17% Armenian; 5% Jewish, along with small numbers of Catholics and Protestants. The remaining 15% of the population was made up of foreigners. Furthermore, it was determined that some 53% of the population had been born elsewhere testifying to the increased role that immigrants and migratory labor played in the last decades of the empire.³³ The civil administration, estimated at 1,000–5,000 in the eighteenth century, grew a hundredfold in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with some 50,000–100,000 civil servants spread across the empire in the Hamidian period. But the education of the new civil service did not proceed apace. Most of the first generation of reformers entered the government via the Translation Bureau, which included travel abroad and diplomatic service to European capitals as part of the curriculum. As the need for more bureaucrats grew, the government opened modern schools such as Mekteb-i Maarif-i Adliye (1839) or the later Mekteb-i Mülkiye (1859) in Istanbul, which, much like the military academy, graduated few before the 1870s.³⁴

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to be the most well-developed of the government offices, with some 200 salaried consuls serving across the globe, indicative of the extent to which relations with Europe preoccupied the government. The language of diplomacy remained French, taught in the newly reimagined Imperial Ottoman Galatasaray Lycée (1868) established to train future generations of the Ottoman leadership. Some 341 students enrolled in the first class, of which 147 were Muslims, 48 Gregorian Armenians, 36 Greek Orthodox, 34 Jews, 34 Bulgars, 23 Roman Catholics and 19 Armenian Catholics. The enrolment doubled the following year. Galatasaray Lisesi remains in operation today.³⁵

Both Ali and Fuad Pashas were committed to the French model for reforms that assumed equality of citizenship, increasingly controversial among Ottoman Muslims. In May of 1867, with ongoing rebellions in Bulgaria and Crete, Fuad Pasha composed a memorandum to the foreign powers. The memorandum contained a report of the progress of the reforms of 1856 and promises about future legislation, including an inclusive Council of State. He stressed education as a concern for Muslims and non-Muslims as a top priority. This communique served as a preface to an unprecedented grand tour planned for Sultan Abdülaziz to visit Paris at the invitation of Napoleon III. From June to August 1867, Fuad Pasha accompanied the sultan to Paris and London (Figure 7.6).

They returned via Brussels, Coblenz, Vienna and Budapest, meeting Leopold II, Wilhelm I, and Franz Joseph, with a final stop in the newly organized Tuna Province of Bulgaria to inspect the progress of then-Governor Ahmed Midhat. Whether the sultan himself came home a reformed ruler remains doubtful, but he is known to have reiterated the Tanzimat aims in a public statement:

The sweetest reward for the efforts of rulers to advance security and public wealth is the response of his subjects with utmost love and loyalty.... Without doubt and as is observed everywhere, the visible causes of balance of states are all about the spread of sciences and beneficial knowledge among



FIGURE 7.6 “Queen Victoria investing Abdul Aziz, Sultan of Turkey, with the order of the Garter, 1867.” William Barnes Wollen © The Print Collector / Alamy Stock Photo W7D8RA

the population, proliferation of roads and passages, regulation of land and naval forces, and securing the financial affairs. Thus, we pledge to focus on progress and proliferation of these items as we have done before.³⁶

In true Ottoman fashion, the statement invokes the centuries old “circle of equity” platitudes that his audience would have understood, without reference to the real struggles regarding the equity and freedom of his subjects.

Later that same year, Grand Vizier Ali Pasha composed a memorandum for internal circulation concerning Ottoman reforms, which embodies more succinctly the problems facing the reformers. Concerned about the potential for foreign intervention in Crete, he declared the need to open all public offices to Muslims and non-Muslims alike; the urgency for education in the development of improved and mixed schools, and the promulgation of a new civil law code where mixed tribunals should be established.

In 1868, Ali Pasha himself oversaw the division of the Tanzimat-generated Council of Ministers into two separate bodies: the Council of State, which continued the consultative, executive oversight body for the reforms, while the Council of Judicial Ordinances, the latter ultimately evolving into a Ministry of Justice, assumed

the responsibility for enforcement. The Council of State included members from each of the non-Muslim *millets*. By that time separate ministries for education, trade and agriculture, customs and public works had also been organized.³⁷

It is an extraordinary reform record in such a short time, engineered by a closed circle of westernized individuals who continued to be influenced by the palace with its own coterie of favorites of the sultan. If the Crimean period can be described as the Stratford Canning show, Abdülaziz's reign has been characterized as driven by Russian Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev (Ignatieff), Ambassador to Istanbul 1864-1877, and a natural opponent to the French and British mentors of the bureaucracy.³⁸ Although the "Porte" had become the code word for an independent and enlightened civil service in European diplomatic circles, it was not that simple in Istanbul.

As the earlier survey of the urban and rural countryside has suggested, the template of westernization, modelled on European laws, was resisted for all kinds of legitimate and inchoate reasons. It also remained unevenly applied, requiring constant and considerable violence to move forward. The principles of the European "Enlightenment project" were thinly represented in the legions of ill-educated and ill-paid scribes in Istanbul itself, where murmurs of resistance began to emerge. Ottomanism was increasingly challenged by those who might owe their employment to the clientage/protégé system of former days but who saw little personal benefit from it. As Roderic Davison notes, "In this sporadic progress towards a more genuine progress, there was a triple dichotomy: the Porte was ahead of Muslim opinion; the capital was ahead of the provinces; and while some non-Muslim Ottomans improved their status and advanced in official positions, many of their brethren went the opposite way toward separatist nationalism."³⁹

Resentment about the superficiality of the reforms, the closed circle of the bureaucracy, and the displacement of shari'a law by the imposition of international legal systems, surfaced first in 1859 in the Kuleli Incident, named for the army barracks on the Bosphorus. Ulema, theological students and army officers coalesced around a defense of the shari'a, resistance to the move to equality for non-Muslims, and the desire to replace Sultan Abdülmecid with Sultan Abdülaziz who was not a party to the plot. The conspiracy was betrayed and has since been held up as the first evidence of constitutional revolt in the city. It is better understood as the early murmurings of Muslim resistance to the fundamental changes then underway, provoked by groups who were aggrieved by a loss of status and power. That military pay was deeply in arrears may also explain the participation of army officers as the government careened towards bankruptcy.

The road to the 1876 constitution

Demand for a constitution would emerge far more forcibly from within the bureaucracy itself, most notably from Ahmed Midhat Pasha (*Ottoman House*), the energetic and forceful provincial reformer remembered as the father of the constitution,

and Namık Kemal (1840–1888), famous for his enormous body of poetry, plays and histories, as well as his role in the Young Ottoman Paris exile group.⁴⁰

Since the Crimean War, the city of Istanbul was teeming with exiles, refugees and revolutionary views not dissimilar to the environments found in many European capitals. Travel and residence in European cities had become commonplace for those with means, or those with official assignments and investigatory responsibilities to learn from the Europeans. A rapid expansion of the Ottoman Turkish language printing press—governed by a press law after 1865 but only lightly censored by contrast with later Hamidian restrictions—had created an environment for critical dialogue about the nature of the Ottoman system and its future. Young *literati* of little means were to be found everywhere with a self-consciousness concerning their rights as citizens, influenced in part by Guiseppe Mazzini and his revolutionary fraternity all over Europe. Some of this new generation were members of Sufi circles; just as many joined the Freemasons or might be members of the lay councils of the *millets*. The provincial reorganization consolidated previous legislation on provincial municipal councils, which by the 1870s formed the backbone of regional legislation, tax collecting, and significantly, conscription.

French continued to be the language of civilization; German increasingly the language of power and global domination as the Metternich era was replaced by that of Bismarck. It should come as no surprise that the Translation Bureau itself enabled the circulation of writings of European Romanticism and the Greek philosophers in part as the curriculum for the Tanzimat bureaucracy. Nor should it be surprising that the Translation Bureau had initiated reforms around Ottoman Turkish itself, illustrated by the first published grammar of the Ottoman language in 1851. An Ottoman Scientific Society was founded in 1861. In 1876, a dictionary was published that reflected the efforts to simplify the language, increase the use of vocalization (vowels) and Turkish words. Linguistic changes aimed at increasing the legibility of the reformist message for a population that was still largely illiterate. Ottoman elites had long maintained *salons* of their protégés, replicated across the empire in the larger urban settings. Sultanic councils (*meşveret*), a routine battlefield practice, had traditionally become a way of testing difficult decisions and conciliating powerful ulema in the palace. In fact, one of the main arguments of the original Young Ottomans group was that the Muslim system had a long history of representative practice based on the shari'a and insistence on good and just government.

Empowered by the new press, the critics of the current government coalesced around complaints about the superficiality of the westernized bureaucrats, the profligacy of the palace and the need for independent thought and representative institutions. Further, the agenda came to include the call for a constitution and a national parliament, and for the first time, hinted at not just replacing but eliminating the sultan altogether.

Namık Kemal (1840–1899), the most well-known Ottoman intellectual of the nineteenth century, was also the most prominent of the group of 1867 dissidents who fled Istanbul for Paris under the patronage of Mustafa Fazıl Pasha. Born in

Tekirdağ in 1840, Kemal was a member of an illustrious family of servants of the sultan, including Grand Vizier Topal Osman Pasha who defeated the army of Persian Nadir Shah in the 1740s. He was raised by his grandfather, Abd al-Latif Pasha, after his mother's death at an early age and spent much of his youth outside of Istanbul. At 16, he joined his father Mustafa Asim Bey in Istanbul, who was prominent as the court astrologer, and instrumental in the further education of his son after the death of his grandparents. The little that is known about Namık Kemal's upbringing suggests the path of an *alim*, steeped in the Muslim philosophers and poets, whose family had lost its prominence and wealth to the westernized reformist networks.

By 1859, he had joined the secretarial staff at the Porte and served in the Translation Bureau from 1861 to 1867. His circle would have included the well-known Ibrahim Âzinası Efendi (1826–1871), son of an army officer, Reşid Pasha protégé, and editor of the first Ottoman literary journals. Others include Ziya Pasha (1825–1880), appointed to the Imperial palace in the later 1860s, another Reşid Pasha protégé, poet, editor and publisher, both rivals to Ali and Fuad. Kemal joined the Freemasons of the Union d'Orient, founded in 1863, which included a broad spectrum of Ottomans such as satirist Teodor Kasap (1835–1897), who had been associated with Alexander Dumas and Garibaldi during his time in Italy and France. Kasap's journal *Diogene*, originally published in French and Greek, switched to Turkish in 1870 (*Diyojen*), using satire and mockery to foster a nationalist agenda. Kemal is said to have contributed to it anonymously as he became the chief publicist of the diverse group of Young Ottomans. Finally, Kemal collaborated for a brief period in exile with Ali Suavi (1839–1878), preacher and publisher of *Mukbir*, which became the voice of the proponents of *Osmanlılık* (Ottomanism) in Paris and London. Kemal's output was prodigious, and it is his writings about these early constitutional thrusts that have generally influenced the histories of the period.

But it was Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, potential heir to the Egyptian Khedivate, who facilitated the transformation of a small group of disparate voices into an international phenomenon. Mustafa resided in Istanbul and had served the sultan in a variety of posts, including Minister of Finance. Sultan Abdülaziz was, however, persuaded (he was partial to immense bribes) by then Egyptian Governor Ismail (r. 1863–1879) to affirm the title of *Khedive* (Viceroy) that heretofore both the Ottomans and the British had resisted. The declaration also changed the law of succession to overlook Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, Ismail's brother, in favor of his son, Tevfik Pasha. Defeated, Mustafa Fazıl took up residence in Paris, addressed Abdülaziz in a public letter in French that was quickly translated into Turkish and printed in the new media. The letter deplored the oppressive conditions in the empire brought on by a corrupt government, depopulation, and financial crises, and called for representative government: a national assembly based on inclusive provincial elections.

Galvanized by the language, the reformers stepped up their criticism of what they saw as the autocratic and ideologically bankrupt westernizers and sultanic profligacy while issuing a call for an Ottomanism that returned to its shari'a roots.

Ali Pasha responded by closing down the presses, exiling Kemal, Ziya and Ali Suavi to the provinces. Persuaded by Mustafa Fazıl to join him in Paris instead, they together continued the attack on the Istanbul government. Kemal separated himself from Suavi's radicalism and began the publication of *Hürriyet* (Freedom), which continued until 1870 when he returned to Istanbul. There, he served as editor-in-chief to another newspaper *İbret* (1872), which was closed within a month of its inaugural issue because of its reporting on Kemal's revolutionary play, *Vatan, Yahut Silistre* that had opened to acclaim at the Gedikpaşa Theatre in April 1873. *Vatan* retains its rightful status as the revolutionary call to arms to protect the fatherland. Despite being immediately banned in Istanbul, it was revived by the Young Turks at the turn of the century, in part because the main characters are not bureaucrats but volunteer soldiers defending the fortress of Silistre on the Danube River during the Crimean War. The protagonist, Islam Bey, a volunteer himself exhorts new arrivals to the defense of the fortress with the following stirring soliloquy:

Our fatherland means the Danube. Because if the Danube goes, there is no fatherland. Wherever you dig on the banks of the Danube, a bone of your father or brother will be found. The land washed by the ripples of the Danube water is made up of the remnants of those who died fighting to protect it. Since the time when the name Ottoman was heard, the Danube was crossed several times, many times. But it was never conquered. While the Ottomans stand, it will not be taken once; if the Ottomans know what Ottoman patriotism is, it will never be taken. Are you ready to die for the fatherland?⁴¹

The play cemented the circulation of the word *vatan* (homeland) as part of the new Turkish vocabulary around patriotism and the state. As a result, Namık Kemal and his fellow dissidents were banished to Cyprus.

Sultan Abdülaziz, under Russian Ambassador Ignatyev's influence, appointed Mahmud Nedim Pasha as grand vizier, the notable enemy of Ali Pasha. But Ahmed Midhat had meanwhile returned to Istanbul and persuaded the sultan to appoint him instead on 31 July 1872. The next chapter of the constitutional movement is largely driven by the chaotic (frankly Byzantine) history surrounding Midhat and Namık Kemal and like-minded reformers. These reformers continued to press privately and publicly for a constitution while railing against the corruption of the palace and the unfit sultan. Sultan Abdülaziz was susceptible to bribery and simply dismissed his chief administrators at will. The reform agenda itself was equally beset by differing points of view regarding the role of non-Muslims in representative government Ottoman-style.

The Istanbul daily newspaper *Başıret* (1870–1878) captured the sentiments of the Ottoman Muslim public: nascent pan-Islamism, celebration of the sultan as leader of the world, hatred of Europe and the capitulations, disenchantment with the reforms and resentment of the constant streams of refugees arriving from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Increasingly, discontent focused on the sultan rather

than the Porte, especially as the influence and bribery of *Khedive* Ismail and the Russian Ambassador became public knowledge. The sultan's erratic ideas, love of warships, exotic collections and general extravagance were international scandals. Like the *Khedive*, he proposed changing the succession from the oldest member of the dynasty, his brother Prince Murad, to his young son, a proposal that alarmed the reformists.

Things came to a head after 1873, in the midst of a global financial panic, when the Ottomans were unable to secure further European loans. Bankruptcy loomed after another attempt to float paper currency (*kaine*) also failed. A severe drought followed by a harsh winter had people dying on the streets and villages depopulated. The disparity between the condition of Christian villages and Muslims in Anatolia increased as the non-Muslims benefitted more from the relief work of the missionaries than Muslims did from their incompetent government. Random attacks on Christians increased. Depopulation naturally had an impact on tax revenues and conscription, which continued to count on the Anatolian Muslim populations. Concurrently, violent uprisings began in Herzegovina and spread to Bosnia, and then to Christian Bulgarian revolutionary bands who began attacking Muslims. Russia was implicated in these events in encouraging the spread of the pan-Slavist sentiments.

The inevitable default on Ottoman bonds occurred in October 1875, and criticism of the sultan accelerated. Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim, back in power after yet another dismissal of Midhat, issued decree after decree about provincial councils and free elections, judicial reforms, and equality before the law while the great powers pondered the Balkan question. In January 1876, Foreign Minister Mehmed Raşid Pasha (1824–1875) convened a non-Muslim interdenominational conference to discuss reform that generated so much enthusiasm for true universal Ottomanism that the sessions were quickly abandoned.

The coalition that allowed Midhat Pasha to convince Abdülaziz to abdicate included Hüseyin Avni Pasha, distinguished military reformer and an implacable enemy of the sultan; Süleyman Pasha, Director of the Military Academy; and Grand Vizier Mehmed Rüşdi Pasha, who replaced the hated Grand Vizier Mahmud Nedim on 12 May 1876. Pressure from striking and armed theological students, support from the military, and a *fetva* from the ulema for deposition allowed Midhat to proceed. All were alarmed at the acceleration of the Bosnia crises, the palace inaction, financial ruin and the threat of imminent foreign intervention.

On 30 May 1876, a bloodless coup replaced Sultan Abdülaziz with his brother Murad V, who immediately declared the shari'a to be the law of the land, with liberty for all subjects to the benefit of the fatherland (*vatan*) the state (*devlet*) and the nation (*millet*). On 4 June, Abdülaziz committed suicide and the news so frightened Murad V that it quickly became clear he was mentally unfit for rule. Negotiations began with Murad's brother Abdülhamid. On 15 June, Minister of War Hüseyin Avni Pasha and Foreign Minister Raşid Pasha were assassinated and several others wounded by a disgruntled Circassian army officer whose sister had been part of Abdülaziz's harem. Further reshuffling of government permitted exiled Namık Kemal and cohorts to return to Istanbul, and his play opened once

more, ultimately stoking even more Muslim reaction. By the end of June, Midhat, now President of the Council of State, had convinced the Council and influential members of the ulema to approve a constitutional draft. The draft allowed for complete Muslim and non-Muslim equality of citizenship and access to the highest offices, and a chamber of elected deputies with 16 representing Istanbul and four from each *vilayet*.

All these shifts and deliberations were underway as war preparations continued. Serbia and Montenegro were now officially at war with the Ottomans and Istanbul was desperately assembling men and supplies for the Balkans. Further negotiations with the 34-year-old Abdülhamid led to the deposition of Murad and the girding of Sultan Abdülhamid II on 7 September 1876, with vague promises of reform, strict adherence to religious law, concerted efforts against the Balkan rebels and vague references to a general assembly.

International politics finally broke through the power struggle bubble at the heart of empire. The Ottoman demands for European recognition of Ottoman sovereignty and independence could not withstand the twin fiscal and leadership crises. The world itself was rocked by fiscal collapse, the increasing militarism of Prussia, and pan-Slavism, stirring up revolutionary organizations large and small across the Balkans. Although Ahmed Midhat Pasha had been much admired in European diplomatic circles for his energy and provincial successes, the climate of Europe in general had begun to turn against the empire, especially as word of "Bulgarian atrocities" began to circulate, following the brutal suppression of revolutionary bands in Batak in April and May of 1876. The cultural reckoning facing the "barbarian Turk" as uncivilized and unworthy of being part of Europe intensified in a language of disgust and condemnation. Fiscal incompetence and military excesses demonstrated the hollowness of Tanzimat achievements in European circles.

Bosnia/Herzegovina unrest had begun in July 1875, stimulated in part by Austrian intervention as part of annexation strategies. This pitted Muslim overlords against Christian and Muslim peasants. Bosnian Commander Ali Saib Pasha pulled together *redif* and militia soldiers to counter the revolt, but the armies of Rumelia and all over the empire were put on alert. The practice remained what has been dubbed the "Ottoman dispersal strategy," division of command into small bands to attempt control over disparate uprisings simultaneously. Soon, however, Nizam regulars along with *Redif* (35 battalions) and 2,000 *bashibozuks*, all under the command of Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha disembarked off Ragusa. An Ottoman army at Nish numbering 43 battalions of infantry, 12 batteries of artillery, and 4,000 *bashibozuks* suggests a considerable force available on the Danube.⁴²

Meanwhile, Serbia erupted in crises over war fever. By 30 June 1876, Serbia and Montenegro had declared war on the sultan. The Ottoman army that had been fighting rebels for a generation now faced both revolutionaries and massed armies on the same terrain. In spite of the confusion, the Ottomans achieved notable victories over Serbia and were poised to march on Belgrade when the great powers intervened. Russian ultimatums alarmed Britain and forced the call for an armistice and international convention in Istanbul in December, to which the Ottomans had

little option but to agree. It was to be preceded by a great powers conference about Ottoman reform that did not include Ottoman representatives.

The race to a constitutional document and elections continued. By 12 October, a *meclis-i ummi*, or general assembly, numbering 28 Muslim and non-Muslim members of the civil service, ulema and two generals had agreed to an elected assembly and appointed senate. Significant reactionary resistance to non-Muslims as part of the assembly ensued. On 18 December 1876, Abdülhamid II approved the constitution, which contained a clause that allowed the sultan the right to dismiss and exile his officials, effectively diluting parliamentary independence. The next day, Midhat Pasha was appointed grand vizier. The constitution was officially made public on 23 December 1876, just as the Constantinople Conference of the six great powers got underway.

Article I of the constitution stated that the Ottoman Empire in its present state—including privileged territories such as Romania—was indivisible and that all Ottoman subjects were equal before the law. While the powers of the sultan had not really diminished, the idea of an elective body took root among the general population in perhaps the first and last imperial statement of the possibility of Ottomanism. The gauntlet had been thrown by the last of the Tanzimat generation, as a quarter century of turmoil—that would bring down not just the Ottoman, but also the Habsburg and Romanov houses—began.

Reforming the Ottoman House: Ali, Fuad, Midhat, and Ahmed Cevdet Pashas

Ali Pasha, Mehmed Emin, 1815-1871

Born Mehmed Emin in 1815, Ali Pasha acquired the name "Ali" (high or exalted) sometime after joining the Ottoman bureaucracy at the age of 14. He was sent on diplomatic missions as early as 1833, first to Vienna and then to St Petersburg (1837). He was next appointed to the entourage of his patron, Reşid Pasha, Ambassador to London, until 1839, when both returned to Istanbul upon Sultan Abdulmecid's elevation to the throne and the reading of the Gülhane Edict.

From then on, Ali was largely involved with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, himself Ambassador to London from 1841 to 1844, and subsequently the Minister of Foreign Affairs when Reşid Pasha was appointed grand vizier in 1846. In 1852, Ali replaced the dismissed Reşid as grand vizier and Fuad Pasha became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This was the moment when the two Tanzimat rival reformers—in a betrayal of their patron Reşid as he himself interpreted it—can be said to have come into to their own as engineers of the massive project underway across the empire.

In the next decade, Ali was dismissed, briefly exiled to provincial assignments, and once again appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1854. His power continued to grow, especially after he was simultaneously appointed president of the High Council for reforms in 1855. At Reşid's resignation as grand vizier in 1855, Ali, reappointed grand vizier, was the Ottoman delegate to the Vienna peace conference given the task of drawing up the 1856 Hatt-i Humayun as part of the treaty ending the Crimea War. The portrait of Ali is from that time (Figure 7.7).

Further iterations of musical chairs in the two highest state offices continued until Reşid's death in 1858. In 1861, Ali was appointed grand vizier for the fourth time upon the accession of Abdülaziz, and then once again for the fifth and longest time, from 1867 to 1871. In that period, Ali Pasha oversaw continued reorganization of the government. He spent four months in Crete subduing the 1866-1869 rebellion where he composed the memorandum to push for further reforms, especially concerning the non-Muslim communities. At the time of his death, he was grand vizier, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the new (1869) Ministry of the Interior.

The son of an Istanbul shopkeeper, Ali was characterized as self-taught (though tutored by Ahmed Cevdet Pasha in the Translation Bureau), witty and French-speaking, and he acquired a European reputation as a master at diplomacy. Observers noted Ali Pasha's frail but implacable presence, and



FIGURE 7.7 Ali Pasha by Mayer and Pierson, 1856, Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program

tremendous self-control. "Sometimes Ali appeared to be a Metternich trying to tie together the empire for the house of Osman, as Metternich tried to prop up his 'worm-eaten' Habsburg house. To the editor of *La Turquie* Ali remarked: 'All we can do is live from day to day. The future is God's.'"⁴³

While instrumental in the reformation of the institutions of the Ottoman government, Ali remained studiously uninterested in constitutionalism, preferring the strict application of the rule of law and the patrimonial relationship between the sultan and his chief administrators. This made him extremely unpopular at home, where the voices for fundamental representation and complaints about the betrayal of shari'a law grew increasingly raucous after the Crimean War.

Fuad Pasha, Keçecizade Mehmed, 1815-1869

Fuad Pasha, son of the famous Ottoman poet İzzet Molla, was born in Istanbul in 1815. He began his studies in the medrese but moved to the newly established medical school (1838) where he learned French. Appointed to the Translation Bureau in 1837, he joined Ali Pasha as a protégé of Reşid Pasha. His language skills led to his appointment as dragoman of the Porte, and he served with Ali Pasha as first secretary to the embassy in London 1841-1844. In 1845, Fuad was placed in charge of a commission on education that recommended a new state school system. He served as part of the Ottoman contingent in Romania as a liaison to the Russian occupiers during the revolutionary moment. He was then sent to inform Tsar Nicholas I of the Ottoman steadfast refusal to extradite the Polish and Hungarians refugees. In a brief respite, he and Ahmed Cevdet published the first modern grammar of the Ottoman languages in 1851.

Fuad Pasha's continued diplomatic successes led to his appointment as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1852, the first of five appointments to that post. In 1860, it was Fuad Pasha who led the forces that put down the rebellion in Damascus and chaired the international commission that created the Mutasarrifiye of Mt Lebanon in 1861. Appointed grand vizier for the first time while in Beirut, Fuad Pasha returned to Istanbul and immediately had to deal with a monetary crisis and rebellion in Montenegro. This period was rife with ministerial rivalries, including with Ali Pasha, and interference by foreign consuls. In 1862, Fuad Pasha resigned in a public letter to his sultan about profligacy and the threat of Balkan nationalism, but ultimately returned to the job of grand vizier in 1863. He and Ahmed Midhat Pasha prepared the influential provincial law of 1864, which was unveiled in Bulgaria. From 1867 to 1869, once again Foreign Minister Fuad Pasha penned his famous memorandum and accompanied Sultan Abdülaziz on his tour of Paris, London and Vienna (June-August 1867), in an attempt to forestall the possibility of foreign intervention in the unfolding crisis in



FIGURE 7.8 Mehmed Fuad Pasha, Bibliothèque Nationale

Crete. He also likely had a hand in the creation of the Council of State and the Galatasaray Lycée. He died in Nice in 1869.

As resentment against the Ali and Fuad rose, Fuad was often called *gavur* (infidel) pasha because of his preference for western ways. Both men were Freemasons, but Ali was staunchly Muslim and Fuad more equivocal. His command of French won him many admirers and his commitment to the Tanzimat agenda was genuine, but like his lifelong Tanzimat partner and rival, representative government was not part of his immediate agenda. As transitional statemen, they are not unlike their counterparts in Vienna and St Petersburg, where ties to autocracy were deeply knotted and reforms required more than one edict and one generation (Figure 7.8).

Ahmed Midhat Pasha, born Ahmed Āžefik 1822-1884.

Midhat Pasha was born in Istanbul, the son of an ulema family. Midhat was apprenticed to the Divan in 1833 and joined the grand vizier's entourage in

1840. In the next two decades, Midhat was often on assignment for various investigative commissions and inspection tours of the provinces, initiatives that formed part of the government's commitment to the enactment of reforms. He was a member of the Supreme Council from the 1840s to 1859, even as he spent much of his time in the countryside settling disputes, quelling unrest and financial mismanagement. He spent six months of 1858 on his first trip abroad, learning French. In September 1859, he was made head of the Supreme Council. Midhat spent the next decade on the Danube and the Euphrates as described, and with Fuad Pasha, drafted the new provincial law (1864). He had become the indispensable organizer of provincial affairs by Ali Pasha's death in 1871. Worth noting is Midhat's establishment of official provincial newspapers such as *Tuna* in 1865 while he was in Bulgaria, and *Zawra* in Baghdad in 1869. A primary role of governors in the period was ensuring security, and Midhat was as ruthless and effective in maintaining order as he was in promoting urban renewal.

In 1871, Midhat returned to Istanbul determined to become grand vizier, and successfully persuaded Abdülaziz to appoint him in July 1872. His forcefulness about sultanic and energetic reforms, including constitutionalism, made many enemies in the palace. In and out of office for the next little while, he publicly resigned as justice minister, citing financial disaster and cautioning about the emerging Bosnia/Herzegovina crisis. He is likely the author of "A Manifesto of the Muslim Patriots," from 1876 that was circulated in Europe and privately in Istanbul, advocating a consultative, representative assembly. In May 1876, Midhat Pasha, War Minister Hüseyin Avni Pasha, and Director of the Academy Süleyman Pasha, plotted the removal of Abdülaziz, ultimately forcing the newly girded Sultan Abdülhamid II to promulgate the constitution in December 1876. International clamor and a declaration of war in April 1877 gave Abdülhamid II the opportunity to dissolve parliament and dismiss Midhat.

Although much of the last decade of his life was spent in exile outside Istanbul, Midhat was much celebrated in Europe and spent the war years advocating for the Ottomans. Later, he was appointed to provincial posts first in Syria, and then in Izmir. By that time, his enemies persuaded an increasingly paranoid Abdülhamid II to put Midhat Pasha on show trial for the alleged murder of Abdülaziz. Found guilty with seven others and sentenced to death, Midhat's international and domestic popularity meant he was banished for life, though ignominiously strangled in al-Taif in May of 1884, likely at Abdülhamid II's bidding. Midhat Pasha was a liberal who understood himself as a prime minister in service to his people and the fatherland, but he was also the quintessential outsider whose enemies ranged across the spectrum. Ultimately, he was as much a transitional figure as Ali Pasha and Fuad Pasha.

Ahmed Cevdet Pasha 1822-1895

Born in Lofça, Bulgaria, Ahmed Cevdet began his studies as a medrese student. Recognized for his potential, he was sent at the age of 17 to continue his studies in Istanbul, where he also added modern mathematics and Persian poetry to the medrese curriculum. His first appointment was as a judge in 1844-1845, but shortly after he joined the household of Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Pasha as a recognized member of the ilmiye who could advise on shari'a law. For 13 years, he remained close to his mentor, joining Ali and Fuad Pashas in the circle of Tanzimat reformers (Figure 7.9).

He was persuaded to join the bureaucracy by 1850, and by 1860 was officially a vizier. His career is extraordinary thereafter, as he served in the provinces, notably as governor of Aleppo in 1865; drafted legislation around shar'i'a law and judicial practices while part of the inner Tanzimat circles; authored a massive history of the post-1826 period as the court appointed vakānūvis (1855), finishing the first three volumes during the Crimean War, and spent decades in a modern codification of the shari'a known as the Mecelle. In 1868, he returned to Istanbul as president of the new Divan-i Akham-i Adliye, where he was instrumental in the crafting of the Nizamiye courts and the conversion of the Divan into a Ministry of Justice. It was while he was Minister of Justice that he began the codification of the Mecelle, with the final volumes being published in 1877. As with the other three of the reforming pashas discussed here, he spent the rest of his career in influential posts, sometimes in the provinces, but more often in Istanbul, where he served either as Minister of Justice or Minister of Education. He broke with Ahmed Midhat Pasha over the constitution and the plan to remove the sultan, and as noted, oversaw the trial that ended Midhat's career after Andülhamid II took the throne.

It has been argued that while the Tanzimat reforms addressed fundamental problems with the rule of law and governance, they never altered the fundamental concept of the person of the sultan as the source of law. In that regard, Ahmed Cevdet was as much a traditional figure as the others profiled here. His is a life deeply documented by contrast with many Ottoman others, especially in the biography written by his daughter, Fatma Aliye, an intellectual of the early Turkish Republic. He was a deeply committed Muslim and servant of the sultanic system, representing the contradictions that the reforms likely engendered in the more enlightened of the ilmiye class. In his writings, the state requires the kind of subordination as the sultan once did, in the hands of the military, the Muslim millet, or the administration.⁴⁴



FIGURE 7.9 Cropped photo of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha © The Picture Art Collection / Alamy Stock Photo P74258

Notes

- 1 Ussama Makdisi, "Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism," in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Late Ottoman Empire*, eds. Jens Hanssen, Thomas Philipp, and Stefan Weber (Beirut: Beirut Orient Institute, 2002), 35.
- 2 Maurus Reinkowski, "The State's Security and the Subjects' Prosperity: Notions of Order in Ottoman Bureaucratic Correspondence (19th Century)," in *Legitimizing the Order: the Ottoman Rhethoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 195–212.
- 3 Quoted from G. Harlaftis and S. Laiou, "Ottoman State Policy in Mediterranean Trade and Shipping, c.1780–c.1820: The Rise of the Greek-Owned Ottoman Merchant Fleet," in *Networks of Power in Modern Greece: Essays in Honour of John Campbell*, ed. M. Mazower (London: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1–44; see also Mathieu Grenet, "Entangled Allegiances: Ottoman Greeks in Marseille and the Shifting Ethos of Greekness (c. 1790–c. 1820)," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 36, no. 1 (2012): 56–71.
- 4 Mark Mazower, *The Balkans, a Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), xxxvi.
- 5 Charles Macfarlane, *Turkey and its Destiny: The Result of Journeys Made in 1847 and 1848* (Vol. 2) (London: John Murray, 1850), 44–51.
- 6 Moses ben Isaac Edrehi, *History of the Capital of Asia and the Turks, Together with an Account of the Domestic Manners of the Turks in Turkey* (Boston: I. Edrehi, 1855), 12. Some 16 eds have been published between 1855 and 2009.

- 7 Alexander William Kinglake, *Eothen or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* (London: John Oliver, 1844), location 350–63 of digital version.
- 8 Mark Mazower, *Salonica: City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (London: Harper, 2004), 303.
- 9 Cristina Pallini, "Geographic Theatres, Port Landscapes and Architecture in the Eastern Mediterranean: Salonica, Alexandria, İzmir," in *Cities of the Mediterranean from the Ottomans to the Present Day*, eds. Biray Kolluoğlu and Meltem Toksöz (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 61–77.
- 10 Daniel Goffman, "İzmir: From Village to Colonial Port City," in *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, İzmir, and Istanbul*, eds. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), 79–134.
- 11 Vilma Hastaoglu-Martinidis, "The Cartography of Harbor Construction in Eastern Mediterranean Cities: Technical and Urban Modernization in the Late Nineteenth Century," in *Cities of the Mediterranean* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 78–99.
- 12 A. Üner Turgay, "Trabzon," in *Port Cities of the Eastern Mediterranean 1800-1914*, eds. Çağlar Keyder, Y. Eyüp Âzveren, and Donald Quataert (New York: Ferdinand Braudel Center, 1993), 435–61.
- 13 Charles Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent, 1800-1914: A Documentary Economic History* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 54.
- 14 Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters, *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, İzmir, and Istanbul* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999).
- 15 Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent*, 134: 40,000 Sunnis; 50,000 Shiites; 7,000 Christians.
- 16 Issawi, *The Fertile Crescent*, 116–20.
- 17 Hala Fattah, "Islamic Universalism and the Construction of Regional Identity in Turn of-the-Century Basra: Sheikh Ibrahim al-Haidari's Book Revisited," in *Modernity and Culture from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean*, eds. Layla Tarazi Fawaz, C.A. Bayly, and Robert Ilbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 112–29.
- 18 Thomas Kühn, "Ordering Urban Space in Ottoman Yemen, 1872-1914," in *The Empire in the City* (Maurits van den Boogert, "Resurrecting Homo Ottomanicus: The Constants and Variables of Ottoman Identity," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları/The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, 14 (2014): 9–20), 329–46.
- 19 Christopher Herzog, "Migration and the State: On Ottoman Regulations Concerning Migration Since the Age of Mahmud II," in *The City in the Ottoman Empire: Migration and the Making of Urban Modernity*, eds. Ulrike Frietag et al. (London: SOAS, 2011), 117–34.
- 20 Ottoman citizenship/nationality laws are the subject of much debate among historians. They are reviewed with great clarity in Will Hanley, "What Ottoman Nationality Was and Was Not," *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 3, no. 2 (2016): 277–98.
- 21 Constantin Iordachi, "The Ottoman Empire: Syncretic Nationalism and Citizenship in the Balkans," in *What Is a Nation? Europe 1789-1914*, eds. Timothy Baycroft and Mark Hewitson (Oxford: OUP, 2006), 120–51.
- 22 Macfarlane, *Tukey and its Destiny*, 360–1.
- 23 Salahi R. Sonyel, "The Protégé System in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 2, no. 1 (1991): 56–66; on the Russian-Ottoman border, see Will Smiley, "The Burdens of Subjecthood: The Ottoman State, Russian Fugitives, and Inter imperial Law, 1774-1869," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46, no. 1 (2024): 73–93.
- 24 Âzhahin, Emrah, *Faithful Encounters: Authorities and American Missionaries in the Ottoman Empire* (MQUP, Kindle Edition, 2018), ebook, Prologue.
- 25 Edward Williams, *The Ottoman Convert: A Narrative of Facts* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh and Hunt, 1853), about a Muslim named Selim (Williams) of Salonica who converted to Protestantism in Malta.

- 26 Roderic H. Davidson, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*. (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1963). 245 and following (Ch. VII).
- 27 Charles King, *The Ghost of Freedom: A History of the Caucasus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 95.
- 28 King, *The Ghost of Freedom*, 98-99.
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- 31 Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans, from Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2009), 177.
- 32 Uyar and Erickson, *A Military History*, 181-2.
- 33 Herzog, "Migration," 123; A. Somel, "Rumi 1301 (1885) Tarihli İstanbul Sayımı/The Istanbul Census dated 1301 Rumi (1885 A.D.)," in *Osmanlı Devletinde Bilgi ve İstatistik/Data and Statistics in the Ottoman Empire*, eds. H. İnalcık and Âz. Pamuk (Ankara: State Institute of Statistics Prime Ministry Republic of Turkey, 2000), 147-63.
- 34 Carter Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte 1789-1922* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1980), 152, 168, 190.
- 35 Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1963), 247.
- 36 Cited in Alp Eren Topal, "From Decline to Progress: Ottoman Concepts of Reform" (PhD diss., Bilkent University, 2017), 150.
- 37 Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 170.
- 38 Âzerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 1961), 108, footnote 5 where Sultan Adülmecid is remembered as hitting his head against a wall and crying to God to deliver him from the hands of Grand Vizier Reşid Pasha.
- 39 Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 97.
- 40 Young Ottomans is used here as a convenience for the constitutional thrust and its chief, early participants in a resistance that was very diverse and had many other names such as Jeunee Turquie, Jeune turques, or New Ottomans. See Further Reading.
- 41 Quoted in and translated by Milena Methodieva, "Muslim Culture, Reform and Patriotism: Staging Namık Kemal in post-Ottoman Bulgaria (1878-1908)," in *Entertainment Among the Ottomans*, eds. Ebru Boyar and Kate Fleet (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 208-24.
- 42 The snapshot is meant to be illustrative rather the reflective of the total force. From James Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude to Collapse, 1839-1878* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000), 310.
- 43 As quoted in Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire*, 85-86.
- 44 Christoph K. Neumann, "Whom Did Ahmed Cevdet Represent?," in *Late Ottoman Society: The Intellectual Legacy*, ed. Elizabeth Özdalga (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2005), 116-34.

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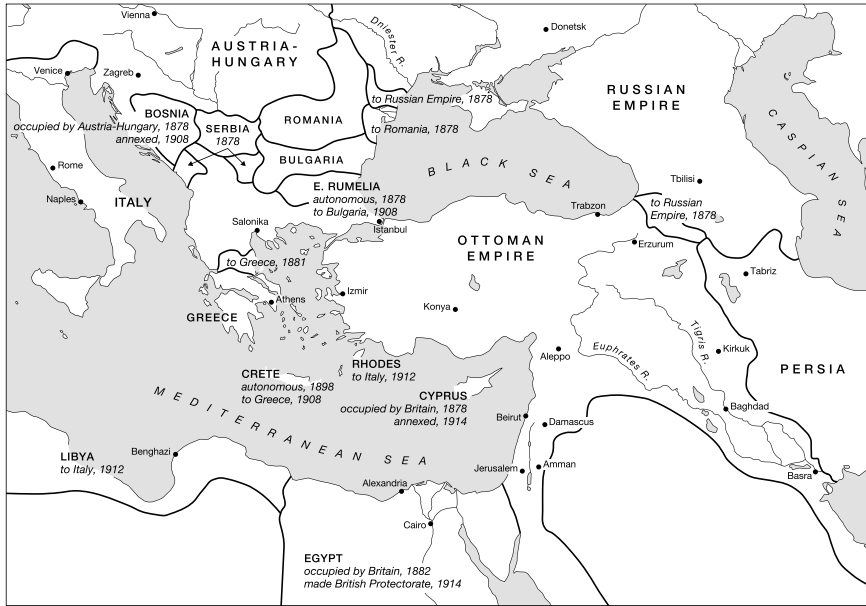
1878 BERLIN TREATY AND CONSEQUENCES

Ottoman internationalism

Ottoman reformers spent the decades after the Crimean War contesting the nature of Ottoman sovereignty and the rights of sultanic rule over its citizens. By the 1870s this had assumed the nature of a three-way dialogue among Ottoman officials, citizens and the European colonial powers, primarily Great Britain, France and Russia. Based on the 1856 Treaty of Paris, which had recognized Ottoman membership in the Concert of Europe but refused to eliminate the crippling capitulatory trade regime, Ottoman bureaucrats assumed they had the right to sit at the table with the great powers. With the establishment of the Ottoman Public Debt Administration in 1881, however, the Ottomans could justifiably be called a colony of Europe (Map 8.1).

Between 1856 and 1876, the climate in European affairs had altered drastically, especially after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871. The eclipse of France—until that time the military model for all of Europe—meant the balance of power shifted to Central and Eastern Europe with Bismarck and Germany's military reforms paramount. Great Britain had assumed the role of protector of Ottoman interests in its contest with Russia over control of the eastern end of the Mediterranean. In the ever-changing political landscape of the international revolutionary environment of post-1848, justifications for intervention, concern about separatist movements and alarm at global fiscal panic stimulated the re-making of international law on a grand scale. Great power interventions in Greece (1827–1831), Lebanon (1860–1861), and Crete (1866–1867) had created a body of law that justified military intervention based on European imperialism, and bolstered assumptions and the subsequent labeling of cultures as ranging from the most civilized to the barbarous.¹

In the Ottoman case, European arguments about intervention justified by the capitulatory regime were gradually augmented with legal definitions concerning



MAP 8.1 Territorial losses, 1878–1914 © Gregory T. Woolston

humanitarian intervention on behalf of persecuted or massacred Christian populations. From there it was but another step to envision occupation, as Mostafa Minawi has noted:

Tracing the fuzzy contours of legal sovereignty on top of a utilitarian, Eurocentric civilizational guideline had implications well beyond the theoretical application of international law. It eventually created the basis for no less than a legal framework to justify new European colonies in Ottoman territories well into the middle of the twentieth century, the British and French mandates in the Levant after WWI being but one example.²

The Ottoman engagement with Europe and international law in this period has long been viewed through the Eastern Question historiography, based on European diplomatic records. More recent work reveals an empire that operated simultaneously as both colony and colonizer. Over centuries, the Ottoman dynasty had negotiated power with various semi-autonomous borderland regions, a process accelerated by granting self-governing authority to the *millets* in the mid-nineteenth century and concessions to the insurrections in the Balkan provinces in Serbia and Bosnia. The reassertion of power in the 1860s over long-autonomous tribal populations in Eastern Anatolia, Syria and Iraq, however, was couched as a colonial project. Meanwhile, the Nationality Law of 1869 was clearly an effort to

delineate an Ottoman sovereignty that challenged the capitulatory regime. At the same time, emerging arguments about sovereignty over less clear cases—such as the eastern coast of Africa and Yemen—especially in the contest with Britain over the Hijaz—reveal a new Ottoman assertion of the caliphate as a legal part of protecting Muslim populations all over the world under threat from Christian oppressors.³

Elektra Kostopoulou describes the contest between autonomy and federalism as armed negotiations:

The semiofficial sovereignty of the powers resided in their military-financial strength and in the principle of what they perceived as “Western patterns” of administration and law. At the same time, the shaky sovereignty of the Ottomans was in harmony with their own tradition of negotiating power between center and periphery. In this way, the empire became deeply involved in a continuous discussion between its own dynastic multicultural past and its contemporaneous multistate present—the exact legalistic, political, and diplomatic essence of which constituted an intensely debated path rather than a fixed reality or orientation.⁴

Placed in the context of the internal debate over Ottomanism, the view concerning Ottoman legal reform becomes exceedingly complex.

Russo-Ottoman war of 1877–1878

All the contradictions of Ottoman international status came to a head in the crisis generated by the Bulgarian atrocities’ scandal of 1876, also known as the Great Eastern Crisis 1875–1878. European cities had become accustomed to reading the news about the Middle East with their morning tea, which accounts for why the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878 has been called “The Breakfast War.”⁵ In fact, European newspaper readers often had more information on current events in Ottoman territories than residents of Istanbul, where Sultan Abdülhamid II increasingly silenced his opposition. The combination of the daily press, investigative journalists, photographers, diplomats and missionaries provided a barrage of information about the daily lives of Ottoman Muslim and non-Muslim populations for European consumption.

The April Uprising of 1876 in the Plovdiv region of Bulgaria was organized by agitators who stirred up scattered attacks on Muslim villages and killed a number of Muslim and Ottoman officials. The immediate Ottoman responders were local *bashibozuk* irregulars from the Bulgarian Muslim and Circassian refugee population, who attacked and killed the rebels and civilian population indiscriminately. The reports about the massacres initiated a sensational reaction and revulsion, especially in the British press. In June 1876, a London paper, the *Daily News*, published a story by Edwin Pears, British resident and amateur journalist in

Istanbul, about Muslim atrocities. His information was based on unsubstantiated rumors from Bulgarian students and officials at Robert College.⁶

The significance of the massacres, quite apart from the tragic loss of life, is that the reports and their awful images became an instant sensation in a European public discourse that was already debating the excesses of colonialism and the barbarity of non-European races. The events added fodder to the nascent national fires of East European victimhood. The controversy swirling around Ottoman survival intensified as Russia and Great Britain faced off in the events that followed.

By the 1870s, British domestic politics—the contest between Conservative Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister from 1874 to 1880, who triumphed over Russia at the Berlin Conference and Liberal William Gladstone, prime minister from 1868 to 1874 and 1880 to 1885, who oversaw the occupation of Egypt in 1882—reflected a confusion about foreign policy and the increasing disillusionment of European opinion about the potential for Ottoman reform. Gladstone, having received much of his information on the massacres from American Consul Eugene Schuyler and the exaggerated newspaper accounts, spoke about the Ottomans in a parliamentary speech in September 1876. It was aimed at the Disraeli government:

Let me endeavour very briefly to sketch, in the rudest outline, what the Turkish race was and what it is. It is not a question of Mahometanism simply, but of Mahometanism compounded with the peculiar character of a race. They are not the mild Mahometans of India, nor the chivalrous Saladins of Syria, nor the cultured Moors of Spain. They were, upon the whole, from the black day when they first entered Europe, the one great anti-human specimen of humanity.

Wherever they went, a broad line of blood marked the track behind them; and, as far as their dominion reached, civilisation disappeared from view. They represented everywhere government by force, as opposed to government by law. For the guide of this life they had a relentless fatalism: for its reward hereafter, a sensual paradise. Let the Turks now carry away their abuses in the only possible manner, namely by carrying off themselves. Their Zaptiehs and their Mudirs, their Bimbashis and their Yuzbachis, their Kaimakams and their Pashas, one and all, bag and baggage, shall, I hope, clear out from the province they have desolated and profaned.⁷

In what can otherwise be construed as a Liberal challenge to Conservative British foreign policy in the Balkans, the language about the Turkish race illustrates the mishmash of “civilisational progress, romantic nationalism, ethnography and racial hierarchy, Orientalist ‘Turkophobia’, Anglo-centrism and nonconformist influenced, evangelical Anglicanism”⁸ that shaped much of British (and American) thought at the

turn of the century. Two hundred thousand pamphlets of the speech were sold in the first month.

After Montenegrin and Serbian troops crossed into Bulgaria and declared war on the Ottomans in June 1876, Russia mobilized. Sympathy for the Balkan plight and increased Russian influence alarmed the European powers. By December 1876, delegates from Britain, Austria, Germany, Russia, France and Italy arrived in Istanbul to deliberate the future of the Ottoman Empire. A year earlier, the league of the three emperors—German, Russian and Austro-Hungarian—had agreed to a series of Ottoman reforms to address the grievances of the Christian populations of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the so-called Andrassy Note, named after the Foreign Minister of Austro-Hungary. This note had been shared with Grand Vizier Midhat Pasha who responded with platitudes about changes in process. Midhat Pasha's tepid response was an effort to retain control over the process, playing into an intense Ottoman propaganda campaign already underway by the Tanzimat reformers and Ottoman ambassadors in European capitals.

On 23 December 1876—the day the new Ottoman Constitution was formally promulgated—the assembled great powers delivered the agreed upon set of protocols. The protocols included the creation of an autonomous province of Bosnia/Herzegovina, with some of the latter assigned to Montenegro. Bulgaria was to be considerably enlarged and divided into two autonomous provinces: Eastern and Western Bulgaria. Eastern Bulgaria would have its capitol at Tirnova, and would include the provinces of Tirnova, Ruşuk, Tulça, Varna, Sliven and Filibe and various strategic *kazas*. Western Bulgaria, with its capitol at Sofia, would include Sofya, Vidin, Niş, Üsküp, Manastır and an addition or subtraction of various *kazas*. While the main object of the exercise was the pacification of the rural countryside, the protocols represented a new blueprint for a Russia-dominated Balkans, with little serious consideration for the distribution of religious or ethnic populations. In sum, by the agreement, Ottoman territories in Europe would be confined to Albania, the northern Aegean coast and eastern Thrace. The Ottomans made peace with Serbia and declined to accept the final agreement in January 1877. The Russians remained on combat alert.

Then, on 5 February, Europe was shocked to learn that Sultan Abdülhamid had dismissed and exiled Midhat Pasha as a danger to the state. In fact, the sultan ran through 25 grand viziers in his 32-year reign, one measure of the almost continuous instability of the Ottoman administration in its final decades. For the moment, the sultan continued to support the election of deputies and the gathering of the first parliament on 19 March 1877. In a speech on opening day of the parliament, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, Ahmed Vefik Pasha, confirmed: "In order to protect the sovereignty of the country, the constitution had been proclaimed with the benevolence of our Sultan and the guidance of England. At the time, we took pride in hearing the news of the establishment of a parliament with the same intent [...] in-order-to protect our country against assaults and molestations by foreigners."⁹ Abdülhamid's conciliatory actions continued only as long as the British policy of recognizing Ottoman territorial

integrity persisted. He would prorogue parliament after only two sessions on 19 March 1877, claiming the exigencies of war, but largely because of the emerging critical voices from among the elected deputies. It would not be reopened until 1908. (See *Ottoman House* for brief profiles of select deputies).

After further discussions among the great power delegates, a much-diluted revised set of protocols was presented to the sultan, with vague commitments to reforms in Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina. There is some evidence that Abdülhamid, fearing war, might have agreed to the conditions, but the challenge to Ottoman sovereignty was considered too great to concede, so the revised protocols too were rejected. The withdrawal of great power support then led to the inevitable confrontation on the Danube and in the Caucasus. Russia declared war on 24 April 1877 after the Ottomans had turned back the Montenegrin and Serbian armies.

Chaos reigned in the military command in Istanbul. The most experienced Ottoman officers were already in the provinces, dispersed on security details that regularly used force against insurrection. The assassination of able commander Hüseyin Avni in Istanbul had left a large hole in the Mektebli ranks. Sultan Abdülhamid appointed senior career general *Redif* Pasha as commander-in-chief and placed Abdülkerim Nadir Pasha in charge of the Balkan front. *Redif* Pasha created a war council, but actually relied on a much smaller committee of retired and inept officers chosen for their loyalty to the palace. Little versed in military matters, Abdülhamid made all the command decisions and soon created even more chaos in military affairs. Mistrust and dismissal of his most able commanders characterized Abdülhamid's behavior as the war progressed, crippling the command structure.

On the battlefield, three experienced but sworn rivals ran independent operations: Mektebli graduate Süleyman Hüsnü Pasha, who took charge of the Balkan Corps; Crimean War veteran Osman Nuri Pasha, also a Mektebli graduate, in command at Plevne; and Mehmed Ali Pasha (born Karl Detroit, a German Mektebli graduate), junior to the previous two, who replaced the disgraced *Redif* Pasha at Şumnu as commander-in-chief of the Balkan front in July 1877. Mehmed Ali Pasha was bitterly resented by his two senior officers and proved equally unable to coordinate the campaign. Yemen veteran Ahmed Muhtar Pasha was appointed commander-in-chief on the Caucasus front (Figure 8.1).

The Russians had been preparing for this moment since the early 1870s when they broke the treaty of 1856 around the neutrality of the Black Sea. The Danube River itself prevented the outbreak of hostilities until the high waters of spring receded, giving the Russians sufficient time to assemble their armies and supplies. A new railroad system facilitated the gathering of troops in Romania, the former Ottoman principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia. Having adopted a constitution in 1866, the Romanians provided reinforcements and weapons to the Russian army in a final bid for freedom from Ottoman suzerainty. Pan-Slavism propaganda in Bulgaria encouraged the revolutionaries to form auxiliary regiments to assist in the campaign. The Russians deployed 185,000 troops to the Danube battlefields, with another 75,000 assigned to the Caucasus.



FIGURE 8.1 Ottoman army officers, 1885, New York Public Library Vinkhuisen Collection

Some 190,000 Ottoman troops were scattered up and down the Danube region, especially along the traditional southern Danubian defense line of the four great fortresses of Vidin, Silistre, Ruşcuk and Varna. Ömer Pasha's successful strategy of the 1853–1854 campaigns—taking the offensive to the northern shore of the Danube—was ignored by Abdülhamid and his Istanbul advisers, who instead operated without a coherent strategic plan.

Another 100,000 Ottoman troops were stationed along the Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Greek line, engaged in pacification efforts. A mobile combat group was established in Şumnu. A second line with an elite division was assigned to the defense of Istanbul. The hastily assembled Balkan corps was given the job of defending the passes between Sofia and Sliven.¹⁰ Balkan Commander Abdülkerim Nadir Pasha stationed himself at Şumnu well back from the front line and was slow to respond to unfolding events. For the final time, Egyptian *Khedive* Ismail contributed troops to the Ottoman war effort as part of the pacification of the Serbia-Montegrin front. Further coerced by his suzerain Abdülhamid, Ismail shipped as many as 30,000 Egyptian troops to Varna on the Balkan front. However, as these troops were fresh from struggles on the eastern African frontier, they proved of little use.

Located in the eastern border fortresses at Kars, Ardahan, Bayezit and Erzurum, the Ottomans had a dispersed army of 90,000, similar in size to the assembled Russians. The war in the east unfolded in much the same pattern as the Crimean War, though with better commanders on the Ottoman side. Fighting began within a week of the declaration of war, and the Russians, briefly defeated at

Batum, had begun the siege of Kars by the end of April 1877. Ottoman Commander Ahmed Muhtar Pasha struggled with insufficient combat support and field commanders of dubious talents, such as the tribal leader Ismail Hakkı Pasha, who routinely disobeyed orders. Despite these challenges, he had managed some brief successes against the Russians until the battle of Alacadağ on 15 October, where, surrounded, he lost half of his regulars, and upon a hasty retreat nearly all his irregulars. Once regrouped, and facing reinforced Russians, Ahmed Muhtar Pasha chose Erzurum for the final defense. The Russians launched a night attack on 8 November, which was repelled with difficulty by the soldiers and civilian population, including women. Though the Russians withdrew from the harsh conditions they succeeded in capturing the better prepared and storied Kars fortress in a similar attack on 17 November. Some 17,000 were taken as prisoners. Harsh winter weather, raging epidemics and guerrilla warfare characterized the remaining months of the war, finally ending with the armistice in early February just as the Russians occupied Erzurum.

On 22 June 1877, a division of Russian troops skirted the famous four fortresses and crossed the river at İbrail on the Danube, a fierce battleground of the late eighteenth-century wars, lightly defended by the Ottoman troops. Within a short time, the Ottoman garrisons left the northern part of Dobruja undefended. By late June, the Russian VIIIth Army and 14 divisions had crossed at Sistova, while the Romanian artillery across from Vidin and the Russian artillery across from Niğbolu kept up a continuous barrage on Ottoman fortifications. On 13 July, with the redoubts of the great fortress at Niğbolu reduced to rubble and no reinforcements in sight, the 7,000 strong Ottoman garrison capitulated. The Russians then pressed south through the mountains, and surprised the Ottoman defenders at Şipka Pass, midway between Sofia and Sliven, with an attack from the south. After a single day of resistance, the garrison surrendered and by 19 July the road to Edirne lay open.

Rather than press their advantage and enter Edirne in the projected six weeks campaign, the Russian command under Grand Duke Nicholas concentrated instead on Rusçuk and Plevne as rearguard protection. Earlier in June, the Russians had easily taken undefended Plevne and then abandoned the town, mistaking its strategic importance. The Ottomans regrouped. Süleyman Hüsnü Pasha was re-deployed with two divisions from Montenegro to the Balkan passes. Osman Nuri Pasha, commander of the Vidin army with his well-organized troops marched to Plevne where he faced and repelled assaults by the Russians on 20 July. The Russian loss and brief pause of ten days gave Osman Nuri Pasha the opportunity to fortify the defenses and add reinforcements from Sofia. In addition, he had a supply of top-of-the-line Peabody-Martini rifles and Krupp guns. On 30 July, the Russians repeated the assault, this time with 7,000 Russian casualties, one-third of the attacking force.¹¹

Meanwhile, by early August, Süleyman Hüsnü Pasha and his Balkan corps began an assault on Russian defenses at the Şipka Pass on 21 August. The futile confrontations continued until late September when Süleyman was himself

appointed the new commander of the Balkan front and turned his command at Şipka over to Rauf Pasha. Osman Nuri's standoff at Plevne continued, which forced the weakened Russians to enlist a corps of Romanian soldiers and siege trains for another massive assault on 7 September. Just as stubborn as the Ottomans, the Russian generals continued the frontal assaults. This third battle ended in 15,000 Russian and Romanian casualties (of a force of 96,000), against the 3,000 casualties of the Ottoman defenders.

Instead of pursuing the defeated Russian troops or calling for reinforcements, the Ottomans gave the Russians the opportunity to organize a Russian blockade. As long as Plevne held out, the Russians could not press on to Edirne. Rivalries and mistrust prevented the dispersed Ottoman commanders from coordinating a response to the siege. This lack of coordination continued until early December, when Osman Pasha, in a night attack of 30,000, initially surprised the Russians and broke through the first of two siege rings 200,000 soldiers strong. Russian reserves arrived to prevent the Ottomans from finishing the job. A desperate and starving Ottoman army surrendered the morning of 10 December 1877. Sympathy for the Ottoman plight at Plevne spread across the European press. The road to Istanbul lay open. Greece, Serbia and Montenegro joined Russia in declaring war on the Ottomans, complicating the picture. Russia captured Sofia on 3 January and forced the surrender of the Ottomans at Şipka Pass by 9 January. As peace discussions got underway, the Russians entered Edirne, and an armistice was concluded there on 31 January 1878.

The British, now seriously alarmed, anchored a British fleet in the Istanbul harbor immediately after the armistice. The Russians responded by marching troops to Yeşilköy (San Stefano), today a ten-minute taxi ride to Topkapı palace. But a British-Russian confrontation was avoided by the particularly punitive negotiations around the Treaty of San Stefano: autonomy for all of Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, the latter two increased by the acquisition of Ottoman territory. Austria and Britain were particularly concerned about the immensity of the new Russian-influenced nation of Bulgaria, and Greece was alarmed for the future of Macedonia.

The Berlin Treaty 1878

A congress was hastily organized by Bismarck from 13 June to 13 July 1878 in Berlin with representatives from Russia, Austro-Hungary (since 1867, the dual monarchy of Austria and Hungary), Germany, Britain, Italy, France and the Ottoman Empire. The resulting Berlin Treaty effectively ended the Ottoman 600 years rule of "Turkey in Europe," surrendering a third of its territory and a fifth of its population (perhaps 5.5 million), half of whom were Muslim.¹² In a side deal, required before Disraeli would attend the Berlin negotiations, the Ottomans leased control of Cyprus to Britain, while Britain agreed to a future French occupation of Tunisia (1881).

The Berlin Treaty also recognized the new alignment of the eastern powers of Russia, Austria and Germany. Austria began the military occupation of Bosnia, while the province of Kosovo was retained by the Ottomans. Serbia, Montenegro and Romania achieved full independence. Bulgaria was divided into three parts: the northern part under Russian influence, an autonomous Eastern Rumelia, and Macedonia still under the Ottomans. Romania acquired Dobruja and the Danube Delta. Russia gained southern Bessarabia, and the eastern provinces of Batum, Kars and Ardahan, while the Ottomans retained Erzurum. The treaty also presaged the League of Nations by introducing the idea of minority rights, stipulating that Romania give full citizenship to Jews and Muslims. Vague language about borders allowed Greece to acquire eastern Thessaly in 1881. Finally, Russia imposed a devastating 800 million French Francs indemnity (roughly 300 million present-day US\$) on the Ottomans. The long-term impact of indemnity payments to Russia, added to the Public Debt Administration demands, crippled the Ottoman capacity thereafter for any significant industrial development except that which was initiated by foreign investors, especially as war expenses continued to consume a majority of the Ottoman budget.

This war is notable for its atrocities, attributable to the apparent lack of Ottoman central command control, but equally to the fierce attacks on civilian populations by all sides. Actual confrontations often ended in massive retreats in the Ottoman army and populations on the run. Apart from Plevne, the war was a rout before it barely got underway. The *bashibozuk* irregulars, themselves drawn from Crimean and Caucasus refugee populations, were continually accused of attacks on Christians, while Bulgarian auxiliary units allied with Russia destroyed convoys and attacked Muslim civilians behind the frontlines. British Ambassador Henry Layard sent repeated reports to London about Russian and Bulgarian atrocities indicating that as many as 300,000 Muslims had been killed in Bulgaria as the Russians made their way to Istanbul, while more than a million had fled, most of whom would not return to their homes.¹³ Concerns about the Armenians in eastern Anatolia, raised by the Armenian National Assembly, prompted Article 61 of the Berlin Treaty that required the Ottomans, under Great Power supervision, to enact the necessary reforms, and guarantee Armenian security against the Circassians and the Kurds.

The singular effect of the Berlin Treaty was that it satisfied no one, leaving one historian to note that “[i]f before 1878 the ‘Eastern Question’ concerned one ‘sick man,’ after 1878 it involved a half-dozen maniacs. For the Congress of Berlin drove the Balkan peoples mad.”¹⁴ It was a template for future disaster and helped launched the great scramble for the world—from the Eastern Question to the Great Game—that characterized the last decades of the nineteenth century. For many military historians, the Berlin Treaty serves as the opening chapter of World War I.

The Hamidian era

The new Balkan map was the first of the problems that Sultan Abdulhamid II faced as he oversaw the recovery. Desertion by former European allies was obvious. The governments of Europe were engaged in the formation of new states in former Ottoman territories, imposing kings from “unemployed scions of Europe’s princely houses,” drafting constitutions, defining borders and using gunboat diplomacy when other means failed.¹⁵ Looming bankruptcy impeded quick recovery. Tanzimat Ottomanism lay in tatters and Muslims comprised some three quarters of the population as a result of new boundaries, random militia violence and successive waves of people forced into exile. The irredentist claims of the new nation states driven by the original San Stefano vision were just one form of the call on the remaining Ottoman populations. Panhellenism, Pan-Germanism, Pan-Slavism, the Orthodox and Catholic patriarchs, and Greek and Armenian *millet* national assemblies were among a multitude of others. Recent events had demonstrated to the Ottomans the need for internal security and a new focus of loyalty. For the sultan, dynastic survival lay in taking charge and asserting the legitimacy of the new Muslim *millet*. Hence, Abdülhamid emphasized the role of Ottoman caliphate among the Muslim nations of the world and imposed the most autocratic reign of the last two centuries of the empire.

Contemporaries who interacted with the sultan during his reign remarked on his attention to detail, his genuine interest in theatre and music, and his religious sincerity. Others have focused on his timidity and paranoia, which increased over time and after several attempts on his life. Abdülhamid II isolated himself in Yıldız palace with his personal court (Mabeyn), which became an internal “city” on the Bosphorus with upwards of 1,000 employees. He is universally acknowledged to have asserted personal control over all decisions of government. By the time of his downfall in 1908, he had established an extensive system of spies and informers and exercised complete control over the dissemination of all information about the empire, more so than any of his royal neighbors.

The sultan had the emperors of Austro-Hungary, Russia and Germany as models, but it is the German model that had the greatest influence on the last decades of the Ottoman nineteenth century. Abdülhamid stands out among them as the most caricatured of his neighbors, particularly after he had Armenian blood on his hands. The satirical press—cartoons, fake biographies and relentless exposés—also explored his private life and sexualized the monarch in much the same way as *The Arabian Nights*.¹⁶

Concerned with his status abroad, Abdülhamid embarked on an explicit campaign to promote an image of a modern autocrat and his people. Since 1855, the Ottomans had participated in the international fairs that had become an exercise in self-promotion of global power by the 1890s. Abdülhamid paid special attention to the details of Ottoman exhibits and performances to ensure that his image as the modern leader of the Muslim world was not tarnished. Notable aspects of the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, for example, included the

construction of a working mosque open for prayers; the declaration of the sultan's accession date as the Ottoman "National Day"; and the addition of a hippodrome with Arabian horses and riders, all to be trained by a pair of Ottoman cavalrymen. Such endeavors were contracted out and insufficient funding often scuppered the projected exhibits, as was the case with the Arabians. By 1900, of course, the popular Oriental fantasies of the circus world of Barnum and Bailey—among legions of other examples—were ubiquitous as popular entertainment, proving difficult to counter with the image of a staid autocrat (Figure 8.2).¹⁷

Using the tools of the emerging world order, especially the telegraph and photography, Abdülhamid ordered the creation of images to counteract the pervasive exoticism of the Orient that entertained the global public whether in their drawing rooms, at the circus, the theatre, international fairs or street corners. Such is the series of photographic albums that the sultan commissioned from the Armenian firm Abdullah Frères, the famous Istanbul photography studio, and presented to the Library of Congress in Washington and the British Museum in 1893 and 1894, respectively. The photographs reveal as much about the Hamidian understanding of a modern European state as they do about the Ottoman Empire. Included are standard vistas of Ottoman Istanbul and its palaces, mosques and modernized military, naval and educational institutions. Those backdrops are



FIGURE 8.2 World's Columbian Exposition: Ottoman mosque lower right, United States, 1893 © Bygone Collection/Alamy Stock Photo D55FJ9

populated with students representing new directions in education, such as the Aşiret School, for the sons of tribal and nomadic citizens, largely from the Arab provinces, or the craft and trade school for girls in Üsküdar. The final series of photographs in the collection is of horses and yachts, nineteenth century preoccupations of aristocratic houses across the spectrum. Strikingly, the sultan forbade portraits or photographs of himself, making him subject to the imagination of journalists/artists of the period. However staged they may be, the albums do reflect the obsessions of Abdülhamid in the last quarter of the nineteenth century: to restore the legitimacy and finances of the house of Osman in the profoundly chaotic world of colonialism. The albums themselves sank into oblivion until rediscovered by historians following the Library of Congress digitization project in the late twentieth century.

Restoring Ottoman fortunes

As the Berlin Treaty so dramatically demonstrated, the new global age was underway: the arms race accelerated, colonial projects expanded, and an international legal system had begun to operate across the globe. Many have noted the death of the Concert of Europe post-1878, when Germany and Italy, late on the colonial scene, joined the scramble for Africa. On occasion, military operations with the world's "semi-civilized peoples" sometimes upended imperial expansion of colonial rule. This was the case in Plevne in 1878 or Adwa, in 1896, when the Italians lost half their troops to Ethiopian machine gun fire. However, most often such engagements ended with lopsided destruction of human life such as the battle of Omdurman in 1898 against the millenarian Muhammad Ahmad al Mahdi (1844–1885) when the British lost 49 soldiers versus upwards of 11,000 Sudanese. Modern guerrilla activity intensified, sped on by anarchic irredentists or revolutionaries. Colonialism and wars inevitably generated by the projects of the imperial powers were enabled by the development of steamships, railroads, the telegraph, and the global arms trade.

It was also a moment of global financial insecurities. One of the sultan's first tasks was the stabilization of the Ottoman economy. Following the default on foreign loans stemming from the Crimean War in 1875, and further indebtedness in the events of 1877–1878, an international commission was established and formalized in 1881 as the Public Debt Administration (PDA). Its members were major European stakeholders. In Egypt, similarly bankrupt, the Caisse de la Dette Publique dated from 1876. Neither would be formally abolished until after World War I—in Turkey in 1925 and Egypt in 1940.

In Istanbul, the PDA collaborated with the Ottoman Imperial Bank, a Franco-British enterprise that had operated as the state bank since 1863. In 1886, the PDA employed over 3,000 in 91 branches as far-flung as Basra and Libya. The Régie des tabacs was founded in 1884 largely with French capital and given a monopoly over the sale of Ottoman "Turkish" tobacco. By 1891, it employed some 8,800 workers largely to intervene in smuggling operations.¹⁸

The consolidation of the debt gave confidence to investors, which in turn stimulated the growth of the infrastructure of the port cities but prevented significant rationalization of the Ottoman budget that was largely spent on the military. Shrinking state revenues hindered the reforms the sultan could address in education and the military. The beneficiaries of the economic system that was in place by the 1880s were largely foreigners, and non-Muslim Ottoman families, chiefly Armenians, Greek Orthodox and Jews. As import and export duties continued to be part of the capitulation treaties, there was very little room for the sultan to improve the budget.

The scramble for Africa

In 1881, Tunisia was occupied by the French. The British, in occupation of Aden since 1839, had obtained permission from the sultan to occupy Cyprus in 1878. They secured the autonomy of Crete in 1897 and would culminate expansion into the Gulf as the role of protector over Kuwait in 1899. But the most significant British challenge to the Ottomans lay in the occupation of Egypt in 1882. Ottoman engagement with the great powers necessitated effective legal representation, especially as the Franco-British competition in the eastern Mediterranean over remaining Ottoman territories heated up.

Much of the diplomacy played out in international gatherings such as the 1884 Berlin Conference over the Congo and the “Scramble for Africa” as it has come to be known. Though initially not invited, the Ottomans insisted on being included because of their concern over Libya and the Red Sea. The Ottomans had heretofore relied on foreign lawyers and Greek Orthodox diplomats for negotiations with the great powers regarding the capitulations. The creation of the Office of Legal Consul in 1883—established at approximately the same time as such offices in Europe and the United States—represented a considerable departure. By the 1890s, the office was staffed entirely from Ottoman graduates of the Imperial Law School and Istanbul University. The most famous of the new legal advisers in 1883 was Gabriel Noradoughian (1852–1936), an Armenian nationalist who served 29 years as legal advisor and occasionally in a ministerial position (*Ottoman House*). His *Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire ottoman* stands today as the authoritative historical collection of treaties that the Ottomans signed. Ibrahim Hakkı Pasha (1862–1918), hand-picked by Abdülhamid, was appointed in 1894. Like Noradoughian, Hakkı Pasha taught international law and served briefly as grand vizier in 1910–1911.

This was the new face of Ottoman diplomacy that sat at the table in Berlin in 1884, claiming Ottoman sovereign rights to Libya and the eastern coast of Africa. However futile the results of the claims, the conference signaled an Ottoman assertion as leader of the Muslim world to protect Muslim, African and Bedouin populations. Such interventions became a particular aspect of Abdulhamid's performance as caliph. In this he was enabled by the European debates and publications over the incompatibility of Islam and science represented by Jamal al-Din

al-Afghani (d. 1897), anti-colonialist and Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), a Muslim modernist who raised the discussion and interest in the pan-Islamism movement to a global level.

The sultan also tapped into the simmering Muslim revivalist regimes, largely Sufi, among the Swahili population of Eastern Africa, in Trablusgar (Tripolitania), and the Omdurman Mahdist revolt in the Sudan against Egyptian and then British occupation. Tenuous Ottoman claims over the eastern African coastal cities (Massawa and Suakin fortresses) were in response to British and Italian interventions in South Arabia and the Gulf. As Isa Blumi notes: "In sum, the region became part of a global ideology of resistance increasingly absorbing the spirit of Ottomanism that Istanbul, by way of Mecca, Najaf, or Jerusalem would transform to influence how Muslims outside the empire understood their ability to survive."¹⁹

The British excuse for the occupation of Egypt lay in concerns about the security of the Suez Canal, its bondholders and the passage to India. By the 1870s, Egyptian *Khedive* Ismail had a great deal of independence from Ottoman suzerainty, had modernized and increased the size of his army, and had moved to assert Egyptian rights to nearby territories. The costs of that independence were the continuation of the payment of annual tribute and supplying troops at Istanbul's bidding. In the 1866–1867 uprisings in Crete, for example, *Khedive* Ismail had supplied some 18,000 troops to support the 20,000 strong Ottoman force in control of the fortresses and towns. Greek militias, operating from mountainous villages, were supported by smaller numbers of regular fighters, all poorly armed, and some 500 Philhellenes with modern weapons—perhaps 10,000 fighters in total. The ferocity of the partisan warfare both replicated that of the Greek Revolution and presaged 1877–1878. In early 1867, *Khedive* Ismail summarily withdrew his forces from Crete, having secured the rights to the Ottoman pashaliks of Suakin and Massawa on the east coast of Africa from the perpetually bribable Sultan Abdülaziz.

Khedive Ismail's dreams had long included possession of the Horn of Africa as part of his ambition to control the Suez Canal and the Red Sea. The *Khedive's* exploratory expeditions of the White Nile had led to his establishment of a tenuously connected array of small forts, with some 60 operating in southern Sudan between 1869–1881. He was supported in his African adventures by the "Neo-Mamluks" as they were called, foreign mercenaries from England, France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the United States. The foreign fighters joined the Turks and Circassians associated with the *Khedive* since the earlier campaigns of Mehmed Ali.²⁰ Convinced that *Khedive* Ismail could end the slave trade and acquire the fabled wealth of Ethiopia and Somalia, the Neo-Mamluks commanded a number of Egyptian incursions from strongholds in the Sudan such as Khartoum, Kassala and Dongola, most of which went awry (The Ottomans signed the international convention against the slave trade in 1890 but slavery continued clandestinely until legally abolished in the Turkish Republic).

Even successful enterprises never secured the territory or fundamentally altered the traditional African-Arab rivalry that stemmed from the 1840s. The Ethiopian-Egyptian war with Christian Emperor Yohannis of Abyssinia proved to be the challenge that exposed the folly of the entire enterprise. At the battle of Gura in March of 1876, the much larger Egyptian army lost 14,000 men to battle and typhus, as well as 10,000–12,000 animals, and left behind a large array of rifles and ammunition. Hostilities continued as proxy wars until 1884 when the British intervened to end the conflict, but Egyptian soldiers were never again deployed to the Horn of Africa.

As with his grandfather, Mehmed Ali, *Khedive* Ismail's imperial dreams always outpaced the capacity of Egypt's population and resources to fulfill. In spite of ruinous investments in new technologies, armaments and a fleet, Ismail neglected to undertake a fundamental reformation of military culture, training and curriculum for his army of *fellahin* conscripts. Imperial overreach and the necessity of supporting the Ottoman sultan's forces cost Egypt dearly in state bankruptcy, increased taxes and popular dissent.

The events of 1882 recall Napoleon's invasion in the previous century. The 'Urabi revolt, named for its leader, the Egyptian army officer Ahmed 'Urabi, began as a series of grievances against *Khedive* Tewfik (1879–1892). *Khedive* Tewfik had been installed by the British with Ottoman consent to replace the long-ruling *Khedive* Ismail as his debts threatened European markets. The revolt became the brief Anglo-Egyptian War when the British dropped anchor off Alexandria, bombed the city from 11–13 July 1882, and occupied it with marines after 'Urabi's forces withdrew. A major confrontation occurred in the Suez Canal zone in September 1882, with a 40,000 strong British army facing Colonel 'Urabi's hastily assembled conscripts dug in at Tel al Kabir. Unsurprisingly, the better equipped British forces carried the day. So began the greatest of colonial occupations on the Mediterranean, spanning 1883–1907, although it was never officially labeled as such.

In Sudan, meanwhile, a new threat emerged in the Muslim Samaniya movement whose disciples declared their Nubian leader Muhammad Ahmad as Mahdi in 1881. Like his contemporary, Yohannis of Christian Ethiopia, the Mahdi was one of the few African rulers of the period who briefly resisted the colonial powers. By the time of his final defeat in 1898, he and his followers had assumed control of a vast area from the Red Sea into Central Africa. In 1883, the Mahdi's army soundly defeated Egyptian forces at El-Obeid, at which point Prime Minister Gladstone—who sympathized with the Sudanese rebels—requested Egyptian evacuation of the Sudan. Charles George Gordon disobeyed his orders to oversee the evacuation, determined to defeat the Mahdi who had besieged him in Khartoum for months. In January 1885, as a British relief army approached, the Mahdi's army attacked and killed all the occupants of the garrison including General Gordon. Determined to honor the memory of Gordon, who became an instant martyr and hero, General Horatio Herbert Kitchener launched an expedition to the Sudan in 1896 that eventually destroyed the Mahdi's army at

Omdurman in 1898. Britain promptly separated Sudan from Egypt by installing a British Governor.

Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Italy made a bid for Ethiopia by occupying Suakin and Massawa with British acquiescence in 1885 and organized an army of some 20,000 to conquer the area. At Adwa in 1896, a superior and well-armed (by Russia mainly) Ethiopian force mowed down more than half of the Italian forces. While Italian ambitions in eastern Africa were checked, their interest in Ottoman Tripolitania remained alive, as their declaration of war on Istanbul in 1911 would bear out.

Egypt remained an autonomous province ruled by a hereditary *khedive* until WWI. The fiction of Ottoman suzerainty was maintained. Abülhamid sent one of his best commanders, Ahmed Muhtar Pasha, to languish in Cairo as the titular representative of the Ottoman sultan. In fact, British Consul General Evelyn Baring, Lord Cromer (1883–1907) was de facto ruler of Egypt in what became known as the Veiled Protectorate. He stabilized Egypt's finances, with 25–35% of annual revenues required to pay off the debt. The *Khedival* military was dismantled after the 'Urabi revolt and reorganized along colonial lines, initially as an internal force of 6,000. Garrisons in Sudan required manpower. By 1892, the army had increased to 16,000 regulars and 11,000 reserves based on conscription by ballot. Two fifths of the recruits were Sudanese.

Many improvements to the economy were made to the benefit and satisfaction of large landowners, but industrialization was neglected in favor of export crops such as cotton. The country was run by British officials who were appointed to every ministry, with the support of hundreds more British employees who were generally better paid (from the Egyptian budget) than Egyptians and enjoyed a communal exclusivity guaranteed to alienate the local population. A vibrant literary and newspaper community developed, partly as a result of *Khedive* Ismail's educational reforms and interest in Egyptian nationalism grew. Cromer, however, shared with his contemporaries an utter disdain for Islam and Muslim societies, having experienced the resistance of the native educated class in India. One of the consequences was a significantly limited access to public postsecondary education and employment for the general (Muslim) population, especially for women.

The emerging resistance to the British came to a head in 1906–1907, after the Dinshaway incident, as it is known, when a small British hunting party disturbed a village that raised pigeons and eggs as its livelihood. In the altercation that followed, two British soldiers were wounded, one of whom later died. The entire village was put on trial and four of the 32 convicted were eventually hanged, while the rest were flogged or condemned to hard labor. The excessive official response generated enormous discontent in a period already rife with significant opposition. In the period 1907–1914, opposition groups crystallized around the 18-year-old *Khedive* Abbas II (1892–1914). World War I intervened, the British declared Egypt a protectorate, imposed martial law, and replaced Abbas with his uncle Husayn Kamil. The Egyptian nation awaited another day.

The British and Italian occupations presented an armed obstacle to the sultan's connections to the Hijaz and the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina. *Khedive* Ismail's significant investment in telegraph, roads and railway lines had assured an increase in communications between Cairo, the gathering place for annual pilgrimages, and the sacred cities. Such infrastructure projects clustered around major ports, however, and made little progress in connecting Istanbul to the southern territories of the empire. Abdülhamid's commitment to extending telegraph lines and building the Hijaz railway from Damascus to Medina—opened in 1908 and financed entirely by Muslim contributors from across the world—were part of the sultan's last-ditch effort to preserve some suzerainty over Arabia and the sacred cities. Investment in the tribal areas, such as the construction of the Bedouin town of Beersheba, south of Jerusalem in the Negev, is another example of Abdülhamid's intentions to shore up the tribal connections to their sultan/caliph in Istanbul.

Cultivating an alliance with Sufi leader Muhammad al-Mahdi al-Sanusi (1859–1902) in Ottoman Tripolitania and Cyrenaica represented another way that the Ottomans attempted to preserve their influence in African and Arabian affairs. Pan-Islamic solidarity became part of the sultan's ideological toolkit broadcast far and wide in Asia. For a brief period before and after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, Japanese-Ottoman relations were driven by shared anti-Russian rhetoric and cultural exchanges between the two courts. The Japanese victory over Russia was celebrated all over Asia and Ottoman reformers used Japanese success at self-preservation and modernization as a model for their own debates. Such initiatives represented significant planks in the sultan's pan-Islamist platform, perhaps the one international campaign by the Ottomans that truly disturbed British colonial policy as they and the other great powers controlled the majority of the Muslim populations in Asia and Africa.

Law and education Hamidian style

But the most lasting reform legacy of the Hamidian era was the overhaul of the legal and educational systems. Living under colonial rule must have represented an existential dilemma for educated Muslims about the nature of their religion and society in the modern world. Historians have long depicted post-Tanzimat Ottoman (Muslim) society as deeply divided by secularists and Islamists—the former progressive, and led by the military, and the latter obscurant, fundamental and guided by the ulema. Such black-white, either/or divides are gradually being replaced by a deeper understanding of the complexity of the experiment of Ottomanism. This more nuanced scholarship reveals a plethora of avenues to Ottoman identity including, for example, well-established and powerful patronage and tribal networks, protected *millet* affiliations, missionary schools and enclaves, autonomous Ottoman territories, and after 1878, the newly emerging national agendas of the Balkans. It is this bewildering array of choices that simultaneously

offered possibilities to late-Ottoman citizens at the same time as generating the violence that had become an endemic and tragic part of the transformation.

In the areas of law and education, ambiguities and attempts at bridging divides are amply evident. The *Nizamiye* courts, as previously described, had introduced French civil codes and practices to Ottoman legal practice. These were run independently of the shari'a courts that were single judge systems without courts of appeal. The *Nizamiye* represent perhaps the most syncretic of the Ottoman legal reforms, engendering an interest in legal formalism and representation as one of the basic principles of the rule of law. The foundation of the Imperial Law School (1878), which included the *Mecelle* (corpus of shari'a law) in its curriculum meant that, by the end of the century, local Muslim graduates of the school increasingly staffed the *Nizamiye* courts. During the same period, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha finished the creation of the multi-volumed *Mecelle* that continued to be used into the Mandate period in some parts of the Middle East. Though the Ministry of Justice (1876) ran the *Nizamiye* courts, while the Office of the *Şeyhülislam* oversaw the shari'a courts, many regional courts were run by ulema appointees often simply because of financial constraints. In sum, the classical *kadi* became the modern *naib* who increasingly played important roles in the *Nizamiye* courts, precisely because it could be argued that ulema had the best knowledge of both civil and criminal systems. As with all other aspects of late Ottoman reform, bankruptcy and the power of the religious class, as enabled by sultanic preferences, influenced the journey to a Muslim nation.²¹

Hamidian educational reforms offer another view of this process of transformation. The Tanzimat reformers had managed to establish a significant primary school presence across Ottoman lands in the 1869 education law but had made little progress around secondary and postsecondary institutions. Abdülhamid, whose animosity to foreign influences and specifically missionary schools has been well documented, devoted significant time and resources to filling that gap. In 1883, a state-funded educational board was established, as directed by Abdülhamid, and the first such secondary school (Mekteb-i Sultani) was opened in Beirut. Damascus followed in 1885. Both are famed for the training of generations of Arab elites and intellectuals. By 1891, some 50 more schools had been constructed largely in the newly reorganized and increasingly contested Anatolian and southern provinces. The curriculum combined modern sciences with Muslim values, Ottoman identity and loyalty to the sultan. As with every other aspect of Hamidian life, the schools were closely monitored and censored.

Military schools preceded secular schools in the Arab provinces. In 1834, Mahmud II had established the military academy in Istanbul, two years after Ibrahim Pasha's Egyptian occupation in Damascus had opened its first military school in 1832. After the Ottoman reoccupation of Damascus, the school continued until 1932 when it was moved to Homs. Its fame derives from the prominent list of Middle Eastern military and political figures among its graduates. Its teachers included the staff officer Mustafa Kemal Atatürk from 1905 to 1907.

In 1845, military preparatory schools were opened in all Ottoman cities that housed army divisions. After 1869, students had access to village elementary schools, often combined with middle schools (*rüşdiye*) for six years, then *sultani* or *idadiye*, preparatory (high) schools, choosing either the military (*askeriye*) or civil (*mülkiye*) curriculum. Graduates could then enroll in the military academy or the civil service, medical or law schools (Figure 8.3).

İdadiye schools were open in every Ottoman province by 1880. After nine years of free education, those who continued as cadets in the Istanbul Military Academy studied military subjects such as field medicine, surveying, fortifications, reconnaissance, and communications along with French, German, and Russian, geography, and math. The military academy did not teach its students history or religion. Students from all over the remaining Ottoman territories, mostly Muslim, studied at the academy for three years before being commissioned. By 1899, over 25% of the Ottoman officer corps of 18,000 had been trained in the military education system.²² The impact of these reforms was substantial and extended well into the post-Ottoman period. In Baghdad, for example, three quarters of the Iraqi prime ministers from 1920 to 1958 were graduates of the Ottoman military preparatory school system (Figure 8.4).

In 1892, Abdülhamid established the Tribal School (*Aşiret Mektebi*) in Istanbul that boarded and trained the sons of elite frontier families from Arabia, Yemen,



FIGURE 8.3 Civil Engineering School, Abdullah Frères, Abdülhamid Photograph Collection, Library of Congress

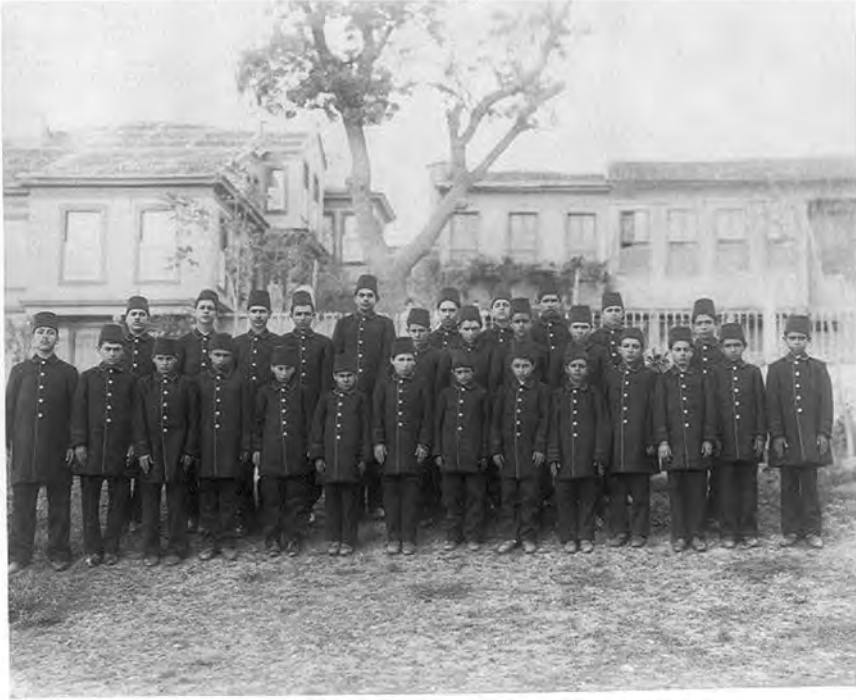


FIGURE 8.4 Students of the Aşirest School, Abdullah Frères, Abdülhamid Photograph Collection, Library of Congress

Hijaz, Libya and the Syrian desert. This was a more direct part of the Hamidian civilizing mission to integrate highly isolated and independent communities and inculcate the young boys with the Ottoman way and with loyalty to the sultan/caliph. It produced a couple of generations of administrators who had a later impact on their home territories well into the post-Ottoman period.

Further military reforms

The 1877–1878 Russo–Ottoman War, despite its short duration, had been a huge undertaking. In terms of logistics, men, and arms it was the largest conflict between the two imperial powers before WWI. It also exposed the perilous state of the Ottoman military system. The decision to use the army for defense against internal and external enemies has been described in previous chapters. More importantly, this war reinforced the necessity for well-trained officers, the *Mektebli*, as the examples of Osman Nuri and Ahmed Muhtar Pashas demonstrated. Unlike the Crimean War, there were very few foreigners, with some exceptions, to supplement the insufficient numbers of commanding and staff officers.

Even the best of officers, however, whose appointments were never secure, could not resist participating in the suspicions and jealousy generated by Abdülhamid himself. The sultan ran the war from Istanbul with incompetent advisers, undermining any possibility of a coordinated effort. Neither civil nor military leaders understood the necessity of developing a full-blown regimental staff command, nor of the need for a citizenship that understood military service as one's patriotic duty to the nation. Extreme financial limitations and the resistance to incorporation of non-Muslims into the army made this yet another pivotal moment in the long struggle for military reorganization that characterizes much of the period.

Abdülhamid's predecessors had made a considerable effort to improve the arms and uniforms of the infantry. As a result, this time around the Danubian battlefields had American-made Winchester and Martini-Peabody rifles, Krupp cannons, sufficient locally manufactured gunpowder and functional baggy uniforms, winter clothing, backpacks and blankets. However, in spite of new railway and steamboat lines, shortages of coal meant that logistics remained a nightmare, even though medical and commissariat services had improved. The lack of reliable field maps or surveying equipment resulted in a range of mishaps, including lost battalions wandering aimlessly when they were most needed for battle.

And yet, the Ottoman performance was an improvement on the Crimean War, and the key lay first and foremost in the further development of officer training. In the mid-nineteenth century, European armies had lapsed to pre-Napoleonic style order, with aristocratic officers and long-serving troops more normal (and less threatening) than a conscript army of citizens. As with the Ottomans, European leaders had continued to make use of the army for internal suppression of revolts such as in Paris in 1848.

In the 1870s, Prussian innovations led the way in influencing the evolution of pre-WWI armies, most notably in the practice of active and reserve forces, which allowed for substantial conscription with less expense unless the reserves were called to the battlefield. The system had the added advantage of controlling labor unrest, which became endemic in the early years of the twentieth century. Urban police and countryside gendarme-style forces were given the task of internal security, while the army was responsible for international wars. Colonial warfare had produced a reliance on indigenous martial forces, as evident in the Habsburg, Ottoman and Romanov contexts, but predominating in the French, British, German and Italian overseas colonial projects by 1900. All the new tools of controlling fighting men meant that European armies grew very large as populations increased. In 1897, Austria had 2.6 million and Russia had 4 million men under arms.

Although the technological gap between the Ottomans and European armed forces has long been emphasized, a significant problem lay in an insufficient population for the scale of warfare at the turn of the century. By 1914, for a rough comparison with the Ottomans, territorial France could mobilize 4 million regulars and reserves from a population of 40 million; Germany nearly 5 million with a population of 65 million and Russia about 6 million men with a population of

175 million.²³ These numbers do not include colonial troops or irregulars in the Russian case. The Ottomans, by contrast, attempted to mobilize close to 3 million soldiers out of a population of 20–30 million, following two years of disastrous and deadly campaigns in the Balkans in 1912–1913.

Until the first decade of the twentieth century, Ottoman conscripts were exclusively Muslims. Even for Muslims, there were multiple ways of avoiding service. Perhaps as much as one-quarter of the Muslim population lived in areas exempt from conscription, including parts of Albania, Crete, Bosnia, the Kurdish territories, and tribal areas of Syria and Iraq where conscription was fiercely resisted and only slowly imposed. The wealthy could secure buyouts, and the religious class was exempted, a factor that not surprisingly increased the number of students in religious schools. Christians continued to pay the *bedel* until 1909, when universal conscription was legislated. Additionally, exemptions meant that the manpower burden fell most sharply on the Muslims of eastern Anatolia. Manpower shortages also meant the new Caucasian refugee populations would likely become recruits to the battlefields of WWI. These conditions suggest one reason why the Hamidian army had not differentiated internal, external or colonial forces to the same degree as had other armies of the world.

Abdülhamid's suspicion of the commanding officers of the army led him to refuse to establish a command structure and hierarchy and to veto organizational reform efforts. Instead, he established a separate military command in the palace that reported directly to him, and seldom consulted with the Ministry of War. Remarkably, in spite of his paranoia, he retained three top officers in their posts for decades: Rıza Pasha as Commander-in-Chief, Edhem Pasha as Chief of the General Staff, and Zeki Pasha as Chief of the Artillery and Engineer Corps. While it did ensure a respite from organizational chaos, it meant the rise of much discontent among experienced and novice Mektebli officers alike.

Abdülhamid completely neglected the *Redif* system in part because of budgetary restrictions but also because, in his rather traditional and largely pragmatic view, the army needed to be enlarged with officers and men who were Muslim and loyal to the caliph. To that end, in 1881 he ordered the resurrection of tribal levies and the creation of irregular tribal cavalry units, known as the *Hamidiye Aşiret Alayları*, a system that had grown to 65 regiments (roughly 45,000) by 1908. Small groups were first deployed to Libya and Yemen, and then in large numbers among the Kurdish tribes in eastern Anatolia, where the suppression of the Armenian Sasun rebellion in 1884–1886 made them notorious for excessive violence. In addition, he created a series of Imperial Guards based on ethnicity: Albanians (mostly from Prizren), Arabs (Sarıklı Suhaf) and Turcomans from Birecik, the birthplace of the Ottoman principality (the Ertuğrul Cavalry Guard) (Figure 8.5).²⁴

New military elites

After much resistance to the idea, and after long neglecting the needs of the army, Abdülhamid was ultimately persuaded to seek advice from the Prussians who had a



FIGURE 8.5 Ertuğul Cavalry, Abdullah Frères, Abdülhamid Photograph Collection, Library of Congress

history of serving the sultanate as military advisers that dated back to the Moltke Mission under Mahmud II. In 1882, a German military commission under Colonel Kaehler submitted an extensive reform agenda that was reviewed by Ahmed Muhtar Pasha and the reform council. The recommendations were three: reform of the command control system and an establishment of an effective general staff; reform of the academy curriculum; and an overhaul of the reserve system. Only the educational reforms were carried out, though under another German adviser, Major Colmar von der Goltz, who arrived in 1883. While small adjustments were made to the curriculum, von der Goltz faced considerable opposition from the veteran commanders. For example Osman Nuri Pasha, of Plevne renown and four times Minister of War in this period, resented the German mission. He continued to resist the changes to the curriculum of the Military Academy, which remained firmly grounded in engineering, ballistics, geography, mathematics and physics.

Von der Goltz lamented the lack of field experience and logistics training of the traditional curriculum, so he turned his attention to the young officers of the general staff (*Erkân-ı Harb*) where he made a considerable impact. The General Staff College, a three-year course of study, had become a prized entrance into officer training. It was followed by five years field work apprenticeship in various

aspects of military command. The reforms created an expert and bonded group of officers who were appointed to influential commands in the decade that followed. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Ottoman–German partnership was profound, largely due to von der Goltz, with hundreds of young officers spending years training in Germany and learning both the German military and political system.

In this, von der Goltz found a partner in Mahmud Şevket Pasha (*Ottoman House*), born in Baghdad of Arab and Georgian background, and appointed to the general staff after graduating from the academy at the top of his class in 1882. He spent ten years in Germany mentored by von der Goltz, where he was an assiduous translator of German military works into Turkish and gained renown around his knowledge of weapons and ammunition. Şevket Pasha's general independence and loyalty to the preservation of the Ottoman system apparently earned him the trust of Abdulhamid. As a result, he was given important tasks such as overseeing the installation of the telegraph in the Hijaz and joining the commission with von der Goltz in the late 1880s that persuaded the Ottoman administration to accept the German Mauser rifle (M98), the ubiquitous Ottoman rifle during WWI.

The Germans became the chief suppliers of Ottoman armaments, and investors in major infrastructure projects such as the Baghdad Railway, a project that began in 1910 and was only finished in 1940. Germany's Kaiser Wilhelm II (1888–1918) made two visits to Istanbul in 1889 to secure the arms trade, and again by royal invitation in 1898, when he toured Syria as well—the only head of state to do so in the Hamidian era. The German Fountain, still standing in Istanbul's Sultanahmet Square, was officially presented by Wilhelm II to the sultan in 1900.

Reforming the Gendarmerie

Military historians have noted that one of the fundamental differences between the Ottoman officer class and their European fellows was that the primary occupation of most of a young Ottoman officer's career was counterinsurgency, largely due to the swirl of rebellions, conspiracies and guerilla warfare that characterized the empire pre-1908. In truth, the Ottoman forces faced the next round of separatist movements with virtually the same lack of differentiation in place.²⁵ The army was better disciplined and supplied, but remained without an effective command structure, one of the chief contributing factors to the emergence of cells of discontent in the army corps most affected by the new separatist unrest.

In the 1840s, the Ottomans had created a countrywide police force, the Zaptiye (Gendarmerie), at about the same time as Russia (1825) and Austria (1848). This was intended to substitute for the use of contractors and local militias, an Ottoman habit, which continued out of necessity as described in the case of the mid-century revolts. The Zaptiye, generally located in provincial centers, became associated with tax collection—essentially extortion rackets at harvest time—and competed with (or occasionally were indistinguishable from) provincial irregulars, such as

bashibozuks of Bulgarian infamy. The Zaptiye had attracted 38,000 by the 1870s, including many of the new immigrants such as Circassians.

As part of the 1878 treaty, the great powers insisted on administrative reforms to the provincial security forces to which the Ottomans acquiesced. The great powers were concerned about security in the new Balkan realignment as much as the protection of minority populations. The Ottomans remained just as concerned to prevent further foreign intervention and foreign troops on Ottoman soil. As part of the reforms, tax collection was removed as one of the tasks of the Zaptiye and a new urban police force was established.

In 1879, the corps itself was reorganized and numbered 26,000, roughly one in 1,000 inhabitants. While it appears to have been effective in a number of places, the corps regulations were never systematically applied across the empire. The Public Debt Administration, normally reluctant to spend money on the military, financed weapons and equipment for the Zaptiye. Partly because of great power support, members of the Gendarmerie regiments were assigned from the elites of the military academy, but in no time, command of the units had reverted to the Ministry of War, stifling innovation.

Specific requirements were few and vague: the ideal gendarme was a young man, a stranger to the territory where he served. Normal service was two years, renewable. There was no restriction by religion. In the brief time that Midhat Pasha had governed Syria, in 1879, for example, he had attempted to mix ethnicities in what was a heavily Kurdish Zaptiye corps and had attracted both Christians and Jews. That proved particularly difficult in the Armenian-dominated provinces where there was little enthusiasm for joining the corps. In spite of such reform efforts, the Zaptiye became home to criminals and bandits largely because pay was low and almost always in arrears, sometimes for years—one reason for reducing the size of the force and for the desertions that became endemic.²⁶

The fallback for suppressing provincial unrest was the standard military units of regional armies, now supplemented by fractious tribal cavalries, the new *bashibozuks*. The continuation of such security practices reflects the inability of the Ottomans to master complete control over its empire-wide military command and strategy. The reassembled forces would soon be tested by significant uprisings in Greece, Macedonia (Bulgaria) and eastern Anatolia.

Revolutionary movements

Resistance to the sultan took many forms before the 1880s. Violence might erupt from excessive taxation, conscription, sectarian peasant violence or inter-tribal politics, but just as often from the excessive use of force that characterized provincial security. Little of the violence looks like revolutionary activities, but rather like attempts to expand borders and win over populations in isolated rural settings where literacy rates were below 10%, and religious authorities exercised more influence than civilian officials. To speak of the birth of the Greek nation in 1832 is to elide the subsequent 14 rebellions that broke out in the independent kingdom

from 1833 to 1852. An example would be the serious revolt of 1835 when the unsolved problem of the demobilized irregular bands broke out in sustained raids by Albanians and Greeks on peasants and shepherds in mountain communities. Veterans of the War of Liberation had been refused settlement on government lands, were reluctant to resume civilian life because of potential charges against them and revolted against a new surtax imposed on goats and sheep entering Greece in seasonal migration. Military reform in Greece was hampered by the celebration of the *klefts* as revolutionary heroes, and they continued to be exploited in irredentist projects in the final decades of Ottoman existence. Creation of a fixed border between Greece and Ottoman Rumelia may have changed the patterns of movements but did not necessarily impede the habits of banditry.²⁷ George Gavrilis has argued that by 1850 the Greeks and Ottomans shared a repertoire of procedures that included reciprocally accepted cross-territorial pursuit; joint pursuit of bandits; local extradition of army deserters and fugitives on shared lists, and illegitimate border jumpers.²⁸ The Crimean War and subsequent events in Macedonia intervened, and the border became permanently militarized.

Likewise, in Serbia, Prince Miloš Obrenović's new government faced seven uprisings from 1815 to 1839, before the final liberation from the Ottomans in 1878. In neither case can the unrest be entirely attributed to a population organized around the idea of a unified nation. Inchoate voices became more clearly organized around the national idea only with the aid of what one historian has called "European carpetbaggers" and transplanted ideas of nationhood. "The disposition of all of the Balkan territories depended upon European politicians' opinions on the ethnic composition of the peninsula and their views on the rights conferred by ethnicity."²⁹

But the situation was different by the 1890s. The final two decades of Hamidian rule are exceptionally difficult to characterize as they were punctuated with violent uprisings, brief wars, and unjustified massacres. Still for those in the urban settings described in Chapter 7, it must also have been a time of promise for those who could afford it as travel on sea and land became easier, and traffic between Europe and Istanbul became a routine on the legendary Orient express (1893) with its terminus at Sirkeci Station on the European side of the city. Similarly, the grand Haydarpaşa Station in Kadıköy on the Asian side simplified travel to Ankara by 1892. The station in its current form was rebuilt in 1906 when it became the terminus for both the Baghdad and Hijaz railways.

Urban life flourished in literary and fraternal societies. These were increasingly organized around ethnicity and celebration of the arts outside the boundaries of Hamidian political censorship. It is here that the splits within the ethnic communities of Greeks and Armenians began, pitting religious officials and notable families against an emerging class of European-educated and secular-minded citizens. Underneath the cosmopolitanism, discontent simmered over the increasing invasion of the Hamidian state into all aspects of life, stimulated by external and

internal agitation quite beyond the practice of great power intervention that had become inevitable and routine after the 1870s.

This was also the age of pogroms in Eastern Europe, when waves of Jewish settlers joined the list of refugees arriving in the remaining Ottoman territories in the 1890s. Theodor Herzl, founder of political Zionism and the search for a Jewish state, appealed to the Ottomans in 1896 and again in 1901, offering to help the sultan recover control of the Public Debt Association for the charter to settle Jews in Palestine. The sultan, though intrigued by the consolidation of the debt idea nonetheless rejected any idea of a charter for the Jewish diaspora, recognizing that it would result in another mini nation carved out of Ottoman sovereign territory. Nonetheless, the stream of refugees continued, helped by the great powers and the capitulatory regime, who enabled the Jewish acquisition of *miri* lands in spite of local official attempts to prevent it. Britain was the first of the great powers to support the new Jewish settlers with threats of intervention, however reluctant they might be to encourage the new arrivals. For different reasons, France, Germany and Russia saw the advantages of allowing the Jewish settlers to establish a colony in Ottoman Palestine. By 1908, the new Jewish population stood at 80,000, three times the number in the early 1880s and had settled in 26 colonies.³⁰ The issue of the new Jewish nation continued to fester among the vociferous and violent movements of liberation that mushroomed all over the remaining territories of the empire. The question of Jerusalem and Palestine awaited the treaties of WWI to become the single most intractable problem of the late twentieth century Middle East.

Meanwhile, the Arab populations of greater Syria and Iraq had also begun a journey (*nahda* or awakening) of self-awareness as the Arab nation along cosmopolitan ecumenical lines. The origins of Arab nationalism have long been the subject of debate. One difference that stands out clearly is the many fewer instances of riots and massacres occurring in Syria/Iraq after the disasters of the 1850–1860s as compared to Rumelia and Anatolia at the turn of the century. It is generally acknowledged that the historical contribution of Arabs and Arabic Islam, increasingly made available to the literate public of the second half of the nineteenth century, was a common foundation for cultural pride in being Arab. Where one lived also determined the extent to which the European debates over nationalism, constitutionalism and secularism influenced individual commitment to reform or revolution. For many Arab Muslims, that identity overlapped with the Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism of Abdülhamid's fashioning. That would be true of inhabitants of Baghdad, Damascus and Aleppo, where a strong Muslim intellectual culture continued until the eve of WWI. Cairo and Alexandria's response to nationalism pre-WWI was Egypt for Egyptians, different again likely because of the British occupation, but it too had a robust and diverse variety of opinions on citizenship and ethnicity.

In Beirut, Izmir and Thessaloniki, by contrast, a Europeanized bourgeoisie with multiple access to Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Orthodox primary and secondary as well as post-secondary education, a lively climate of debate around

identity thrived, as indicated by the large number of publications in multiple languages of the period. Most scholars point to Butrus al-Bustani, who died in 1883, known by some as the father of the Arab renaissance, as bringing together the threads of the secular state, still argued as his vision of Ottomanism, that became the springboard for much later thought on the cultural unity of Arabs. A prolific didact, he was also the founder of The National School in Beirut (1863–1878) that welcomed students of all faiths. Finally, among Arab populations, Tanzimat and Hamidian reforms brought prosperity to Muslim and non-Muslims to a degree, especially those already involved with Christian networks of trade, or newly elevated Bedouin tribal leaders in the settled Iraqi regions. The local councils and brief parliamentary representation also instilled inter-elite co-operation in identifying and forestalling mutinous murmurings.

Of course, that did not benefit the Ottoman peasants who were often charged with starting the inter-faith violence. In many instances, whole communities passed from being “nominal” landholders to sharecroppers resulting from the central efforts to bring more cultivation of land under control, and the intervention of new classes of property owners/money lenders. The rural/urban divide remained stark and regions on the borderlands or tucked away in mountainous regions were long used to abuse by random violence around property and honor. Such isolated populations were susceptible to poor harvests, frequent seasons of fevers, and manipulations by local forces—be they church official, or the random horseman/enforcer, ubiquitous state official or simply marauder. Hamidian censorship and suppression of rebellions drove many Ottomans—largely non-Muslim—into exile and more, as described, into immigration overseas. In spite of all that, many in the population continued to think of themselves as connected to Ottomanism at least until 1908.

Greece, Bulgaria and Macedonia

Universal dissatisfaction with the Berlin Treaty of 1878 guaranteed decades of struggle over ill-drawn frontiers as the lead up to the final conflagration of WWI. It was an era of international revolutionary moments when the debates concerning constitutionalism as a political agenda were embraced in ideologies of nationalism, socialism, Zionism and anarchism. All were influenced to various degrees by the spirit of European leftist utopian violence as the means to an idealized, civilized state and society. Revolutionary cells emerged in Habsburg, Romanov and Ottoman territories, spreading across the Balkans and Anatolia, where individual organizations adapted the rhetoric to local contexts. It is in this context that the first stirrings of a revolutionary group of the late empire that came to be known as the Young Turks emerged among discontented Ottoman army officers based in Salonika.

The population of mainland Greece, already warming to the Megali Idea—that is, reviving classical and Byzantine Greece by reoccupying Istanbul and western Anatolia—strenuously objected to being left out of the 1878 Berlin settlement.

Vague language in the treaty, however, allowed them to secure the expansion of Greek frontiers in Thessaly and Epirus, leaving eastern Thrace in Ottoman hands. Meanwhile, the resistance to Ottoman rule in Crete continued to stir activists in the mainland, as Greece began its emergence as part of the European state system, with budgetary reforms and modernization of the army.

Bulgaria adopted its first constitution and installed Alexander of Battenberg as the first Prince of Bulgaria. By 1885, following an insurrection in Eastern Rumelia to overthrow Prince Alexander, Prime Minister Stephan Stambulov invaded eastern Bulgaria and declared independence from Russian influence. Serbia invaded Bulgaria briefly but was defeated handily and agreed to the status quo in 1886. Now regent as well as prime minister following the abdication of Alexander, Stambulov and the newly elected assembly found another willing titular head, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg. Bulgaria under Stambulov secured the sultan's permission for the creation a separate Bulgarian Orthodox church (Exarchist) and patriarch in 1890. By 1894, Stambulov himself had been removed from office and later assassinated. The table was set for confrontations between the rival Greek and Bulgarian Orthodox churches in the remaining contested Ottoman territories.

The third part of Bulgaria by the Berlin Treaty, Macedonia, comprised of the three Ottoman *vilayets* of Kosovo, Bitola (Monastir) and Salonika, with the capital in Salonika remained nominally in Ottoman hands. The contest for sovereignty in Macedonia was immensely complicated by the extraordinary diversity of languages and ethnicities not easily divisible into homelands such as Greece, Bulgaria or Serbia. By 1893, separatist bands had organized themselves as the pro-Bulgarian Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) in Salonika. Initially undetected by Istanbul, they operated by taxing or robbing local populations until exposed and punished by the Ottomans in 1897. In Sofia, another group, known as the Supreme Committee, launched attacks in Macedonia in 1891 that were exposed and thwarted by the Ottoman army. By 1899, however, the two organizations collaborated as the IMRO and began organizing village bands called *chetas* (Turkish *komitaas*). As the century ended, the guerrilla activities in Macedonia included kidnapping, alerting the great powers to the increasing unrest. Meanwhile, Greek irredentists formed their own network of revolutionaries in Macedonia that intensified in the same period, adding further confusion to the plethora of other national bands such as the Albanians and the Serbians. By 1908, these would include the rebellious national battalions of the Ottoman army, the nascent revolutionary Committee of Union and Progress.

There were several other hotspots beyond Macedonia that claimed Abdülhamid's attention in the 1890s. One was yet another rebellion in Crete, demanding union with Athens and mainland Greece, leading to a brief Greco-Ottoman War in 1897. The other was the Armenian question, simmering in eastern Anatolia since the 1860s but forcing the international community into action in 1894. The insurgency in Crete had festered since the 1866 rebellion, surfacing again in 1878 and 1888. It reached an intensity in 1896 when the rebels insisted on union with Greece and called on Athens for military support, which

duly replied with an expeditionary force. Great power intervention assured Crete's autonomy after 1897, but fervor for Greek expansionism on the mainland continued. By the time that the Ottomans declared war in April 1897, Greek volunteers and the army amassed some 25,000 troops on the Thessaly border. Ottoman troops defeated the Greeks in a month, but great power interference also stopped that conflict. Greece removed its troops from Crete while the Ottomans retreated to their own border on the mainland, having secured an indemnity from Greece. The brief encounter presaged the singular violence that would characterize the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars. German observers and military advisers such as von der Goltz predicted that the emerging moral energies of the Turkish “volk,” would spawn a Turco-Islamic culture.³¹ It was a brief victory for Abdülhamid in the midst of a far more intractable and escalating crisis in eastern Anatolia where Hamidian heavy-handed responses grew especially lethal.

Eastern Anatolia

The Armenians, known as the loyal *millet*, were more deeply embedded in Ottoman society than any of the other *millets* and scattered in every corner of the empire as merchants, laborers, agriculturalists, bankers, money lenders (*sarrafs*), translators and state officials, serving on municipal councils and in the administration. By the nineteenth century, minority populations of Armenians could be found in all the cities of the empire. Like the Ottoman Greeks, their communal organizations had become very diverse. Governed by an Armenian Apostolic (Gregorian) Patriarch in Istanbul after the Ottoman conquest of 1453, their historic homeland and bishopric lay in the six eastern provinces (Erzurum, Van, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Mamuretel-Aziz and Sivas) of Anatolia, which was also populated by semi-nomadic Kurds. By the nineteenth century, the Armenians were split among the Apostolic, Catholic and Protestant rites, the latter in part because of the missionary schools. They were proportionately the most highly educated of the *millets*, often at the forefront of new technologies such as photography. The Tanzimat reforms created an Armenian lay assembly that connected Istanbul and the eastern provinces more directly, helping to promote the notion of an Armenian nation. Armenian intellectuals, as with their Balkan counterparts, began to imagine a different political future for the community after 1860. The Russian invasion of the eastern borders in 1876 with the intention of annexing the eastern provinces further stimulated hopes of uniting the Russian and Ottoman Armenian communities. The Berlin Treaty, however, had put the sultan on notice that the great powers would be carefully watching the progress of reforms among the Armenians in eastern Anatolia.

As in Macedonia, small armed bands of Armenian youths (*fedayi*) sprang up to defend local communities. By 1890, two more global revolutionary organizations had begun to operate in Istanbul and Anatolia, largely to draw the attention and assumed intervention of the international community in Armenian affairs: the Hnchaks, founded in Geneva in 1887, espousing complete separation, and the

Dashnaks, or Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), established in Tbilisi in 1890, a socialist and sometime collaborator of the Ottoman opposition in exile in Paris and later Committee of Union and Progress (CUP).

For Sultan Abdülhamid, the creation of an independent Armenian state was not to be considered, and he began a brutal campaign of suppression of such nationalist aims that failed to distinguish between activists and the general population. His weapon of choice was the Kurdish Hamidiye cavalry previously described as led by his protégé Zeki Pasha, the Commander of the Fourth Army corps from 1887 and commander of the Hamidiye as of 1890. For two decades, Zeki Pasha ran the Hamidiye as his private army, a veritable prince of Kurdistan according to witnesses at the time. The organization mimicked the *derebey* emirates that were broken up by Mahmud II and his military commanders during the Mehmed Ali crisis in the 1830s. However, these cavalry units were not confederations of tribes, but single tribes with their own leaders who also served as the Ottoman administrators for their regions. Of course, they were dependent on the largess of Abdülhamid, who operated in much the same way as sultans of yore, by handing out units of irrigable land to tribal units for fixed rents from the large estates he had acquired across the al-Jazirah region.

The Hamidiye regiments proved ungovernable and undisciplined as soldiers, though well-armed by the state and often escorted on their migratory routes by the regular army. Indiscriminate and casually violent in their dealings with non-tribal populations, they quickly became notorious for looting at will in their capacity as state representatives, most especially the Armenians of the six provinces. Abdülhamid favoritism of specific tribes stirred up anger and envy among the impoverished Kurds and Armenians of the area. Local clashes between the communities and the new militia accelerated after 1890, breaking out in open rebellion between Hnchak groups and the Hamidiye with regular army backup in Sasun in the province of Bitlis. Rumors of an Armenian revolution prompted Abdülhamid to order a sustained campaign against the militants which resulted in widespread massacre of Armenians as well as Assyrian Christians in all of the six provinces. An estimated 200,000 Armenians died in what has become known as the Sasun massacre or more appropriately, the Hamidian massacres.³² Hnchak and Armenian Revolutionary Federation guerillas continued the attacks in an effort to force intervention by the great powers, but to no avail.

Stepping up their activities in 1896, a Hnchak band took over the Ottoman Bank in Istanbul and held hostages, threatening to blow it up with a set of demands addressed to the European embassies. Their activities unleashed angry Muslim mobs on the city's Armenian population. While the events engendered disgust with Abdülhamid in European circles, concerted international action did not materialize. For European diplomats, the massacres fit into the mounting evidence of the decadent and collapsing empire, ruled by a sultan now dubbed "Abdul the Red," or "Abdul the Damned." In dreary late Ottoman fashion, Abdülhamid could neither control nor would he condemn the unlawful activities

of his security forces, assuming that all non-Muslims (and non-Sunni Muslims as a matter of fact) were domestic agitators for their ethnoreligious nations.

The events did intensify the continuing flight of Ottoman citizens of all ethnicities for foreign shores. As one example, American officials recorded the arrival of 270,000 people who claimed Ottoman citizenship between 1895 and 1914. Among them would have been Maronites, Druze, Greeks and Bulgarians in addition to the Armenians. In fact, the world at the turn of the century was one massive blur of movement, driven by colonialism and a global economic recession. While much of the Ottoman migration was driven by persecution, as with the Jews and the Armenians, an equal amount was prompted by sheer economic desperation. Ottoman poverty became glaringly apparent after the establishment of the foreign-controlled PDA and the Régie de Tabacs and the limited ability of the Ottoman state to generate revenue.

The international context at the turn of the century

Furthermore, after a couple of decades of uncertainty and colonial rivalry in Africa, the global powers reestablished new partnerships that further threatened Ottoman sovereignty in its remaining territories. Austro-Hungary-Italy-Germany continued in a triple defense alliance established in 1882 that lasted until WWI. France signed an alliance with Russia in 1894. Britain, increasingly confronted with Germany's rising power, signed an informal agreement with France in 1904. The resulting Entente Cordiale, as it was known, accepted one another's colonial activities in Morocco and Egypt. Nicholas II of Russia was facing an empire-wide revolution following the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 which resulted in a multi-party state, an assembly (Duma) and constitution by 1906.

Next, it was Iran's turn, then in the hands of the inept and corrupt Qajar dynasty. Russia's slow, inexorable move into the south Caucasus disturbed the Qajars as much as the Ottomans and raised British alarm about India. Displaced populations fled into Iranian territory as into Ottoman territory, and the economy would shortly be controlled as with Cairo and Istanbul by foreign investors. Desperate for money, Qajar Muzaffer al-Din Shah (1896–1906) had granted William D'Arcy massive oil concession rights in Iran in 1901, considered the largest of its kind in that era. The Persian population had been restless over Qajar ineptitude and foreign interference since the 1890s. Encouraged by a small but influential coalition of Europe-educated reformers from all walks of life, a significant protest broke out in Tehran in 1905 demanding a constitution called the Fundamental Laws, with Twelver Shiism the official religion.

It is in that context that the Anglo-Russian accord of 1907 was signed. The two powers agreed to split the country into zones, the north under Russian influence; the south under British, with a neutral middle territory. In 1908, oil was discovered, justifying the British investment and the creation of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, predecessor of British Petroleum. Iran was well and truly colonized. While the constitutional movement survived for several more years, it was

suspended on the eve of WWI when the British invaded in 1911 to put an end to the political turmoil between royalists and constitutionalists, ulema and secularists. WWI intervened, and the Iranian revolution was postponed.

The Ottomans were now surrounded in effect by hostile, colonial powers, and constitutional revolutions, and completely beset by unrest from populations within the remaining territories. Whether it was from new taxes, interfaith conflicts or nationalism, revolts in the early 1900s became very widespread and occurred in the countryside as well as the cities. This was particularly the case in Macedonia, where after a brief hiatus following the Ottoman victory over Greece in 1897, guerilla activity began again in September 1902 and the indiscriminate violence escalated until the CUP revolt in 1908. Pro-Bulgarian rebels (the Supremists) revolted in present-day Blagoevgrad (Cuma-i Bala) but did not have sufficient support and were easily suppressed by the Ottoman army in a couple of months. Harsh reprisals followed including the burning of villages, and deaths of non-combatants. Austria and Russia called for reforms, but anticipating their intervention, Abdülhamid established a General Inspectorate of Rumelia in December 1902, not just for Macedonia but specifically for Yanya, İşkodra and Edirne, and placed Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, veteran administrator of Adana and Yemen, in charge. The Ottomans proposed a wide-ranging series of reforms including to the Gendarmerie that had become one of the major sources of the violence. Significantly, guidelines for mixing Greeks, Bulgarians, Muslims, and non-Muslims in the Gendarmerie was one of the new regulations.

International intervention was forestalled but the problem remained unsolved. A group of anarchists splintered from the IMRO in Salonika were responsible for several bombings there in April 1903, but as most of the targets were foreign owned—such as the Ottoman Bank, the Istanbul railroad tracks, or the German School—the international community was more annoyed than concerned enough to act. However, following the Ilinden (St Elias) uprising on 2 August 1903, when guerillas, gendarmes and the army devastated the countryside, the signatories of the Berlin Treaty forced a new series of reforms on the Ottomans, called the Mürtzeg program in November 1903. The focus of concern was again the Gendarmerie, rather than the festering problem of territorial, national boundaries. The Ottomans agreed to the appointment of Italian General Emilio Degiorgis as the commander of the Gendarmerie and training would be based on that of the carabinieri of Italy. The corps would be run by several dozen foreign officers who would report to Ottoman commanders. Perhaps most interesting of all was that each of the foreign powers assumed jurisdiction in Macedonia as follows:

Kosovo, the district of Uskub was assigned to Austria-Hungary: in Monastir, the town of Monastir as well as Kastoria and Serfice were to be under Italian command; and the province of Salonika was to be divided among the Russians, British, and French, who took over the *sancaks* (subprovince) of Salonika, Drama, and Serres, respectively.³³

In retrospect, it was an astonishing invitation to further conflict and violence, only now broadening the potential participants. Edith Durham (*Ottoman House chapter 9*), later renowned artist, ethnographer and historian was an eyewitness to these events. "The problems of Turkey in Europe are not confined to one spot, and to 'cultivate a cabbage-garden' in the middle of it with quite artificial boundaries is likely to create as many new difficulties as it cures old ones." She continued:

Far too much 'copy' has been made out of 'atrocities' for party purposes, and the supply of them has been thereby stimulated. Nor are they presented in proper perspective. When a Moslem kills a Moslem it does not count; when a Christian kills a Moslem it is a righteous act; when a Christian kills a Christian it is an error of judgment better not talked about; it is only when a Moslem kills a Christian that we arrive at a full-blown atrocity.³⁴

In 1904, the Bulgarians and Ottomans signed an agreement offering a general amnesty to the insurgents while Bulgaria promised a suppression of the guerilla bands. As İpek Yosmaoğlu acutely notes: "The Ottoman government under Abdülhamid II went after those who opposed its authority with a vengeance, but for all its show of absolutism, its punishments were always juxtaposed with the paternalistic leniency of a regime that jailed entire villages following an uprising and yet pardoned 'ex-bandits' who expressed their regrets, often honoring their requests to be enlisted in the gendarmerie."³⁵ Indeed, the general amnesty released all the activists who simply returned to their subversive activities, which now included newly emerging Greek, Muslim and Albanian bands. It is estimated that between 1904 and 1908, 8,000 lives were lost of which only 3,500 were guerillas.³⁶

Abdülhamid may have welcomed the intervention in Macedonia as 1904–1905 was otherwise an annus horribilis for the paranoid sultan. In Rumelia, as well as elsewhere in the Ottoman lands, a severe winter, crop failure and a flu epidemic led to food shortages and increases in food prices, a preview of the cycles of famine that would characterize the war years in the Arab provinces. In 1903, the Hamidian government had introduced a new poll tax, a rather blunt instrument that did not differentiate the status of the individual taxpayer but was an effort to move away from collective taxation practices of the past. This was on top of the 10% agricultural tithe and a new tax on livestock. Tax revolts and bread riots were instantaneous and erupted everywhere, including Macedonia. Outbreaks by peasants as well as urban populations, activists, clergy and working class occurred in Izmir, Istanbul, Mosul, Adana, Midilli, Trabzon, Sivas, Bitlis, Van and Yemen to name just a few. Although it was reorganized in a more comprehensive fashion, the poll tax was never successfully implemented and was eventually abolished in 1907.

Simultaneously, the insurgency in Yemen that first erupted in 1891 and had simmered for most of the following decade, erupted again in 1904 under the Zaydi (Shiite) Imam Yahya. In spring 1905, the tribal supporters of the Imam succeeded in capturing the garrison in San'a, leaving Ottoman rule on the brink of collapse. Yemen had become a very costly burden on the military, notorious for

corruption, with upwards of 50,000 troops committed to extending central control over the northern highlands and very little to show for it. Negotiations between Imam Yahya and the central government began in 1907, were interrupted by the 1908 CUP coup, and then continued until 1911 when the Ottomans finally agreed to cede the northern highlands to the Imam while retaining a foothold in the south that was ultimately surrendered in 1918. Lastly, the sensational assassination attempt by the ARF on Sultan Abdülhamid as he left Friday prayers on 21 July 1905 shocked the world. Delayed inside the mosque, Abdülhamid escaped unscathed, but the bomb killed 20 members of his service. Within four years, Abdülhamid would abdicate, brought down in the end by his own army in what has become known as the 31st March incident of 1909.

Representing the Ottoman House³⁷

The Tanzimat group assembled by Reşid, Ali and Fuad Pashas was an extraordinary and diverse collection of educated bureaucrats. They were imbued with European enlightenment agendas but operated in an environment where service and loyalty to the palace were often more prized than enterprise. For a short period, they had a common language of reform based on schooling abroad and a concerted effort at the Translation Bureau to train Ottoman bureaucrats in philosophy, science and medicine. Long established partnerships with the Greek Orthodox Phanariot families continued to fill the important diplomatic posts abroad. Jewish banking families with tremendous reach, such as the Camondos, had well-established dynasties whose children too were educated in European circles. Similarly, Istanbul Armenian families were part of the trading, legal and investment systems of post-1856, though they were increasingly internally splintered after 1876. The short-lived sessions of the first Ottoman parliament, however, brought together delegates from all over the empire representing provinces rather than solely their status as members of ethno-religious networks. In the spirit of the reforms, quotas for non-Muslim delegates were specifically designated by the drafters of the constitution. Examining a few of the more prominent of these privileged families and elected deputies affords a glimpse of an empire and its peoples assembled around the idea of Ottomanism—or at least Ottoman constitutionalism—at the very moment of its collapse in the events leading to the Berlin Treaty. As these short sketches illustrate, the Tanzimat period opened a wide array of possibilities for those whose faith in the system would be tested to the extreme in the final decades of Ottoman existence.

Kostaki (Constantine) Musurus (1807–1891) was a member of a prominent Phanariot, Greek Orthodox family from Istanbul, and an ex-officio appointee to the Senate. Musurus began his career as the first Ottoman Ambassador to Greece (1840–1848) and then spent an extraordinary 34 years (1851–1885) as the



FIGURE 8.6 Constantine Musurus Pasha, National Portrait Gallery

Ottoman Ambassador to London, during which time he served simultaneously as the ambassador to the Netherlands (1861–1877) and Belgium (1861–1875). His skill as a diplomat and ability to pass from one network to another, as well as to act and intervene in a variety of settings were celebrated and he was essential to the negotiations with Britain leading to the promulgation of the first constitution (Figure 8.7).

Alexander Karateodori (Caratheodory) Pasha (1833–1906) was also member of an Istanbul Phanariot family. His father had been the personal physician of Mahmud II. After studying law in Paris, Karateodori joined the Ottoman civil service and then became part of the constitutional reformers. He is credited with drafting the speech that Abdülhamid gave at the opening of the parliament in 1877 and was the head of the Ottoman delegation to the 1878 Berlin Treaty conference, a measure of the trust that the sultan had in him. He was appointed as Governor of Crete in 1878, a time of considerable unrest, but was pulled back to Istanbul when appointed as the Minister of Foreign Affairs for a brief while, resigning again in 1879. From 1885 to 1895 he was Ottoman appointee Prince-Governor of autonomous Samos. His wife was a member of the Musurus family.

Krikor Odian Efendi (1834–1887) was Armenian, born in Istanbul. He was perhaps the most influential of the non-Muslim reformers who, along with Midhat Pasha and Namık Kemal, was critical to the final drafting of the first constitution



FIGURE 8.7 Alexander Karatheodori Pasha, wood engraving, published 1893 © ZU_09 via Getty Images

in 1876. He had begun service in the Foreign Correspondence Bureau—which he headed by the 1860s—and accompanied Midhat Pasha to the new Danube Vilayet as its foreign minister (1864–1866). He was instrumental in the crafting of the Armenian National Constitution (1860–1863) and served as president of the Armenian National Assembly. He was promoted to bala, a rank just below vizier, after long service as secretary to the Ottoman Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Public Works. By 1876 he had been appointed to the Council of State, and became a trusted counselor to Midhat Pasha, who sent him on extended diplomatic trips to Russia, Paris and London to coordinate the work of crafting a constitution. After Midhat Pasha’s disgrace and exile, Odian fled to Paris where he died in 1887.

Abdyl Frashëri (Abdullah Hüsni) Bey (1839–1892), was a member of a prominent Tosk Albanian Bektashi Sufi family and elected deputy from Yanya (Ioannina). Frashëri and his brothers are revered as fathers of the Albanian National Awakening and pioneers of the Albanian written language. His father was commander of a local militia and Abdyl saw service as a captain of the Albanian forces. He was a noted scholar of multiple languages and the sciences. He entered Ottoman service in 1877 as a custom officer for Yanya. Albanian aspirations aligned with the Ottomans especially after the 1878 Berlin Treaty

when he and fellow Albanians established the League of Prizren to resist Greek ambitions on Albanian territory. Abdyl continued as a fierce defender of Albanian nationalism as the League grew more militant until he was arrested and sentenced to death after the Ottomans confronted Albanian revolutionary forces in 1881. His sentence was commuted by Sultan Abdülhamid after three years in prison. He died in Istanbul in 1892.

Servitchen Efendi, Serovpe Vitichenian (1815–1897), first elected as a deputy and then appointed as a Senator, was a well-known Istanbul physician and the first Armenian to be sent to Paris to complete his medical studies (1834). He was mentored by Reşid, Ali and Fuad Pashas and by 1842 served as the head doctor of the Ottoman military command (Seraskeriye) and continued to serve in prestigious medical appointments for four decades. In 1849, he started the first Ottoman medical journal at the request of the sultan. In 1856, he founded the Ottoman Medical Association. In 1876–1877, he served as a consultant to the Red Cross. Servitchen was influential in the advancement of the Armenian constitution and served as a deputy in the Armenian assembly.

Menahim Salih Efendi (1844–1940), a deputy from Iraq, was the son of a prominent landowning Jewish family in Baghdad (Danyals). Privately tutored, he began his service in the government on the municipal council (1869) and shortly thereafter went to Istanbul. Following several tours to Europe, he returned to Baghdad where his philanthropy was evident as a founder of the Iraqi Red Cross and a builder of endowed elementary schools and an orphanage for Muslim children. In 1925, he was appointed to the Iraqi senate. He died in 1940.

Niqula al-Naqqash (1825–1894), a deputy from Syria, was born in Beirut to a Maronite family originally from Sidon. Fluent in Arabic, Turkish and Italian at a young age, his older brother, who was a playwright and poet, taught him Ottoman Turkish and French. Al-Naqqash is best remembered as a newspaper journalist and editor, and tireless translator of the blizzard of legislative changes emanating from Istanbul in the Tanzimat era. His articles on the Tanzimat were published in the many Arab newspapers and at least once translated for the Istanbul English language newspaper, *The Levant Herald*. He was recognized repeatedly by the sultan for his translation efforts. His facility with banking allowed him to circulate among the elite of Beirut and open his own bank in 1859. By the time he was publisher of his own paper *al-Misbah* in 1880, he was not only a powerful voice for change but also, along with his brother, a philanthropist and promotor of the arts.

Mehmed Emin Efendi (Muhammad Amin al-Zand) (1819–1892) was a senator, born to a tribal family settled in Baghdad, and a member of the ulema. He rose to the rank of naib (kadi) and subsequently mufti of Baghdad, a post he held until 1855. Under Governor Mehmed Namık Pasha (1862–1868), he served as kahya (deputy governor) for five years. In 1868 he joined the Council of State in Istanbul. He continued his religious studies in Istanbul and served on the drafting commission of the Mecelle with Ahmed Cevdet Pasha. He died in 1892.

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9

LEADUP TO WWI

Committee of Union and Progress 1908–1913

It was clear to most external observers that the Ottoman Empire—which was poorly industrialized, reliant on harsh tax regimes on peasant holdings, and long colonized by foreign capital—was descending into its death throes. The events of 1905 demonstrated forcibly that the sultan no longer had control over empire-wide security. Wages of state employees and the army stagnated and Abdülhamid's preferences for tribal cavalries over his military organization stirred much discontent in hitherto loyal populations of the empire. Resentment against the absolutist rule of Abdülhamid accelerated especially among the young, military academy educated officer class stationed in places like Erzurum and Salonika. Within a year, a small group of officers and administrators in Macedonia had organized the Ottoman Freedom Society (*Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti*), open to Muslims, aimed at restoring the constitution and saving the empire. Among the earliest members of the secret society were the individuals who would ultimately carve the new Turkish nation out of the remaining Ottoman territories in Anatolia: Mehmed Talât (later Pasha); Chief Telegraph Officer of Salonika; Captain Enver (later) Pasha, stationed in the important Ottoman garrison of his hometown Monastir; and Musa Kazım Karabekir, later decorated general of eastern Anatolia in WWI and close friend of Enver. Cemal (later) Pasha, likewise an Academy and general staff graduate, joined the secret committee in 1905 when he was appointed as inspector of the Rumelian railways. Other members of importance include Ziya Gökalp, sociologist and chief ideologue of Turkish nationalism. Born to a Turkish family in Diyarbakir, Gökalp opened a Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) cell there in 1908. He was invited to join the Central Committee in 1912. Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), native of Salonika, graduate of the Academy in 1905, was posted to the Third Army in Monastir where he became a

member of the CUP in late 1907 but later separated himself (or was separated by) from the revolution.

Open opposition had been a long time coming. As early as 1889, a group of military medical academy officers in Istanbul had organized a secret society aiming at parliamentary restoration but they were quickly exposed to Hamidian repression and exiled. What we today call the Young Turk revolution was a coalition of resistance from a variety of groups with quite disparate agendas. The exile voices centered in Paris included Ahmed Rıza, whose journal *Meşveret*, published in French and Turkish, was an important organ for the positivists who wanted the restoration of the constitution and reconstruction (order and progress) of the empire around a Turkish identity. Of a similar political persuasion, two doctors were particularly instrumental in spreading the revolutionary ideas: Dr Bahaeddin Şakir, exiled physician to the palace, often referred to as the Stalin of the CUP, and Dr Nazim. They brought order and precision to the Paris predecessor of the CUP known as the CPU (Committee for Progress and Union).¹

Self-exiled Ottoman Prince Sabahaddin Bey, Abdülhamid's nephew, and his followers in Paris espoused a more liberal, multi-ethnic view of a constitutional empire that included connections with the Armenian revolutionaries (Armenian Revolutionary Federation). In 1907, The Ottoman Freedom Committee and the expatriate groups agreed to merge and signed an alliance with the ARF. With that, though not immediately apparent, the revolutionary movement had effectively been taken over by the military and its ideologues. After 1908 they settled on the name the Community of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), generally referred to as Unionists. Modeled as revolutionary cells, and run by a tightly controlled Central Committee, the new insurgency issued repeated calls to arms for the restoration of the constitution and Ottomanism as a means of saving the empire. Appealing to the broader population, they initially quelled incipient Turkish nationalist sentiments in the organization.

The sense of urgency was palpable in early June 1908. In the Balkans, Austria-Hungary's rumored annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina stirred fears of more violence. At the same time, news that Abdülhamid had learned of their activities and was planning intervention alarmed the Central Committee and forced the hand of the CUP. First, they sent a lengthy memorandum to the consuls of the foreign powers in Monastir, demanding a return to Ottomanism in the province and threatening Muslim resistance. Simultaneously, bands of soldiers and volunteers under command of loyal CUP officers, organized as National Detachments (*Milli Müfrezeler*), took to the mountains in guerilla (*komitacı*) fashion. Establishing themselves in Muslim villages with Albanian and Turkish populations, they called on Bulgarian and Greek Christian villagers to ignore the separatist calls and promised equality in an Ottoman Muslim state.

The CUP soon gained control of Macedonia and sent an ultimatum to the sultan to restore the constitution or be prepared for a march on Istanbul on 23 July. The sultan first dismissed his grand vizier and commander of the army as a concession to the rebels, and when that proved insufficient, he issued a decree

announcing the restoration of the constitution, with elections to follow. His compliance with the demands prevented his own deposition for the moment. Euphoria and disbelief spread across remaining Ottoman territories. Censorship was lifted, and new publications in all the languages of Ottomanism proliferated across the remaining territories of the empire. Long hostile religious communities briefly shared communal moments in celebration of the new age.

The following excerpt is from Edith Durham's *High Albania*, in conversation with locals about the new constitution. She is in the Dukagjin Highlands of northern Albania.

Kthela consists of three bariaks—Kthela, Selati, and Perlati. Kthela is all Catholic, the two others mixed. They border on Luria, and Islamism is spreading.

It had not accepted Constitution, asked doubtfully, "What is Constitution?" and opined that if it were Turkish it was bad.

"Has the prison in Scutari been pulled down yet?" they asked eagerly. "If it is true that Konstitutzioon means that all the land is free, it will not be wanted any more!"

"But how can the Constitution punish a thief without a prison?"

"Chop off his hand," said everyone promptly.

"That is very cruel," said I.

"Not half so bad as prison. He has stolen with his right hand. Very well. Chop it off, but do not take away his freedom." (I have even met priests who upheld this theory. Knowledge of Turkish prisons makes it not so extraordinary as it appears.) "If Konstitutzioon means prisons—down with it."

Our lively guide explained to me, before an applauding audience, that, so far, Konstitutzioon was a dead failure. "It promised to give us roads, and railways, and schools, and to keep order and justice. We have had it two whole months, and it has done none of these things. We have given our besa till St. Dimitri, and if it has not done them by then—good-bye Konstitutzioon!"

I said no Government, however good, could do all these things in the six weeks left. They shouted me down.

"It could if it chose. A Government can do just as it likes, or it is not a Government."

I urged the cost—railways, for example.

"Railways, dear lady, cost nothing. They are always made by foreign companies."

"Schools cost thousands of piastres—the house, the master, books."

"Schools in all civilised lands cost nothing. They are all free. The Government pays for them."

"In England," I said, "we have to pay a great deal for schools."

They retorted that the English Government must be bad, and they did not want a poor one like that. I said, firmly, that every other land had to pay for all these things, and Albania must too, or go without. But one of the party knew as a fact that, in Austria and Italy, the Government built most beautiful things and paid for them itself.

In despair, and thinking it was a subject they could understand, I pointed out that it would take more than six weeks to organise gendarmerie to keep order in all Albania. They were indignant, and said they did not want Turkish zaptiehs in their land, were not afraid of them, and would defend their kulas even against artillery.

"But you say you want a good Government and law and order. How can order be kept without zaptiehs or a prison?"

"By the Konstitutzioon."

I fell back exhausted from the unequal combat, and they triumphed.²

Then in October, in short order, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared full independence and Crete proclaimed union with Greece. So began what has become known as the Second Constitutional Period, when all the contradictions inherent in CUP Ottomanism were fully challenged and exposed in the gradual turn to Turkish nationalism, and when *komatias* became the generals that would lead the 'nation in arms' to the fateful battlegrounds of WWI.

Within a year of the July 1908 events, the CUP had grown from 83 to 360 branches with a membership of 850,000 (from 2,250).³ The Central Committee continued to hold its annual congresses and maintain its central offices in Macedonia until 1912 while the remnants of the Hamidian *Sublime Porte* ran affairs in Istanbul. Elections were held from October to November 1908, with eligibility restricted to males over the age of 25. Knowledge of Ottoman Turkish was required, only one of the many new edicts put in place by the CUP. Two-hundred-seventy-five deputies were elected in what is generally considered to be the fairest elections of this late moment in Ottoman history. Of course, the issue of ethno-religious-national representation immediately surfaced, revealing the thorny question that had been raised with the first parliament in 1876. In the end, half of the deputies to the restored chamber were Turkish while the remainder were equitably distributed among the other communities. But the election also generated new opposition parties to the Central Committee of the CUP, whose members remained secretive and reluctant to share power. Chief among these opposition parties was Sabahaddin Bey and his liberal coalition that contested the CUP over the next four years.

By April 1909, that opposition—comprised of liberals, Islamists, disaffected rank and file soldiers, and non-Turkish nationalists—coalesced into a military uprising in the capital called the 31 March Incident (13 April on the Gregorian calendar), a counter coup that roused the deputies in session. It began as spontaneous mutinies

of soldiers and groups of religious students all united in opposition to the CUP. Neither Sabahaddin Bey nor the sultan were part of the uprising, although some historians suggest palace instigation. Violence flared throughout Ottoman territories but was particularly virulent in Adana, where migrant Muslims and resident Armenians competing for scarce work clashed, resulting in thousands of deaths of Armenians before the army managed to suppress the revolt.

Meanwhile, the Salonika based Unionists organized an “Action Army” (*Hareket Ordusu*) under the command of Mahmud Şevket Pasha, not a CUP member but popular and trusted among his fellow officers. He remained suspicious of the intentions of the CUP but saw the army as the only remaining guardian of the sovereignty of the empire. Soldiers from the second and third armies of the Balkans under his command marched on Istanbul and suppressed the rebellion by the end of April. Şevket Pasha became an instant hero, and the bi-cameral parliament was restored. He represents perhaps the last of the Ottoman (non-CUP) officers to understand the necessity of publicly reassuring the consulates and the international community about the state of Ottoman affairs in the international press (Figure 9.1).



FIGURE 9.1 Mahmut Şevket Pasa, 1909 © Chronicle / Alamy Stock Photo DR9N2P

The counter coup prompted the CUP to force the abdication of Abdülhamid II in favor of his brother Mehmed V Reşad (27 July 1909–3 July 1918). The former sultan and his family were exiled to Salonika. The new CUP-dominated government wasted no time in declaring martial law in Istanbul, which continued until 1918 with a short break in 1912. Martial law gave the CUP power to pass temporary legislation for later endorsement by parliament that severely limited the powers of the sultan.

Mehmed V, no longer young, and reluctant to take the throne, proved to be little more than a figurehead, which was precisely as the CUP wished it. First, the regnal name Sultan Mehmed V he was given was intended to invoke other storied sultans such as Mehmed II, the conqueror of Istanbul. Mehmed V made an official tour of all of Rumelia in 1911 as Albanian resistance started to heat up, a journey recalling similar tours during the reign of Mahmud II and never contemplated by Abdülhamid. The CUP also promoted the new sultan's caliphal status. After the Ottomans joined the Germans against the Entente powers in 29 October 1914, for example, Mehmed V publicly called on all Muslims worldwide to join a jihad against the Entente infidels. The Ottoman triumph at Gallipoli in 1915 also prompted the CUP to accord Mehmed V the title of *Gazi*.

But in 1909, CUP control of government in Istanbul was not guaranteed. The curious insistence on maintaining essentially two administrations—the secretive Central Committee (at its largest made up of 12 members) in Salonika that made all the decisions, and the participatory government in Istanbul—resulted in a struggle between the survivors of the Hamidian *Sublime Porte* and the new young radicals that played out in Istanbul affairs. A few of the important leaders, such as Talaat, served both in the cabinet and as members of the Central Committee, but internal rivalries also divided the supposed unity of the party. The military continued to use the tactics of counterinsurgency learned in Macedonia to silence opposition while presuming to speak for a population that most CUP members held in contempt. Most acutely, equality of citizenship as expressed in Ottomanism began to be eroded. The new Law of Associations forbade ethnically based parties. Censorship returned. The army was purged of long-time rank and file (*alaylı*) officers, known to be in opposition to CUP politics and participants in the 1909 events. The elimination of scores of officers with decades of military experience proved ruinous in the years of war that were to follow. Universal conscription of all Ottoman citizens regardless of faith was one of the first acts of the CUP government in August 1909. Such new measures were not well-received outside Istanbul and widespread resistance continued.

Military reforms and the German mission

In short, in 1909, the state of army organization was in disarray. Part of the dismantling of palace powers was to formally disband the Hamidian era *Seraskeriye* (Ministry of War established by Mahmud II) and transfer its responsibilities to the *Harbiye Nezaratı* (also Ministry of War) and the *Erkân-ı Harbiye* (General Staff),

where Germany's influence was evident and ongoing. In the period 1908–1914, the Ministry of War had no less than 11 ministers of war, while for the same period the General Staff remained stable under the guidance of Ahmed İzzet Pasha, making it the default authority on military affairs as it increasingly assumed the role of the more contested Harbiye.

Like Şevket Pasha, İzzet Pasha, a later signatory to the Mudros Agreement ending WWI, was an Academy graduate who had spent considerable time in Germany and was a protégé of von der Goltz. Thoroughly imbued with the German military system, he set about rationalizing the General Staff by consolidating the bureaucracy into five departments: training, intelligence, mobilization, topography and correspondence. İzzet is also credited with the military reforms of 1910 even though they are clearly just as much the work of von der Goltz (who returned to Istanbul in May 1909) and Şevket Pasha, minister of war from January 1910 to July 1912. By 1911, a German mission of 26 officers had arrived, most of whom were involved with education and training. To improve command control, a new triangular division design replaced a former, more cumbersome brigade structure. Army field corps, or inspectorates, focusing on operational matters were also established. Importantly, the academy curriculum was expanded to include subjects such as military and political history while the General Staff began combat training with rank and file in tactics and with weaponry previously forbidden them by Abdülhamid.

The new conscription law, in spite of resistance and flight, had enrolled two-thirds of eligible non-Muslims into the army by the end of 1910. In autumn of that year, field maneuvers, a first for the modernized army, included a mock battle plan with the Bulgarians in the Balkans designed in consultation with von der Goltz and Şevket Pasha. Cholera and insufficiently prepared junior officers interrupted the maneuvers, however, and informed the minister of war acutely about the state of the rank and file. But as so often happened, the new German-inspired structure was not followed by a systemic review of the manpower, reporting and support services. Significant anti-German sentiments evident in rank and file and junior officers had also hindered the maneuvers.⁴ The reformers simply ran out of time and the organizational transformation was incomplete when international events once more intervened. The struggle between the Unionists and Liberals continued over control of the government in Istanbul.

Inevitably, the CUP had continued Hamidian authoritarianism, inheriting a broken economy and resisting the intervention in Ottoman affairs by the great powers. Albanians, restive since the Berlin Treaty and initially supportive of the CUP, began their own moment of national liberation in 1910–1911. Their efforts were inspired by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia, and exacerbated by the CUP, which was intent on disarming the countryside and imposing new tax regimes and conscription. Two large expeditions were sent against uprisings in Kosovo, where a mutiny planned by the newly organized Savior Officers Group erupted in the very cradle of the CUP military. Sultan Mehmed V's goodwill tour included a general amnesty for the Albanian rebels, but Albanian resistance continued and

alienated Albanian officers in CUP ranks deserted to the cause. By November 1912, Albania, led by Ismail Kemal, had declared independence from the Ottomans. The great powers conference in London gathered to address the new Balkan tangle recognized the new Albania early December. World War I intervened in the state-making process. Occupied by Austria for most of the war, Albania lost 10% of its population (70,000) on the battlefields.⁵

Meanwhile, in February 1911 Ahmed İzzet Pasha had been sent with battalions from the First, Second and Third armies to quell a rebellion of Imam Yahya in Yemen that similarly did not end well. It would be the last of such large expeditions of the Ottomans against northern Yemen. Thus, it must have seemed a propitious moment for Italy, when, in September 1911, the Italians declared war on the Ottomans and invaded Tripolitania. Italy's bellicosity was in part due to events in the western Mediterranean known as the Agadir crisis. In April 1911, following a French invasion into the interior of Morocco, the Germans used gunboat diplomacy to acquire a piece of the African pie. European politics were briefly in crisis until Germany was awarded part of the French Congo, while Spain and France divided up Morocco into the Spanish and French protectorates of 1912. In retrospect, the events, part of the scramble for Africa, escalated the colonial domino effect on the eastern Mediterranean and should be added to the long list of international disputes that led to WWI.

Imperial chauvinists in Italy, still nominally part of the Triple Alliance and frustrated by the creation of the French Morocco Protectorate, decided on their own adventure in Libya. Austria-Hungary in particular repeatedly warned Italy that such actions would be the torch to set off the Balkans bonfire, though the surprise annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not necessarily make them the best example. Ignoring their allies, Italy sought and received tacit approval from the Triple Entente powers instead, thus presaging its political realignment during WWI. War was declared by Italy on 29 September 1911. Tripoli and Tobruk fell on 4–5 October. Preoccupied with Albania and southwestern Arabia, the CUP was slow to respond, also hampered by the incomplete reorganization of the army corps, and a government rife with military partisanship. An asymmetric war unfolded between the well-organized Italian navy and army (34,000 to 100,000 troops with later reinforcements), and the provincial Ottoman troops (8,000 regular troops, 20,000 irregulars). The Ottoman navy, neglected for half a century, was in no position to face the Italians at sea, so after the first landings of the Italians, the local troops withdrew from the coastline. Minefields were laid to protect the straits. Istanbul was seething with the call to action. Select CUP officers—among them Enver and Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk)—slipped into Tripolitania from Tunis and Egypt to organize an unconventional war that coincidentally had been envisioned, along with the mines, by von der Goltz. The CUP officers, combined with the provincial soldiers, numerous Arab officers and the tribal forces of the Sanusi Sufi Order of Cyrenaica, seasoned warriors against the French incursions into the Sahara, managed to check the Italian invasion into the interior.

Frustrated by the continued losses on land to Ottoman guerilla tactics, the Italians used their navy, airplanes and airships (for the first time in armed combat), virtually unopposed, to shell the coastlines of the Red Sea and the Aegean, occupying Rhodes and the Dodecanese Islands. Bombings, reprisals, and executions by the frustrated Italians accounted for as many as 10,000 deaths among the local defenders. The war is notable for its anti-colonial aspects, and the stirring of both Muslim and Arab nationalism across the region. The CUP officers were instant celebrities for their heroic exploits.

Imminent war in the Balkans, however, forced the Ottoman capitulation to the Italians as laid out in the Ouchy Peace Treaty of 15 October 1912 (also known as the first Treaty of Lausanne), ending Ottoman sovereignty in north Africa. The Dodecanese Islands were to revert to the Ottomans, but in the turmoil of the wars to follow, an Italian administration stayed in occupation until the Ottoman surrender of the territory to Italy in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. These territorial losses were soon to be completely overshadowed by the two Balkan Wars and World War I.

In early 1912, the newly formed Liberal Entente party had assembled enough of the discontented to challenge the CUP in the 1912 elections, generally known as the “Big Stick” elections for the ways in which the CUP engineered the outcome in their favor by April 1912. Mutinies in the military, especially among the Albanian Savior Officers Group as described, united with the Liberal Entente, precipitated a crisis. The CUP was forced to dissolve its newly established government by July 1912 and install an acceptable anti-CUP cabinet called The Grand Cabinet of Reconciliation made up of distinguished war heroes such as *Gazi* Ahmed Muhtar Pasha.⁶ Minister of War Şevket Pasha was replaced by Nazim Pasha, a noted nationalist who was not particularly enamored of the German mission. For most historians, these elections are seen as the end of the parliamentary experiment as well as a clear indication of faltering support for the CUP, which had begun to lose control of the army. It is in this context that both the Italian campaign and the first Balkan War must be understood.

The Balkan League

With Russian encouragement, aimed at halting further Austro-Hungarian expansion, Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro had improbably signed mutual defense agreements, including secret clauses to defend one another against the Ottoman empire. Clearly part of the rationale for the return to violence was the apparent chaos in Istanbul and the transformational moment of the Ottoman military spread thinly across multiple arenas. Surprise and foreboding about war spread across Europe. In rapid order, the four countries, now called the Balkan League, declared war on the Ottomans in October 1912. Montenegro and Greece attacked Albania, while Bulgaria invaded Thrace, and Serbia and Greece invaded Macedonia.

Caught by surprise, and with many of the able officers fighting in Libya, defending the Aegean, and posted to counter-insurgency activities, the most seasoned soldiers and officers were scattered across Ottoman territories. A military command in disarray, with floods of new recruits and insufficiently prepared officers guaranteed that the Ottomans would perform very badly, facing the prospect of losing all remaining territories of Rumelia.

The new minister of war was particularly keen to assume operational command and defend all frontiers. The upshot was the replication of the mistakes of the 1877–1878 war by spreading available resources too thinly. An Eastern and Western Army were cobbled together in order to defend all of the Balkan provinces, Istanbul and the Dardanelles, expecting to deploy the various armies in 30 days on woefully inadequate training and logistical systems. The public wanted war to reclaim the lost provinces. Most soldiers and their officers were unaware of the extent of the opposition awaiting them. As had been the case in Italy, a warmongering fever took over the streets of Istanbul, forcing an ill-judged declaration of war by the government. The daily jingoistic press published a call to arms to the defense of the Ottoman nation (*millet*), or the Ottoman fatherland (*vatan*), in what would prove to be one of the last appeals to a diversified population to Ottoman patriotism. Although the CUP press characterized the war as an anachronistic crusade by the Balkan League, significantly, neither the chief religious officer nor the sultan declared a jihad.

The Balkan Wars 1912–1913

The first Balkan War was over in eight months (October 1912–May 1913). The eastern theatre in Thrace involved the Bulgarians; the western theatre included Macedonia, Greece and Montenegro. By 24 October, the massed army of the Bulgarians had checked the Ottomans in Kırkkilise. Engagements with the Bulgarians, better armed and commanded, and with considerably better morale, ended up in the total rout of the Ottomans whose last defense was at Çatalca, a fortified zone 25 miles from Istanbul. Losses to battle, cholera and dysentery were terrible. After the total collapse of logistics and men, the Çatalca Army (as it was now called) regrouped and made the last defense, supported by naval gunfire and decimating a massive assault of the Bulgarians 17–18 November, with a combined loss of 10,000 men. The Bulgarians, equally exhausted, had misjudged the strength of the defense. However, they made liberal use of the komaticı gangs and civilians, as in 1877–1878, and succeeded at forcing thousands of Muslims from their homes into Ottoman held territories.

By contrast, the Western Army spread itself too thin in order to defend against four separate militaries. Most of the action was in the Vardar Army, led by Halepli Zeki Pasha, confronting the Serbs at Kumonova in northern Macedonia in an attempt to keep the Serbians and Bulgarians from joining forces. Much the same disaster befell the Western as the Eastern Army, hampered by insufficient transportation and composed largely from the reserves. Outnumbered two to one, the

Vardar Army fell back on the town of Monastir (Bitola). Defeated a second time, the remnants of the army retreated into Albania where further desertions of Albanian soldiers to the revolution underway occurred. Most other dispersed detachments failed at their assignments, including the defense of Salonika, which fell to the Greeks on 10 November 1912.⁷

The Ottomans had requested a ceasefire on 12 November, leaving all but the besieged cities of Ioannina, Scutari (Shkodra) and Edirne in the hands of the Balkan League. As the Istanbul cabinet seemed to be acquiescing to the surrender of all of Rumelia as part of the peace negotiations, infuriated CUP officers led by Enver stormed the grand vizier's offices in January 1913, where they shot and killed the Minister of War Nazim Pasha and forced the resignation of the Grand Vizier Kâmil Pasha. Mahmud Şevket Pasha was reappointed grand vizier and added minister of war to his duties. With this coup, the CUP took control of government and imposed strict censorship, reinstituting martial law.

The armistice ended 3 February 1913. It had given the Ottomans sufficient time to consolidate and reorganize their armed forces. The first act of Şevket Pasha was to assign young General Staff officers to new commands and organize an offensive to lift the siege of Edirne. This involved bold naval maneuvers and land offensives in February against the Bulgarians entrenched in Gallipoli Peninsula, but the reorganized forces failed to relieve Çatalca or Edirne. Fighting continued through March when a bombardment lasting 36 days cemented the surrender of Edirne to the Bulgarians on 14 March, after months of acute suffering and desertion by the defenders. In Ottoman hands since 1365 and the capital of the early empire until 1453 when Istanbul replaced it, the loss reverberated as no other could among the remaining Ottoman populations. A second armistice in April led to the Treaty of London on 30 May 1913, ceding all the captured territories to the four nations of the Balkan League, in addition to numerous Aegean islands, and the nominally autonomous Crete to Greece. The human toll for the Ottomans was 75,000 dead from disease (largely cholera), another 50,000 who died in battle, and 100,000 wounded.⁸

May 2013 was a nadir for the CUP. The coup had represented the effective end of the second constitutional experiment. What replaced it has been called a single party rule, as parliament continued to meet sporadically until 1918. Martial law allowed the CUP to enact laws that would subsequently be rubber-stamped by parliament. The instrument of the CUP, the army, lay in ruins, with men dying on the streets, and misery and dread everywhere. In retrospect, the loss of Edirne may have been the catastrophe that spurred the uniting of the slowly emerging Turkish (Muslim) nation among CUP followers. In 1908–1909, 353 newspapers and journals were published in Istanbul; by 1914, the number was 75.⁹ Another estimate for 1913 records 389 periodicals across the remaining territories: 161 in Turkish (including the 75 in Istanbul); 118 in Arabic, 42 in Armenian, 38 in Greek, 28 in French, 10 in Hebrew, and one each in English, German and Persian.¹⁰ A good portion of the newspaper and periodicals in other languages represented ethno-religious clubs and associations debating the viability of Ottomanism and the future of the empire. As the news of the disasters in the

Balkans started to circulate, a debate ran across the still relatively free press about the reasons for the failures. The tone of the Turkish newspapers also shifted. Gradually, the loyalty of the non-Muslim populations of the empire began to be questioned, especially as the press began describing the atrocities against the Muslims in eastern Thrace. As Enver wrote:

My heart is bleeding. The misery created by this last Crusade [the Balkan Wars] are visible everywhere. If you knew all the atrocities which the enemy has inflicted right here at the gates of Istanbul, you would understand the sufferings of the poor Muslims. But our hatred is intensifying: revenge, revenge, revenge, there is no other word!¹¹

The CUP took complete control of the press and after 1913 used their publications as effective propaganda tools.¹²

Then, in yet another Balkan twist, on 29 June 1913, Bulgaria turned on its erstwhile allies, angry at the loss of Macedonia to Greece and Serbia, particularly as the Bulgarian army had borne the brunt of the fighting at Çatalca. Serbia, meanwhile, equally unwilling to give up the parts of Albania it still occupied, forced an international crisis between Austria and Russia and tested the reliance of the new international alliances.

Chasing the Ottoman army from the Balkans for the brief eight months, the Balkan League armies had unleashed a round of inter-ethno-religious violence that intensified when the Bulgarians returned to war against their erstwhile allies, now including Romania, seizing the moment to occupy territory on the south shores of the Danube. Before the frontiers were finalized, Greek, Serb and Bulgarian officials and their enforcers began (or continued) the process of ethnic cleansing that had marked the first Balkan War. Greece was particularly intent on removing all traces of the Bulgarian Exarchate Church in Macedonia. The extent of the violence prompted the newly founded Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (1910) to send an international commission to investigate in July 1913. The report included detailed interviews with victims and eyewitnesses, some of the earliest records of the international humanitarian and pacifist movement leading to later calls for a League of Nations. Describing the conflict, the commissioners noted,

It has become a competition, as to who can best dispossess and ‘denationalize’ his neighbor. [...] The real struggle is not between oppressors and oppressed. It is between two policies, the policy of armaments and that of progress. One day the force of progress triumphs, but the next the policy of rousing the passions and jealousies that lead to armaments and to war, gets the upper hand.¹³

One hundred years on, the words of Balkan War correspondent and revolutionary Leon Trotsky, who witnessed the massacres of Albanians by the Serbian army, still resonate: “We have learned how to wear suspenders, to write clever leading articles,

and to make chocolate, but when we need to reach a serious decision about how a few different tribes are to live together on a well-endowed European peninsula, we are incapable of finding any other method than mutual extermination on a mass scale.”¹⁴

The Special Organization

One of the CUP legacies of the period was the creation of a small group of CUP officers and soldiers to undertake the capture of Gümülcine (Komotini), the still largely Muslim town in western Thrace west of the Maritza River, where successive Greek, Bulgarian and Ottoman occupations spared no one, causing untold civilian suffering. The successful Ottoman mini expedition established a brief “Muslim republic” before the treaties of the second Balkan War separated the area from the Ottomans forever and the group was disbanded. The potential usefulness of such clandestine actors was not lost on Enver, however, who established the Special Organization (*Teşkilat-ı Mahruse*) attached to the ministry of war, responsible for paramilitary intelligence and counter insurgency during the war and postwar period. The Special Organization became the CUP’s secret version of Abdülhamid’s Kurdish cavalry Hamidiye, made up instead of descendants of Circassians from the North Caucasus who had been resettled strategically in Ottoman lands as previously described, also increasingly along the south Marmara coast from Adapazarı to Bursa. Among them were Süleyman Askeri and Eşref Kuşçubaşı, both particularly attached to Enver, and notorious for a campaign of expulsion against the Greek villages of the south Marmara and the Armenians of eastern Anatolia in the days before and during World War I.¹⁵

In July 2013, Istanbul watched as Bulgaria suddenly began withdrawing from eastern Thrace and Edirne. Taking advantage of the shift of the Balkan allied forces away from Edirne, the CUP army recaptured the city unopposed. Enver Pasha, hearing of its imminent recovery by the Ottoman army hastened to Edirne to lead the troops in triumph into the city on 21 July 1913. The Treaty of Constantinople between the Bulgarians and Ottomans finalized the Ottoman retention of Edirne on 30 September 1913. Separate treaties with Serbia and Greece were signed the same month. By one estimate, 600,000 Muslims civilians died in the Balkan Wars, 27% of the residents of the conquered lands in 1911, while a further 400,000 became refugees in the remaining Ottoman territories. In 1912, the loss of Ottoman territories in Europe, part of the empire for some 500 years, amounted to 155,000 square kilometers once inhabited by 2.5 million Muslims.¹⁶

The assassination of Mahmud Şevket

While the pyrrhic victory at Edirne briefly vindicated the CUP, it was the 11 June assassination of Grand Vizier Mahmud Şevket on the streets of Istanbul that had given Enver and his fellow Unionists the opportunity to assume total control of the government. Şevket was one of the last Ottomans with direct links to Midhat Pasha and Tanzimat Ottomanism. His relationship with von der Goltz had kept

the German connection alive as he continued to lobby for a German mission even in his last, tumultuous days. He remained suspicious of the Central Committee of the CUP to the end and was more inclined to a federation of Ottoman citizens. As a testament to his popularity, some 5,000 spectators, including select representatives from the Great Powers, attended his burial in the cemetery of the Monument of Liberty (*Abide-i Hürriyet*), completed in 1911 to honor the fallen soldiers of the 31 March incident. In subsequent years, he would be joined by Ahmed Midhat Pasha, reinterred from Taif in the 1950s; Talaat Pasha, killed in Berlin by an Armenian assassin in 1921 and reburied in Istanbul in 1943; and Enver Pasha, whose remains were returned in 1996 from Tajikistan, where he died in 1922 as a *komitaci* cavalry officer.

The CUP rounded up the grand vizier's assassins and used the occasion to formally charge Prince Sabahaddin and other liberal opponents with conspiracy, exiling hundreds of individuals. The new CUP cabinet included loyalists Egyptian Said Halim, installed as the grand vizier; Talaat Pasha, the interior minister; Cavid Bey the finance minister; Enver Pasha the minister of war; and Cemal Pasha the minister of the navy. Operating under the leadership of Enver Pasha and the military, with Talaat Pasha and the civilian bureaucracy, the new government found themselves facing an exhausted, humiliated and angry population, including thousands of refugees and people on the move. Within a year, they were confronted by Europe at war. The coup de grace had been delivered to inclusive Ottomanism. The post-1913 debates revolved around Muslim/Turkish Ottomanism, and by 1918, secularism and the Turkish nation.

The road to total war

On the eve of the First World War, Ottoman territories had effectively been reduced to present-day Edirne and environs, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia. From 1839 to 1909 Ottoman territory in Europe had been reduced from 230,000 square miles with a population of some 20 million to 66,000 square miles, with a population of 4.5 million.¹⁷ By the end of the Balkan Wars, the Ottoman Europe had been reduced to 10,882 square miles (28,293 sq. km) with a population of 1.9 million people.¹⁸ The empire that once had straddled Europe and Asia now found itself largely restricted to Asia, with an Arab periphery extending to the Hijaz and Mecca. The CUP government faced a daunting series of problems that seemed insurmountable. The army had lost 36 active and reserve infantry divisions and 6 army corps headquarters as well as casualties approaching 250,000 men.¹⁹

Most European observers assumed that the "sick man" of Europe was at death's door. As the Austrian and Russian standoff over Serbia and Albania in the first Balkan War had demonstrated, it was all too easy to stir up excuses for military intervention by the great powers. The size of the refugee problem and the settlement of the Balkan Muslims were perhaps the most significant of the problems facing the Central Committee, many of whom had themselves become homeless with the losses in Rumelia. Talaat Pasha, returning as interior minister, took a

significant lead in the problem of settling the new arrivals. What began as the settlement of refugee Muslims seems to have been accompanied by the displacement of non-Muslims, whether voluntary or coerced. Perhaps as many as 50,000 Bulgarians were expelled by early 1914, following the peace treaty and delineation of the new borders around Edirne. Meanwhile, the Greek Orthodox population began streaming out of the interior to port cities along the Marmara and Aegean coasts, largely driven by armed gangs. Talaat himself suggested that 150,000 Greeks had left Izmir. For the most part, the Central Committee continued to deny a role in the expulsions that would continue throughout the war.

Military reforms 1913–1914

Ahmet İzzet Pasha had begun the total reorganization of the army in late 1913 by eliminating the dysfunctional reserve system that had so crippled the military's effectiveness in the Balkans. Reserve soldiers were to report to mobilization depots as individuals and not as members of organized units, with the aim of proper training for service as backups for the regular army. Active army strength in peacetime would be maintained at 40% to be topped up by reserve units in wartime.

İzzet was replaced by Enver Pasha in January 1914, now minister of war, chief of the general staff and acting commander of the armed forces all in one. With German assistance after the arrival of Liman von Sanders and his German mission officers, he managed to restructure the military hierarchy that had eluded the Ottoman military command since 1878. In fact, by early 1914, he had dismissed or retired 1,300 officers, and replaced them with CUP members. By March 1914, Enver began issuing General Orders that radically reorganized the military system over the next several months. He focused on the systemic problems around mobilization, tactics, strategy, and effective and rapid accumulation of firepower in war settings. Educational institutions were revitalized and training centers were established in Istanbul, Erzincan and Aleppo; the strengthened General Staff was under the direction of German Colonel Baron von Schellendorf who also supervised the Ottoman Military Academy; the writing of reports and maintenance of diaries of operations were stipulated in the Army's Instructions for Field Service, one of the crucial aspects of battlefield communication.²⁰

Throughout the 1914–1918 period, with martial law in effect, the Unionists continued to push their reform agenda with the cooperation and enforcement of the military. Major moves towards secularization, such as reorganizing the legal institutions and legislation, were promulgated after ad hoc decisions of the Central Committee and later approved by a sitting of parliament. The CUP also cultivated a culture of corporate socialism that privileged Turkish Muslims over other nationalities as the European territories shrank, an early iteration of the kind of national capitalism and state monopoly that became an essential part of Republicanism under Atatürk.

The gradual Turkification of the countryside, such as imposing Turkish as the sole language of business practices in 1914, the boycott of Greek goods and merchants, and the demographic engineering resulting in the genocide of the Armenians in 1915, were policies of the Unionists after the Balkan Wars. As Zürcher has argued, the single-party government was neither a dictatorship nor a parliamentary government with the power invested in the cabinet.

The group that ruled the empire during the war years can better be understood as a complex of different factions and networks that all operated in a bipolar environment. The poles were Talaat and Enver and, although there certainly was a lot of rivalry between their followers, each of these two men, who could not be more different from each other in background and personality, recognized that the other was indispensable in the war effort.²¹

Henry Morgenthau, US ambassador at the time, estimated that the entire Central Committee, or some portion of the 40 members were “the real power.”²²

Turning Turk and Arab

The ideological framework of revolutionary Turkism was supplied by intellectuals such as sociologist Ziya Gökalp, an early CUP adherent or Yusuf Akçura, representing the Turkism (or pan-Turanism). They were heavily influenced by the works of Emile Durkheim, as were many of the new Turkish nationalist adherents, who argued that Ottoman society could be and ought to be Turkish, Muslim, and modern: secular and scientific, but retaining its cultural roots in Islam. They understood reform as enlightened social engineering by an oligarchy, but of course the need for state security and preservation of the vestigial Ottoman territories remained the top priority of the Muslim ruling elites.

It is also fair to note that, while the Young Turks had come to view Anatolia as a secure ‘core’ of the empire, they were still fully committed to maintaining as much control over the Arab provinces as they possibly could. Yet the importance of both Turkification and Arab nationalism, even in the context of World War I, can easily be overstated. What is perhaps most striking about the response of most of the Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, regardless of religion, social class, or language, is the extent to which they remained loyal to the institution of empire until its final defeat as well as the alacrity with which they sought new national projects after the Ottoman Empire finally collapsed.²³

The question of when the CUP became “Turkish” is still much debated, but in the immediate post-Balkan Wars period, the CUP assumed a hard stance evident in the upswing in their rhetoric parroted by patriotic associations and controlled by censorship. One such association, established in February 1913, was the National

Defense League. It was formed in part to collect donations for the refugees and the war effort, acting as an auxiliary for the Ottoman Red Crescent Society, and later recruited volunteers for the army. The Defense League worked closely with the Turkish Hearth Society (*Türk Ocağı*), a literary society established at the same time. While not directly tied to the CUP, both assumed a more nationalist exclusionary voice after general mobilization of the public was declared on 2 August 1914, and most other such associations were suppressed, muffling the anti-war voices in the population.²⁴

The CUP ideologues did not, however, move to secularism with ease. The long debate about the role of the shari'a in public life that began with Mahmud II had resulted in a reformed Ottoman Islamism by the end of the century. Abdülhamid had fostered and utilized pan-Islamism as part of his imagery while his administrators pressed for the introduction of European civil law codes and parliamentary rule. The Young Turk (Unionists)/Liberal Party split from 1908 forward was fundamentally about a monoethnic secular state versus a decentralized negotiable federation of Muslim/non-Muslims under shari'a law.

With the Unionists in charge, the former view became apparent with legal reforms addressing the powerful class of ulema and reorganizing the religious endowments as well as the office and function of the Chief Religious Officer. As Marcus Dressler writes about Ziya Gökalp's writings:

On the one hand, he regarded the modern nation-state and its need for centralized authority, including over religious affairs within the state administration, as an indispensable prerequisite for societal evolution and the move toward modern civilization. On the other hand, he was convinced that religion was a crucial element of the culture of the people and of its national identity; that religion worked toward social cohesion; and therefore, that the state, and in particular the Islamic state, needed to provide institutional support for it.²⁵

Secularism (or laicism, a word coincidentally coined in 1909; *Laiklik* in Turkish) is still as much contested in the world today as it was then.

Who was a Turk? is an interesting question. For Europeans, "Turk" has always been a synonym for Muslim, both historically and now. The populations who sought refuge in the empire in the last decade of Ottoman life were not then Turks but once enfolded in the Turkish Republic became so regardless of origin. This would include of course Kurds, Albanians, Bulgarians, Circassians, Arabs to name the most obvious. However, prior to 1923 this was not at all certain. Gökalp first debated the question in a series of articles that became a book entitled *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, Muasırlaşmak* in 1918 (*Becoming Turkish, Islamic and Modern*).

Yusuf Akçura, born in Russia to a Tatar family, was a graduate of the Istanbul Military Academy in 1895, but exiled in 1896 for his Young Turk affiliations. He spent time in Paris and Russia but returned to Istanbul in 1908 as an avowed Turkish nationalist. He was an influential member of the Turkish Hearth, and

founder of the organization Türk Yurdu, whose publication by the same name was one of the major organs for Turkish nationalists after 1911. His most famous work is *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Policies), which presented Ottomanism, Islam or Turkism as possible ideological underpinnings for imperial survival. The pamphlet argued for Turkish ethnicity as the basis for Turkish nationalism that the CUP had embraced by 1918.

The Arabs had long embarked on their self-definition (*nahda*) that had developed many fissures by 1913, when the first Arab Congress was held in June 1913 in Paris. As with the Turks, Arab groups across the empire had created literary societies and political clubs under the careful scrutiny of CUP censorship. In Istanbul, the short-lived Arab-Ottoman Brotherhood, mostly Arab delegates to the Ottoman parliament, operated openly. As with the Young Turks, the Young Arab Society (al-Fatat in Arabic) began life in exile in Paris among Syrian Muslims in 1909. In Cairo, a similar group founded the Ottoman Decentralization Party in 1913, where dissidents and their publications were not censored to the degree they were in Istanbul. A similar Beirut Reform Society was met with quick repression by the Istanbul government in April 1913, hence the gathering of the dissident bodies in Paris for the conference. There, Arabs expressed a variety of opinions from Muslim Arab youth demanding equal rights to the Turks, to Arab Christians full of hatred and desire to separate from the Turks, to just as many who were not yet ready to abandon Ottomanism. The CUP sent a delegation to the Paris gathering perhaps as much to censor as to negotiate. The result was a brief moment of Turkish-Arab brotherhood that temporarily stalled the move to Arab nationalism, simply postponing the reckoning to come during WWI in Syria.²⁶

Turning to Germany

One thing the new Talaat-Enver government understood in the aftermath of the Balkan Wars was the certainty that they needed a great power ally in the crises that continued to unfold. Efforts to acquire a new European ally failed until the summer of 1914. The turn to Germany after the death of Şevket Pasha was not a certainty. Before his death, the late grand vizier and the German Ambassador in Istanbul, Hans van Wangenheim, had been in discussions with the enthusiastic Kaiser Wilhelm II. Together, they had envisioned a mission that would be comprised of more than 40 German officers with actual command over troops, schools and select headquarters, and a prominent German commander in charge of the army corps in Istanbul. Such was Şevket's distrust of the Central Committee. After the assassination, the Germans assumed the CUP government would not be interested, but Enver himself reopened the negotiations. By October 1913, an agreement was reached about a military mission. It was placed under the command of General Liman von Sanders, who had never stepped on Ottoman shores when he arrived in December 1913. Von Sanders was unimpressed with the state of the military and a German officer delegated to inspect the preparedness of the Baghdad railway project reported serious limitations, much to the embarrassment of both

his superiors and the Deutsche Bank. German officials wondered at the wisdom of the secret alliance under discussion.

A diplomatic crisis ensued as Russia got wind of the extent of the German mission and ongoing secret negotiations, and the Russian foreign minister raised a fuss about the proposed arming of the Dardanelles, still the biggest focus of concern by the great powers as the empire unraveled. France and Great Britain, by contrast, were not particularly disturbed by the German initiative. The two great powers, colonial rivals, seemed more interested in preserving their investments in the empire. Indeed, Britain and France both were actively pursuing the protection and preservation of their territories in the Middle East in light of the inevitable collapse of the Ottomans. Even German infrastructure investments such as the Baghdad railway came nowhere near those of Great Britain and France.

Britain sent a naval mission to help with the reorganization of the Ottoman navy as part of the promise to deliver two dreadnoughts, battleships purchased in 1911 and near completion in London dockyards. France was deeply invested in the management of Ottoman debt and oversight of the reformed Ottoman Gendarmerie. Still, the three Entente powers sent a verbal inquiry to Grand Vizier Said Halim about the nature of German mission and the question of the straits. The Germans adroitly equated the mission to the British naval mission with the Ottoman Admiralty and France's oversight of the Gendarmerie. The crisis was resolved by promoting von Sanders to the rank of Lieutenant-General (*Müşir*, Pasha, Field Marshal) and Inspector General of the entire Ottoman Army, thus elevating him above direct command. Enver found ways around von Sanders by relying on his previously established German networks.

Most British and French observers underestimated the extent of military reform that the CUP had initiated with Enver and Talaat after the Balkan disasters. The CUP understood that former ally Britain was deeply tied to Russia and the straits question through the triple Entente. Talaat approached Russia about mutual security interests in May 1914 while on a courtesy call to the Tsar in the Crimea but came away empty-handed. Minister of the Navy Cemal Pasha, a Francophile, approached France during French naval exercises in July 1914, but failed to make his case. By the time that Austria declared war on Serbia on 28 July 1914, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs was ready to sign the secret pact with the Ottoman government (2 August 1914), a day after Germany declared war on Russia.

Germany saw the Ottomans as the pan-Islamic buffer against Russia's expansion in the Balkans and as a possible organizer of international holy war against the triple Entente in their colonies. Two days later, the British entered the war, cut its military ties to Istanbul and appropriated two previously purchased and as yet undelivered battleships, already dubbed the *Sultan Osman* and the *Reşidiye* by the Ottoman public. Within days, two German warships, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, cruising in the eastern Mediterranean and chased by British and French ships, had made their way through the Dardanelles, and were formally gifted to the empire by the Kaiser. As the cruisers sailed by in salute of the sultan in the middle of

September, they were surrounded by hundreds of rowboats in a public expression of gratitude and patriotism. This series of events was adroitly exploited by CUP propagandists, especially by the volunteer Ottoman Navy League, an organization which had raised significant funds for the purchase of the ships. The papers were full of British betrayal, piracy, and condemnation, much of it supplied by the CUP publicity networks.

When the war exploded in Europe, the Ottomans, whose pact with Germany did not require them to enter hostilities, declared armed neutrality and ordered empire-wide mobilization, non-Muslims included.²⁷ It was even then still not certain the Ottomans would join the allies in war (Figure 9.2).

On 9 September, the Ottomans announced the abolition of the detested capitulations. It was a popular move celebrated as a day of liberation with spontaneous demonstrations everywhere, but especially among the Muslim businessmen's associations (*esnaf cemiyetleri*), who were part of the CUP plan for a national economy. The next day, the Germans, alarmed by the abrogation of the capitulations, announced the cessation of financial aid to the Ottomans. The Central Committee pressed their CUP naysayers and secured assurances that Bulgaria would join the allies, meanwhile preparing the new cruisers for use against the Russians in the Black Sea and Dardanelles. By mid-October, a German loan in gold was on its way to Istanbul, and a further obstacle to sending troops to the battlefield



Zu den Reorganisationsbestrebungen der Türkei.

Patriotische Demonstration in Konstantinopel zur Feier der Abschaffung der „Kapitulationen“ in der Türkei.

FIGURE 9.2 “Patriotic demonstration in front of the Hagia Sophia to celebrate the abolition of the Capitulations,” 1 January 1914, Scherl, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* © *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Photo / Alamy Stock Photo 2B2B759

was removed. The Ottomans officially entered the war after their surprise attack on the Russian navy at Sevastapol in the Black Sea (29 October 1914). The final decision has long been argued as Enver's alone, the chief warmonger, but clearly the choices of willing ally had narrowed considerably before the ships sailed for the Black Sea.

On 11 November, an official *fetva* announced a holy war, first exhorting the Ottoman naval and armed forces but subsequently addressed to all the world's Muslims. It was published in Arabic, Persian, Tatar, Urdu and Ottoman Turkish in a CUP-managed public performance at Fatih Mosque (of the conqueror Mehmed II) on 14 November 1914. It did not receive as enthusiastic a response as the abrogation of the capitulations, though again the Muslim trade corporations were out in force.²⁸ The *fetva* was part of the mobilization effort aimed at young recruits focused on revenge for the loss of the Balkans but recast as a quest for the independence and salvation of the Ottomans. The call for an independent state was expected to resonate with Muslim resistance in colonies across the world. Closer to home, it was a call to arms for Kurds, Arabs and Turks of Anatolia and Mesopotamia who were in fact the backbone of the fighting forces.

Mobilization

The compulsory mobilization orders directed men between the ages of 20 and 45 to report to recruiting stations, making it sound like volunteerism. This was as much of an "imagined community" with which the CUP could hope to muster a largely illiterate and rural population. The campaign also stimulated animus against the "enemies within," understood as the non-Muslim communities. The final piece of the mobilization propaganda was the appeal to *nâmûs* (honor), and the need to protect fatherland and especially the women of the nation. Traditional ways of sending young men off to army service already existed, such as communal praying, musical entertainment, and processions of the new soldiers as they left their villages, and they were enlarged and linked to the message of patriotic duty.

The mobilization was based on a vague Temporary Law for Military Service that spoke of two groups: armed and unarmed conscripts. Most of the non-Muslim conscripts would end up in unarmed labor battalions (*hizmet taburları*). Labor battalions were not unknown in other armies of the belligerents, such as the British Indian Labour Corps (formerly Coolie Corps) used in Mesopotamia, Persia and Thrace. Russians were noted for the instrumentalization of civilian populations in the Caucasus and Iran, part of a general assumption by all combatants in WWI of the legitimacy of extreme violence against non-combatants.²⁹

Ottoman official figures published after the war indicate that 930,000 men in active services, with 1,920,000 reserves, or a total of 2,850,000 men had been mobilized by March 1917. While the mobilization statistics from the early part of the war are impressive, in retrospect, they mask the complete lack of readiness of the supplies and logistics for the numbers that were recruited too quickly. They also mask the lack of standardization around war taxes and local mobilization

practices that led to the abuse of potential recruits and the development of wide-spread black markets in the scarcity of goods. The burden on the recruit was large: he was instructed to bring five days food supply (assumed to be the time to get to his regiment), and his own uniform and good shoes.³⁰ In fact, the completion of mobilization, estimated at under a month for most of the XIII Army Corps from Istanbul to Baghdad, averaged closer to two months in most cases. This was the army that went to war on multiple fronts: Galicia, the Caucasus, the Baghdad-Basra basin, Hijaz, Mecca and Medina, and Thrace and the Dardanelles before the final capitulation in October 1918. In the last decade of Ottoman existence, the CUP was at war not just with the triple Entente but also with its own citizens as the path from empire to nation began.

Late Ottoman Houseguest: Edith Durham

Edith Durham (1863–1944) was a renowned and controversial artist, ethnographer, author, political activist and lobbyist, relief worker and prolific letter writer. She was born to a prominent surgeon and his wife in London, the eldest of eight, most of whom were high achievers. She was trained at the Royal Academy. At 37, she found herself unmarried and the caregiver to her mother. Feeling trapped and anxious to do something (anything) else, she suffered a nervous breakdown. As a treatment her doctor recommended that she get away for two months which resulted in a trip to the Dalmatian coast and Montenegro. This was the catalyst for her travels for the next 21 years to Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and beyond. Something about the Balkans had struck a chord. Above all, Albania drew her back frequently.

Durham traveled by horseback and on foot, meeting the tribes who dwelt in the rugged landscape, especially the “Accursed Mountains.” Albania in the early 1900s was a region organized around clans and religion. Albanians could be Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics or Muslims, but also lived by ancient customs such as those of the Canon of Lek Dukgjin, dating back to the fifteenth century. The Canon dictated how the clans and households were organized and ruled, how disputes were dealt with (including blood feuds), and the importance of hospitality and besa (personal honor).

Accepted by the men of the tribes, Durham spent time listening to the communities and recording their customs, clothing, food, beliefs and opinions. Through her books, letters and articles, Durham advocated for the recognition of the Albanians as needing support against the predatory powers.

During the Balkan Wars and at other times of strife, Durham did fundraising and relief work in Albania. A steady stream of letters went to newspapers and anyone she thought might help, including government officials. Her proximity to the battlefields brought her to the role of war correspondent, another avenue for

advocacy. Her strident advocacy earned her the reputation for being blunt and rude, no doubt because she said and did things that contradicted British interests in the Balkans.

After 1921, back in Britain, Durham worked tirelessly for the Albanians. Her books, articles and letters constitute a much-needed repository of knowledge of the Balkans that would otherwise be lost. Albanians called her Queen of the Highlights and named schools, monuments and squares for her. Among the many books she published, *High Albania* remains the most popular.

Notes

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EPILOGUE: 1914–1923

The Ottomans and World War I

The centennial of the Great War has produced an extraordinary number of new studies of the Middle Eastern front's impact on the people, militaries, and governments of all the participants and the victims, not just on the great powers and Europe. While the history of the Ottomans in World War I was long organized around the Armenian genocide and sensational campaign moments such as Gallipoli and the Dardanelles in 1915, the Middle East, Balkans and Caucasus arenas of total war are only now beginning to receive the attention they have long deserved. So too is the question of the dislocation of millions of people, not just the Armenians and Assyrians who were forced to leave their homes in eastern Anatolia and march in untold misery and accompanying atrocities to Syria.¹ So much material is now available that it allows this author to summarize selectively the road from 1914 to 1923 in a bid to convey the colossal human tragedy and leave the history of the post-war settlements to the experts. What follows are signposts to the extremely rich material listed in the Further Reading at the end of this chapter.

While the Ottomans had spent considerable efforts on another round of reforms, they had not developed a war strategy beyond the defense of Istanbul and the straits when they went to war in August 1914. That allowed German mission officers to reorganize and take over military command, in effect sidelining the Ottoman officers, with the exception of Enver Pasha and Cemal Pasha. The subjugation of the Ottoman officers created much resentment, and even Liman von Sanders thought it was ill conceived. Enver Pasha's quixotic obsession with pan-Turkism led him to make more than one disastrous command decision with serious consequences. The Ottomans would ultimately fight on eight different fronts, some of them simultaneously. Lesser expeditions were sent to Yemen, to Libya against the Italians who joined the allies in June 1915, and to Iran. On the

European front, the Ottoman army served in Galicia, Macedonia and Romania. It is however, in the central lands of Anatolia, Sinai, the Hijaz and Mesopotamia that the Ottomans and their opponents fought hardest and longest.

At first, however, the Ottoman forces were largely concentrated on the defense of Istanbul, the straits and the Marmara Sea, which meant the redeployment of regular soldiers from far-flung army headquarters. That left much of Mesopotamia poorly defended, so the Ottomans fell back on their traditional combination of tribal militias, the Gendarmerie, and raw conscripts, influenced by their recent Libyan battles with Italy. This accounts for the quick occupation by British and Indian forces of Basra and the Shatt al-Arab waterway on the evening of 21 November 1914. The British preemptive strike to occupy Basra and environs succeeded in the main object of protecting the important oil fields of Iran and maintaining British dominance in the Gulf. The Ottomans retreated to Qurna where the small number of regular troops put up a brisk defense, but British artillery fire and shelling from a river flotilla forced its surrender on 3 December, marking the end of the first campaign in Mesopotamia. Ottoman defenses had failed miserably; the tribal levies melted away and looted as they left.

Sarikamiş campaign

The next significant confrontation was with the Russians at Sarikamiş near Erzurum on the Caucasian front. Russian troops began the invasion of the eastern Ottoman border on 4 November 1914, with significantly reduced numbers as much of the Caucasus army had been redeployed to the battlefields in Poland. Enver Pasha understood the Russian incursion had demonstrated military weakness, which prompted him to take the offensive campaign to reclaim formerly lost territories in eastern Anatolia. Hasan İzzet Pasha, commander of the Third Army, as with all the other regional commanders, had barely begun the reorganization of his divisions, most of them relocated from Thrace. His best troops had been redeployed to the defense of Istanbul. Most of the defensive lines were occupied by gendarmes and border guards.

Lack of proper transport was the single largest problem of the war, perhaps second only to the lack of food. The railway system did not extend much beyond Ankara. The Ottoman navy, in spite of the German gift of the two warships, was insufficient to the needs of army maritime transport on the Black Sea. The Russians had made that a certainty by sinking three Ottoman steamers with 3,000 troops and equipment near Zonguldak on 7 November and within a few months, were laying mines at the Black Sea entrance to the Bosphorus strait. Land transport became the only option for moving troops, but significant problems arose there as well. Relying on local resources proved problematic and took valuable time away from training raw recruits. As Uyar explains:

Unsurprisingly, the requisitioning of animals, wagons and all sorts of carts rapidly became a nightmare. Most of the animals were in poor condition,

too old or young and untrained for heavy work, and most of their riders and drivers were likewise untrained for transportation duties. Under these conditions, Third Army units had to spend valuable time, energy and resources marching from their home provinces to concentration points and then to the front line. Heavy loads, continuous bad weather, poor billeting and rations, unformed roads—or lack of roads—took their toll.²

Ever since his Libya experience, Enver Pasha was a convert to unconventional warfare. He ordered the mobilization of cavalry divisions from eastern Anatolia for the Caucasus front, in essence a return of the Hamidiye Cavalry, and sent them to the front as the Reserve Tribal Cavalry (*İhtiyat Aşiret Süvari*). Then Enver added another dimension, the Special Organization guerilla troops already recruited from local Muslims groups like Lazes and Acaras. These operatives were initially under the orders of civilians, notably CUP ideologue Dr Bahaeddin Şakir, one of the architects of the Armenian genocide.

Two battles at Köprüköy and Anap on the Caucasus frontier demonstrated the strength of the regular army and the many dedicated officers who died with their troops. Meanwhile, the conscript divisions, made up of local Armenian and Kurdish villagers, deserted in huge numbers. Losses were high with little to show for it. Special Organization regiments had better luck along the Black Sea coast, attacking Russian border guard positions and raising the locals to join them, capturing Artvin on 22 November and pushing the Russians back to Batum. Enver Pasha, encouraged by the Artvin news, decided to send an expeditionary infantry army. This troop, now known as The *Stange Detachment* (*Müfrezesi*) for the name of its commander Major Christian August Stange, was sent to the front along with a 1,000 Special Organization volunteers known as the *İstanbul Çetesi*. When they too had repulsed the Russians along the coast, Enver Pasha took command of the Third Army and was joined by the Chief of the Ottoman General Staff Colonel Bronsat von Schellendorf. Enver immediately replaced an older generation of officers with eager and younger CUP officers. They planned the encirclement of the Russian army in the Soğanlı Mountain range near Sarıkamış but apparently without proper intelligence or consideration of the logistical difficulties and winter weather. The attack was launched on 22 December with very little thought to backup plans and no rations for the soldiers, who were told to fend for themselves. Six infantry divisions marched 70 kilometers in winter snow before they began frontal assaults on the Russian entrenched in the mountains.

While the Ottomans had the advantage of surprise and a confused Russian command, they failed to capitalize on their momentary advantage because of poor communications between the divisions, continuous daily assaults with too few soldiers, inadequately clothed and shod, too few rations and brutal weather, conditions that were all too reminiscent of the war years 1876–1878. Checked, the Ottomans had turned back through the mountains by 5 January. Enver deserted his decimated army on 9 January 1915, leaving the mop-up to Stange who managed to hold the line at Artvin, and Hafız Hakkı Pasha, the originator of the

original assault plan, now in charge of gathering the shattered forces. Of the original 118,174 combat effectives on 22 December only 42,000 personnel remained fit for battle, while most of the troops had died from starvation and disease. Hafız Hakkı himself lost the battle to typhus on 5 February 1915.³

The collapse of Enver's campaign at Sarıkamış demonstrates the almost complete disconnect between the expectations of the CUP officers and what the army was capable of due to local conditions. It also exposed the fragility of a command structure that was divided between the Talaat and Enver Pasha camps and that demanded absolute obedience from its junior officers, part of the paranoia arising from the complete breakdown of the army in 1912–1913.

The use of the Special Organization bands continued in the Caucasus until the end of the war, against the Armenian guerillas and citizens indiscriminately. In effect, the Ottomans turned their backs on the Caucasus front, admitting to a war of attrition and entirely ignoring pleas for reinforcements. It was a particularly bloody setting in which both Russians and Ottomans encouraged casual brutality on civilians. The campaign further destabilized an alarmed population fleeing from armies on the move.

The Armenian Genocide

In the aftermath of Sarıkamış, the CUP made a number of decisions affecting Armenians. On 25 February 1915, Armenian conscripts were ordered to be disarmed and transferred to labor battalions where they were prey to abuse by their Muslim fellow soldiers. Armenian volunteer units served in the Russian army and instigated local and international agitation for a homeland in and around Van, including attacks on Ottoman government offices and civilians. Initially, local Ottoman commanders represented the Armenians as a threat as they operated with impunity on both sides of the border. By mid-April, a faction of the CUP decided on the relocation of the Armenian population of eastern Anatolia, ultimately at the direction of Talaat Pasha. Simultaneously, 200 prominent Armenians were arrested in Istanbul, accused of treason, marched into the countryside and massacred. A forced evacuation of Armenian villages began. By mid-May, a joint Russian-Armenian force occupied Van, driving out the Ottoman garrison and massacring civilians. On 27 May, the government passed a Deportation Law to legitimate the rounding up of the Armenians, which included instructions about protecting person and property. But eyewitnesses from among the American missionaries who were deeply embedded in the communities told a different story about what had become an expulsion operation with terrible consequences.

Many Armenians were driven through the Syrian desert in what is now known as the death march. But thousands were also killed before they left their villages. Those who survived the journey took refuge largely in Beirut. The number of victims varies between 800,000 and 1,000,000. Censuses from both Ottoman (1900) and Turkish Republican sources (1927) tell the story in stark terms: In Erzurum, the largely Armenian non-Muslim population declined from 32% to

0.1%. In Trabzon, the primarily Greek non-Muslim population fell from 43% to 1%, and in Izmir, perhaps the most diverse of all the Ottoman port cities, the percentage of non-Muslims fell from 62% to 14%.⁴

Foreign consuls and missionaries facilitated the founding of the American Committee for Armenian and Syrian Relief in 1915, distributing what aid they could to the refugees. As the Bulgarian atrocities had fired up Europe in 1876, the Armenian genocide committed the United States to intervention in the Middle East. The system the US instituted, renamed the American Committee for Relief in the Near East in 1918, is the basis for much of humanitarianism as it functions across the world today. As Keith Watenpaugh notes: “The sheer scale of interwar relief needs prompted the replacement of independent missionary charity with secular, professional, and bureaucratized intergovernmental forms of aid and development.”⁵

The Suez Campaign

The Ottomans continued to resist command by the Germans, most notably in the Suez Campaign of early 1915. Britain forced the Egyptians to declare war on the Allies, which included the closing of the Suez Canal while the Ottomans were still neutral. Facing tremendous discontent from Egyptian nationalists, the British installed Hussein Kamil as Sultan of Egypt on 20 December and deported dissidents along with numerous Ottoman citizens. The legitimate *Khedive* of Egypt, Abbas Hilmi, was in Istanbul, meanwhile, collaborating with the Germans and Austria for the independence of Egypt from Britain.

The original order for a Sinai expedition had come to Enver Pasha in August from the Chief of the German General Staff, General Helmuth von Moltke, who saw the Sinai thrust as a way of diverting British forces from the western front. Enver, true to form, preferred to create a tribal army, and sent his special agent Reserve Captain Kuşçubaşı Eşref and Cavalry Major İzmidli Mümtaz to organize the Bedouins of Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula. German Colonel Kress von Kressenstein was to command two army corps of the Fourth Army along with the tribal forces. Zeki Pasha, Commander of the Fourth Army was in charge of the operation but proved particularly inept for the job, so Cemal Pasha, minister of the navy was appointed to the task. Cemal Pasha, ardent CUP Central Committee member, had proved himself an able administrator in Adana in 1909, and in Istanbul in the events of 1913. His removal from Istanbul may well have been engineered by Enver and Talaat. He would spend the rest of the war in Syria, as commander of the Fourth Army and governor general of Syria.

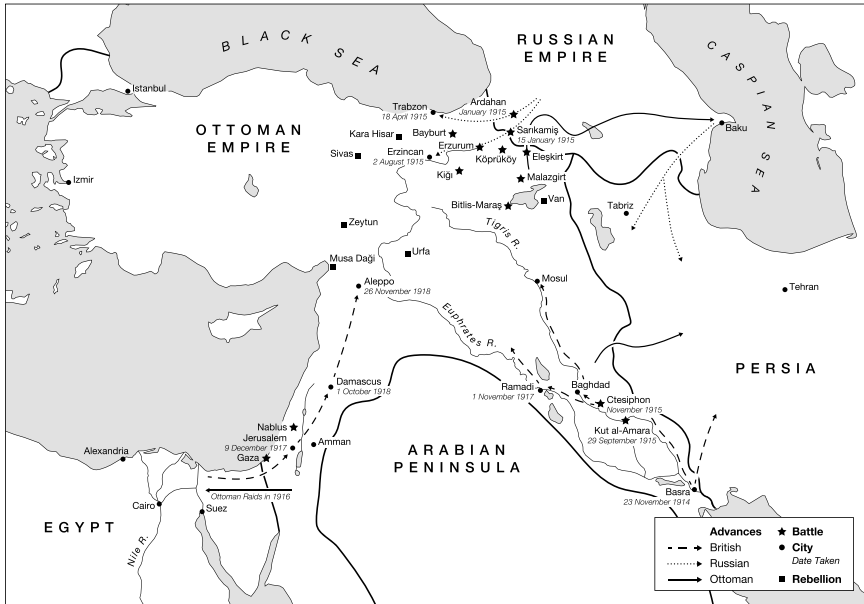
It was no easy task, as the tribal experience with the Ottomans had created few friends and many enemies. Moreover, Syria in general was alive with dissident groups, some working with the allies while others collaborated with the Entente powers. Entente warships were busy bombing up and down the Syrian coastline. In addition, the logistical difficulties of a Sinai passage were made brutally clear after von Kress did a reconnaissance of the route and reported on the extreme limitations of such a crossing:

The enormous distance between the railhead and the advanced base, lack of routes, lack of food and forage in the region, total dependence on camel convoys and the enormous, combined weight of food, forage, ammunition, heavy weapons, the bridging train and baggage. The planners stripped the units of all non-essential baggage, including tents (only a few tents were included for a field hospital), bedding, personal equipment and field kitchens.⁶

The Ottoman expedition to cross the Sinai to Suez in late January 1915 included 12,000–15,000 men, most on camels and on strict rations of biscuits, dates and olives. Camels numbering 1,280 carried food; another 2,300 carried water.⁷ The Ottomans were woefully unprepared for what they would do when they reached the shores of the canal and had underestimated the British firepower, which included warships. Meanwhile the British, paranoid about the unreliability of both the Egyptian and Indian forces, had overestimated the size of the Ottoman advance and had fortified the canal with men and weapons in three vantage spots to prevent its crossing. British regulars as well as Anzac troops (New Zealand and Australians) who were training in Egypt were also available. From late January to early February 1915 some brief attempts were made by the Ottomans to cross the canal, but they failed both because of lack of proper intelligence and bad weather and also because of the firepower of the strategically placed British presence. Cemal Pasha made the decision to withdraw the forces and by 4 February the Ottomans melted away. The British Colonial administration kept the area fortified, so that when the Ottomans tried to invade a year later, some 400,000 troops were concentrated in the canal zone with the same result. One is tempted to compare this Sinai Campaign to the Ottoman (Janissary) expedition against Napoleon in 1801–1802, only on that occasion, the Ottoman allies were British (map 10.1).⁸

Gallipoli 1915–1916

There are likely more published works on Gallipoli alone than on any other of the battlefields of the Middle East, as the Dardanelles continued to be the obsession of the Entente great powers. The 1915–1916 campaign serves as a foundational story for Australia and New Zealand's colonial armies. For Turkey, the heroic defense by Ataturk looms large in the national histories of the making of the Turkish Republic (see Further Reading). Gallipoli quickly evolved into trench warfare after the initial naval invasion of the British and French warships in early February 1915. Forty-six thousand British and Anzac troops, plus 18,000 Frenchmen assembled at Moudros on the island of Limnos for the ground campaign. By now, the enterprise had assumed the nature of a major expedition that the Entente needed to win. After weeks of bombing and attempts at minesweeping, the British launched their attack on the straits themselves on 18 March 1915. There, the Ottomans had laid a row of mines that took out one-third of the Entente ships. It was the first major victory of the Ottomans. The British ordered an additional



MAP 10.1 Major battles of World War I © Gregory T. Woolston

75,000 infantrymen to force the landing in the straits. As Eugene Rogan describes the mix of nationalities:

No battlefield in the Great War would prove more global than Gallipoli. The Mediterranean Expeditionary Force numbered some 75,000 men from around the world. In addition to British troops—Welsh, Irish, Scottish, and English—there were volunteers from the Dominion of Newfoundland, Australians, and New Zealanders (with both Pakeha and Maori units), Gurkhas and Sikhs, Frenchmen, Foreign Legionnaires hailing from around the world, and colonial troops from across Africa—Senegal, Guinea, Sudan, and the Maghrib.⁹

Communication among them must have sounded like the Tower of Babel.

Enver, fresh from his Caucasus disasters, bowed to the Germans, putting Liman von Sanders in charge of the Fifth Army headquartered in Gallipoli, with some 50,000 troops. At three vulnerable points, they dug in. One of them, Arnburnu (Anzac Cove) on the west side of the Dardanelle Peninsula proved to be the graveyard for the assembled Entente forces and the survival of the Ottoman Army. On 25 April 1915, the campaign began. By 20 December, after months of futile attempts, the Ottoman resistance had forced the evacuation of the Entente men and fleets, completed in the first week of January 1916. After a futile eight months, the 500,000 casualties (wounded, taken prisoner or killed) were evenly split between the two sides: 205,000 British and colonial soldiers; 47,000 French and their colonial troops, and an estimated 250,000–290,000 Ottomans.¹⁰

Though Cemal Pasha had been prepared to organize another campaign in the Hijaz, Enver was more concerned with the Dardanelles. Thus, the Fourth Army was plundered for its best divisions to be sent to Gallipoli and by mid-March 1915 to the Caucasus. Cemal Pasha resisted the reassignments as long as he could and attempted to find new conscripts and supplies among a much-afflicted Syrian population. Manpower was one thing, food supply was another. The impact of resident armies in Syria and the Hijaz put enormous stress on already fragile food supplies and exacerbated an already corrupt system. When buying at fixed prices failed, the forced requisition of farm animals and wagons became the norm. The wealthy found ways around confiscation through bribery or forced purchases in gold. The Entente blockade of the Mediterranean made it extremely difficult for the Ottomans to import food.

Syria was already under a sustained drought when a plague of locusts destroyed the year's crops in spring 1915. Although the entire population and the military mobilized to fight the infestation, farmlands and orchards were destroyed, forcing desperate populations on the move. Ottoman civil and military officials opened soup kitchens and orphanages, and allowed American missionaries to coordinate relief efforts, but to little avail. There were 300,000–500,000 civilians of Syria who died of starvation and diseases between 1916 and the end of the war.

Meanwhile, Cemal Pasha began his campaign against the dissident Arab nationalist groups, for which he is justifiably known as Cemal Pasha al-Saffah, or Blood-Letter. In an extended effort to crack down on perceived fifth column Arab nationalists, Cemal Pasha arrested and deported large numbers Syrians from August 1915 in Beirut to May 1916; and on May 9, 21 young Arabs were hanged in Beirut and Damascus. His actions alienated the Hashemites, the tribal federation of Sharif Husayn of Mecca, whose collaboration with the British resulted in the Arab Revolt and accelerated the end of the war. It did not result in the spontaneous uprising of the Arab population as the British hoped. The Ottomans had exiled an estimated 50,000 Syrians by the war's end.

In the summer of 1915, in an effort to round up deserters the Ottomans confronted a series of internal rebellions among Iraqis in the Euphrates towns of Najaf, Karbala and Hilla. The Ottomans eventually conceded self-government to the region as they had to regroup to face the British advance into Mesopotamia in mid-1915. By early June, a British advance party had captured Amara, on the Tigris River 90 miles north of Basra. They faced little opposition from the villagers on the way, and hundreds of Turk and Arab soldiers surrendered easily, perhaps misleading the British as to the state of the Ottoman resistance. By mid-July, the British had completed the occupation of the province of Basra by capturing Nasiriya on the lower Euphrates River, but needed reinforcements.

Kut al-Amara 1916–1917

The ending of the Dardanelles campaigns released thousands of soldiers and equipment for redeployment. This meant airplanes and tanks were used in the

Hijaz, Palestinian and Transjordan battlefields for the first time alongside the infantry and camel and horse cavalries of Anzac troops as well as local tribesmen. The Sixth Army was activated for Mesopotamia under Field Marshal Colmar von der Goltz, who until then had spent much of the war in Baghdad.

On 19 April, 1916, however, Field Marshal Von der Goltz died of typhus at the age of 73, just two weeks before the British surrender at Kut. He is buried on the grounds of the German Consulate in Istanbul, one of the most influential members of the early German mission.

Ottoman forces besieged the British entrenched in Kut by the end of 1915. Between January and April, the British relief troops advanced against an Ottoman force entrenched between the relief army and the besieged British garrison at Kut. Against all expectations, the Ottoman forces held up well and accepted the British surrender of Kut on 29 April 1916, after a siege of 145 days and almost a week after the garrison had run out of sufficient food. "With a loss of 13,309 men in total, Kut was the British army's worst surrender ever: 277 British officers, 204 Indian officers, 2,592 British soldiers, 6,988 Indian soldiers, and 3,248 Indian support staff."¹¹

The Ottoman commanders marched the captured British to Baghdad and dealt severely with supposed Kut citizen-collaborators, hanging large numbers of them. It was but a short triumph. In February 1916, the Russians had taken Erzurum. On 10 June 1916, the Arab Revolt organized by Faisal Husayn and T.E. Lawrence began a systematic attack on the Ottoman garrison in Mecca. By September Husayn's forces controlled most of the Hijaz with the exception of Medina, under siege for the rest of the war. The British had slowly gained control of Sinai, while the Arab revolt forces spent most of 1917 attacking the Hijaz railroad, and captured Aqaba in July 1917. In December 1917, Allenby's victorious march into Jerusalem was celebrated as the triumphal end of a crusade. The entrance of the conquering army into the sacred city was carefully choreographed, photographed and presented to a British public still smarting from Gallipoli and Kut as a Christmas gift (Figure 10.1).

The patriotic moment was just one example of the use of religious symbols by both sides throughout the war. The CUP press glorified the victory at Gallipoli as having secured the gateway to Asia for Muslims world-wide. Sharif Husayn had called for a jihad in the Arab revolt just as the CUP government had, accusing the Ottoman army of inflicting harm on Muslims and non-Muslims alike. The CUP press responded by accusing Sharif Husayn of disloyalty and betraying fellow Muslims.¹²

On all sides, however, insufficiency of food, equipment and horses as well as fevers and other diseases were just as lethal as bullets, problems for which patriotic messages served little purpose. As desertions accumulated, for example, glossy pamphlets of the comforts of British and Russian captivity were dropped from planes and distributed behind Ottoman lines by British soldiers in Turkish uniforms. Arabs on the Palestine front deserted to join either the British or the Arab dissidents.¹³ The British had captured 202,000 prisoners by the end of the war. The line between Ottoman citizen and soldier was largely non-existent.



FIGURE 10.1 General Allenby in Jerusalem, December 1917 © World History Archive / Alamy Stock Photo D9919Y

Mesopotamia and Palestine 1917–1918

The final confrontations of World War I in the Middle East occurred in the Basra–Baghdad Basin with the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, under Major General Sir Stanley Maude, and in Palestine with the Egyptian Expeditionary Force and Indian Expeditionary Force under General Sir Edmund Allenby against the Ottoman Yildirim Group, led by General Liman von Sanders. On 16 December 2017, the British MEF had recaptured Kut. By March 2017, they had taken Baghdad, where the inhabitants, having just looted the city, are said to have greeted them as heroes. In April, the United States entered the war. By November 1917, Russia had left the war when the empire was upended in the Bolshevik Revolution. Among the consequences was the dismantling of the Russian/Ottoman eastern border defenses where some 702,000 Russia soldiers had been deployed.

At the beginning of 1918, the Ottomans were desperate for manpower as desertions rose to intolerable levels. By October, infantry regiments were at half strength with no prospect of replacements. In November 1917, they had been forced to abandon the Beersheeba–Gaza line after the British broke through the Yildirim Group’s southern defenses on the third try. The Ottoman forces were

now vastly depleted and spread out along the Mediterranean Coast. Allenby, while feinting an attack on Amman, stealthily managed to concentrate some 35,000 infantry and 9,000 cavalry supported by nearly 400 heavy artillery, on a 15-mile front on the Mediterranean just north of Jaffa.¹⁴ The Turks had no more than 10,000 men and 130 guns defending the coastline, while the Transjordan areas, harassed by the Arab forces, had been reinforced. The final offensive began on 19 September 1918. The Battle of Nablus, or the Battle of Megiddo (Biblical Armageddon a name chosen by Allenby) as it is now known, stretched across present-day Israel, Jordan and Syria, and for six days mowed down the Ottoman armies. It has the distinction of being known as the last great cavalry charge in history.¹⁵

On 1 October, the British entered Damascus and on 3 October, Faysal Husayn arrived to meet with Allenby. The Seventh Army under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk managed only to keep the British from pushing beyond Aleppo, which he surrendered on 25 October. Bulgaria had capitulated to the Entente as of 30 September. The CUP government disintegrated as of 8 October. A week later, Ahmed İzzet Pasha was persuaded to form the government that would concede defeat at Moudros on 29 October 1918. The Germans surrendered on 11 November 1918. By the March 1918 Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between the new Bolshevik government and the allies, the three provinces of Kars, Ardahan and Batum, previously lost in the 1876–1877 Russo-Ottoman war, were ceded to the Ottomans to become part of the new Turkish Republic.

The social cost of the war was tremendous. “By 1918, Ottoman casualties had reached the appalling figure of 725,000 (325,000 dead and 400,000 wounded). More than a million deserters, constituting almost half the number of draftees, wreaked social havoc throughout the empire, especially in rural areas. Out of 2,608,000 men put in uniform, only 323,000 were still at their posts”¹⁶ in 1918. Most units existed on paper only. Britain and India deployed 2,550,000 men against the Ottoman army, or 32% of their total forces, with 650,000 casualties. The fiscal impact was crippling: the Ottomans spent ten times their annual budget on the war effort (after the 44% for the Public Debt Administration was paid) for four years, calculated as an average of 2.3 billion gold Francs per year.¹⁷

Occupation and the Treaty of Sèvres

As part of the Armistice of Moudros in 1918, by which the Ottomans surrendered control of all garrisons outside Anatolia, the British sailed through the straits to occupy Istanbul (and the nominal government of the sultan) for the next five years. A fleet of French, Greek and British ships, 44 in all, led by the British dreadnought HSS Agemenon dropped anchor in front of Dolmabahçe Palace. A squadron of biplanes flew overhead. It was a time of tremendous suffering and misery on all sides, including fires that destroyed neighborhoods and afflictions like tuberculosis. Dissents and rebellion were rife in western Anatolia, where the Special Organization had begun a ruthless campaign of expulsion of Greek villages.

Total war had ended but revolutions among remaining unsettled nations were just beginning.

Sir Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), whose exaggerated prose and mythical views are discredited by present-day historians, was influential in post-war Britain and the United States. He was a delegate at the Peace Conference of 1919 that led to the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920. In his pamphlet of 1917, *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks*, Toynbee had this to say:

Turkish rule ought to be ended in Europe, because, even in that small part of it which the Sultan still holds, it is an alien power, which has in that region been, and is now, oppressing or massacring, slaughtering or driving from their homes, the Christian population of Greek or Bulgarian stock. It ought to be turned out of the western coast regions of Asia Minor for a like reason. The people there are largely, perhaps mostly, Greek-speaking Christians. So ought it to be turned out of Constantinople, a city of incomparable commercial and political importance, with the guardianship of which it is unfit to be trusted. If a Turkish Sultanate is to be left in being at all, it may, with least injury to the world, be suffered to exist in Central and Northern Asia Minor, where the populations, mainly Mussulman, and there are comparatively few Christians—and those mostly in the cities—to suffer from its mismanagement.¹⁸

The lasting impact of the Sèvres Treaty is notable even today in what historians call the “Sèvres syndrome,” or the general Turkish paranoia about being carved up as once envisioned by the victorious allies. Toynbee, like many other intellectuals of his generation, became pro-Turkey in later life largely because Atatürk constructed the model secular, nation state out of the Ottoman, Arab, Armenian and Greek ashes. For that, Mustafa Kemal made the cover of the fourth issue of the new *Time* magazine on 24 March 1923.

CUP survivors and cells were active in the south Aegean and Istanbul during the allied occupation, but the Unionist triumvirate had secretly fled to Berlin along with Dr Bahaeddin Şakir on 1 November. The Central Committee dissolved the party five days later. At British and American insistence, the Ottoman government put accused CUP members—including the leaders in absentia—on trial and declared their guilt, but the trials were halted by the British as the Nationalist Movement in Ankara gained ground and unrest in Istanbul mounted. The most prominent CUP members were subsequently assassinated by Armenians: Talaat in 1921, Şakir in Berlin in 1921 and Cemal in Tiflis in 1922.

Although official Turkish histories exonerate Atatürk of CUP atrocities, he shared many of the ideas of the radical cells that began in his hometown Salonika, and many in his circle were former CUP members. He was also the popular hero of victory at Gallipoli that catapulted him into the public arena. He spent most of the latter days of the war, however, on the Syrian front, as commander of the

Seventh Army and not as part of the Central Committee. He was known to be critical of Enver's command.

Ostensibly sent by the sultan after the armistice to the interior of Anatolia to disarm the remaining Ottoman forces in early 1919, Atatürk succeeded instead in imposing the outlines of the contemporary republic on post-war Anatolia. He accomplished this by first tapping into former CUP circles, or as Ryan Gingeras would have it: "The detritus of the CUP era: one-time liberals, royalists, nationalists of various shades, former Unionist militants and imperial officers all clashed over who would have the right to rule over what was left of the empire."¹⁹ Rallying Muslims from all over Anatolia, Atatürk created a nation under arms, and challenged both the sultan and the British as well as Greek, Italian and French occupiers. In late 1918, 15,000 Armenian irregulars with French officers landed in Mersin on south coast of Anatolia. Armenian Legion troops, who had volunteered with the British, were still in Adana and Iskenderun (Alexandretta). In March 1919, French troops had landed in the region of Zonguldak on the Black Sea, the major coal mining area of the Ottomans. By May 1919, 20,000 Greek soldiers, consumed with the idea of reuniting Anatolia and Greece as the new Byzantium, disembarked from French and British ships at Izmir.

By the time that Atatürk landed in Samsun on the Black Sea in May 1919, it was clear that the circle would continue to close on the Ottoman territorial remnants, leaving only the area around Ankara as the new Turkish homeland. A new organization, the Society for the Defense of National Rights (*Mudafa'a al-Hukuk*), based on the principle of Ottoman (Muslim) national self-determination, had sprung up all over the remaining territories. At congresses in Erzurum and Sivas, the latter convened in September 1919, calls for the reunion of the Ottoman fatherland rang out from delegates from all over Ottoman territories. In November, Atatürk circulated a proclamation to Syrians to join the *mujahidin* (Muslim warriors) in the liberation of their brothers set within the usual Ottoman patriotism and duty to defend Muslim lands. Leaflets circulated, referring to the rights of "our nation" for those who love the sultan/caliph. Some responded. Many Arab officers who had served with the Ottomans continued to serve the new Anatolian movement.²⁰

The last Ottoman parliament in February 1920, decidedly anti-occupation and pro-nationalist, declared a National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*) in alliance with the revolutionary forces in Ankara. They called for the protection of minority rights, settlement of foreign debts (Public Debt Administration), independence, sovereignty and freedom of action. The pact specified the new territorial map that was to include the territories occupied by an Ottoman Muslim majority such as Istanbul and Marmara regions, and hold plebiscites in the Arab territories, Thrace and recovered provinces on the Caucasus border. The new map was to be called Turkey and the appeal was to Turkish and Kurdish Muslims. The British were furious, and uprisings began in Istanbul. In mid-March, the British arrested nationalist leaders and exiled them to Malta. Others fled to Ankara to join the new government (map 10.2).



MAP 10.2 Treaty of Sèvres, 1920 © Gregory T. Woolston

Lausanne Treaty and Turkish Republic

On 23 April 1920, the new Grand National Assembly in Ankara assumed control of the government of Turkey in defiance of Istanbul. The Assembly proclaimed their loyalty to sultan/caliph, even though the chief religious officer had previously issued a *fatwa* condemning the nationalists as unbelievers. The Assembly celebrated with recitations of the Quran and a parade of the Holy Relics of the Prophet.²¹ On 25 April, the San Remo Conference agreed to the establishment of the mandates later ratified in the Sèvres Treaty, and the British occupation forced Mehmed VI Vahdeddin (1918–1922) to sign it, but the new Ankara government did not. By May, the Iraqi revolt was underway, adding to insurrections in Syria. British officers claimed the leaders were ex-Ottoman officers and CUP members. Remaining Ottoman army units were called on to expel the French along today's Turkish/Syrian border. By 1921, the French had abandoned Cilicia and the Armenians and crossed the border into the new Greater Lebanon.

With his new nation under arms, including the remnants of the Ottoman army Atatürk had not disarmed, the Turks defeated the Greek Army that had managed to capture Bursa and Edirne. Though the British did nothing to stop the Greeks from renewed warfare, they also did nothing to help them. The expected military backing never materialized for the Greek army. A brief and bloody civil war known as the War of Independence in Turkey and the Asia Minor Expedition in Greece ended when Atatürk's forces retook Izmir in 1922. The victory forced the

withdrawal of the Greek army and thousands of Ottoman Greek subjects while the city of Izmir burned. The armistice of Mudanya was signed on 11 October 1922, ending Greek aspirations. On 1 November 1922, the Grand National Assembly abolished the Ottoman sultanate. International negotiations began in Lausanne, where İsmet İnönü famously championed Turkish sovereignty and the right to self-determination.

The modern Turkish Republic was established by the Treaty of Lausanne 4 July 1923. A “Turk” was a citizen of the new Turkish Republic, regardless of ethno-religious identity, in effect denying the National Pact. The term Turk was applied to significant populations of Kurds, Arabs, Circassians, Georgians, Abkhazians, Laz, Albanians and Bulgarians, among others resident inside the new line in the sand. In reality, the notorious exchange of the Christian (1.5 million Turkish-speaking Greeks) populations of Anatolia for Muslims (400,000 Greek-speaking Turks) in Thrace, signed by Atatürk and Greek Prime Minister Venizelos on 30 January 1923 and sanctioned by the League of Nations, made certain that it stayed that way. In 1924, the caliphate was abolished, the final betrayal of any aspirations for a new alliance among Arabs and Turks.

Unrest continued in the Arab Provinces under occupation by the Allied Occupied Enemy Territory Administration. As in Anatolia, local communities were resentful of the continued presence of British forces hardened by the war and impatient to return home. For example,

between 1919 and 1921, over 18,500 Zionist immigrants flocked to Palestine’s shores. Rioting broke out in Jerusalem in the first week of April 1920, leaving five Jews and four Arabs dead and over two hundred people injured. Worse violence followed in 1921, when Arab townsmen intervened in a fight between Jewish communists and Zionists in the port of Jaffa during May Day parades. In the ensuing riots, forty-seven Jews and forty-eight Arabs were killed, and over two hundred people were injured.²²

In Syria and Iraq, Faysal Husayn and his Arab army, betrayed by the Sykes Picot war promises found themselves challenged as much by other pro-Arab revolutions already brewing. In March 1920, the brief moment of a possible larger Ottoman Muslim multi-ethnic state was overtaken by the Syrian National Congress in Damascus, declaring Faysal the undisputed king of the Arab Kingdom of Syria, while the Iraqis did the same for Faysal’s brother Abdullah. Meanwhile, the international conferences, meeting to create the new settlement map of the Middle East systematically refused to hear the pleas of Egyptian, Arabs, Kurds and Armenians, among others, all denied sovereign state aspirations.

On April 1925, the San Remo resolution was signed creating the mandates of Syria, Palestine and Mesopotamia with borders to be determined subsequently. Ibn Saud, the new favorite tribal leader of the British, challenged Sharif Husayn in Mecca when the latter tried to assume the title of caliphate after it was abolished in Istanbul, forcing Husayn into exile, and establishing the Saudis as rulers of the

Arabian Peninsula, soon to be swimming in oil. The revolts that broke out all over the new mandates were localized and driven by occupation, anger and betrayal. Even Faysal, who briefly confronted the French mandate forces succumbed in the end to the rearranged maps. He was installed as King of the new British mandate of Iraq created from the Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Mosul and Basra, in August 1921, while Abdullah became the King of the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan.

The British and French continued to rely on former Ottoman officers and officials as well as urban notable families who gradually dismantled the Ottoman past. These accounts have been told ably elsewhere, as have the multiple and systematic betrayals by all the international powers.²³ Eugene Rogan's reflection is apt here: "Had the sultan's government harnessed Atatürk's movement and resisted the terms imposed by the victorious powers at Sèvres, the Ottoman Empire might well have survived within the boundaries of the modern Turkish Republic. However catastrophic their defeat in the Great War, acceptance of the draconian peace led to the fall of the Ottomans."²⁴

One of Atatürk's most quoted refrains was: "*Yurtta sulh; cihanda sulh*" ("Peace at home; peace in the world"), which signaled the new republic's intentions to stay within its borders. The Ottoman Empire was finished, literally and figuratively, and Atatürk proceeded to wipe most traces of it from the national narrative. He dealt harshly with CUP critics, executing some and exiling many. Perhaps his most decisive move was to eliminate many aspects of Islamic institutions and practices including the call to prayer, Sufi organizations, and various aspects of the shari'a law. This engendered stiff resistance especially from the Kurdish populations. What he did not replace was the dominance of the military, which until the time of the present-day neo-Hamidian government of Erdoğan, stood as the inheritors, protectors and guarantors of Atatürk's vision and the constitution, the citizen soldier, exceptionally educated and privileged in the early decades of the Republic. All republican educational institutions embraced the Turkishness of the new secular national history, harked back to the invented tradition of the Central Asian Turkish civilizations, and schooled their students to say "*Ne mutlu Türküm diyene*," or "How happy is he who can say 'I am a Turk.'" The nation had been born of empire.

The ghosts of the Ottoman Empire, unfinished revolutions, continue to surface in the Middle East. If there is a legacy in the 600 rule of the Ottomans, it is in the federative model (Ottomanism) that offered an alternative process of transformation after 1860 evident in the reforms described here. The Unionists, however, combined Jacobin French revolutionary notions of the ethnic nation under arms and Prussian/German models of colonial warfare in their utilitarian view of military order, both grounded in the Westphalian understanding of sovereign states. After 1900, the Unionist model was honed by the mountains of Rumelia, especially Macedonia, where fragile pastoral communities organized around banditry and protection had long developed komitaci-style violence as a means of survival from imperial conquest. The colonial powers of Britain and France brought their proxy troops (sepoys) to the region in 1800, beginning the long history of intervention and resource extraction that constitutes international relations in the region today.

Much like the 1878 Berlin Treaty, the 1920 treaty of Sèvres disappointed and enraged as many as it satisfied. The imposed ethno-sectarian state logic is presently backed by the widespread and constant use of superior lethal force and internal paramilitary organizations, in order to facilitate resource extraction to the benefit of world markets. Humanitarian crises are legion, movement is constant, and separation of families is normal. That too is the ghost of the past 100 years of empires: Russian (Soviet), Ottoman, Prussian (German), and Austro-Hungarian, British, French and American.

The Middle East and North African regions need a different map, one based on a new regionally negotiated social contract based on robust legal and humanitarian organizations. Ten years after the Arab Spring we are still waiting.

Notes

- 1 Donald Quataert, "The Massacres of Ottoman Armenians and the Writing of Ottoman History," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 37, no. 2 (Autumn, 2006): 249–59.
- 2 Mesut Uyar, *The Ottoman Army and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2021), 85.
- 3 Uyar, *The Ottoman Army*, 99.
- 4 Caroline F. Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1923*. (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 547.
- 5 Keith Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2015), 2–3.
- 6 Uyar, *The Ottoman Army*, 116.
- 7 Uyar, *The Ottoman Army*, 118.
- 8 Virginia Aksan, "Locating the Ottomans in Napoleon's World," in *Napoleon's Empire: European Politics in Global Perspective*, ed. Ute Planert (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 277–90.
- 9 Eugene Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 143.
- 10 Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 214.
- 11 Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 227, 246–7, 267, 289–90.
- 12 Ryan Gingeras, *Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War and the End of the Ottoman Empire 1908–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 214.
- 13 Leila Tarazi al-Fawwaz, *A Land of Aching Hearts: The Middle East in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 171.
- 14 Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 374.
- 15 Uyar, *The Ottoman Army*, 383.
- 16 Şükrü Hanioglu, *Brief History of the late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 2008), 181.
- 17 Hanioglu, *Brief History*, 180.
- 18 Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Murderous Tyranny of the Turks* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1917), 7.
- 19 Gingeras, *Fall of the Sultanate*, 238.
- 20 Michael Provence, *The Last Ottoman Generation and the Making of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge: CUP, 2017), 112–23.
- 21 Finkel, *Osman's Dream*, 542.
- 22 Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 401.
- 23 Especially well done in David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914–1922* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1989).
- 24 Rogan, *The Fall of the Ottomans*, 395.

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GLOSSARY OF PLACES

Place	Variant
<i>Abkhazia</i>	Republic in Caucasus
<i>Aboukir</i>	Abu Qir, Egypt; site of land and sea confrontations between Anglo-Ottoman and French forces, 1798–1801
<i>Acre</i>	Akka, Israel
<i>Adakale</i>	Ada Kale; Danube Island submerged by Iron Gate Dam, also Orsova Island
<i>Adana</i>	town and province in southern Turkey
<i>Ağnboz</i>	Negreponte, Euboia, Greece
<i>Akkirman</i>	Akkerman, Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy, Ukraine
<i>Aleppo</i>	Halab, Syria
<i>Anapa</i>	Black Sea port; entrance to sea of Azov
<i>Anatolia</i>	Anadolu; Asian Turkey
<i>Ardahan</i>	town in northern Turkey
<i>Avlonya</i>	Vlora, Albania
<i>Aynalıkavak</i>	on the Golden Horn, Istanbul
<i>Azov</i>	on Don River, 3 km from Sea of Azov
<i>Babadagı</i>	Babadag, south of Danube in Romania
<i>Baban</i>	a principality (Sulaimaniya) in northern Iraq
<i>Bahçesaray</i>	Bakhchisaray, former court of Crimean Khanate
<i>Bender</i>	Tighina, Moldova
<i>Bessarabia</i>	Ottoman territory ceded to Russia in 1812; Moldova
<i>Bitlis</i>	town and province in eastern Turkey
<i>Bug River</i>	Buh, Boh, Ukraine
<i>Canik</i>	Ottoman province, Trabzon region
<i>Çankırı</i>	Kangra, Gangra, northeast of Ankara, Turkey
<i>Chios</i>	Island in Aegean Sea, Sakız (Tr.)
<i>Çerkes</i>	Circassian
<i>Çeşme</i>	site of Ottoman naval disaster; bay (present town) near Izmir, 1770
<i>Dacia</i>	Ancient name Romania and Moldova
<i>Daghestan</i>	Dagistan, Dagestan, present Republic in Russian Federation
<i>Damietta</i>	Dimyat, Dumyat, Egypt
<i>Davut Paşa</i>	suburb of European Istanbul, once the Janissary assembly area for European campaigns in Rumeli
<i>Diyarbakır</i>	city and province in southeastern Turkey
<i>Dobruja</i>	Dobruje; territory at mouth of Danube, surrendered to Russians in 1829
<i>Drava</i>	Drave River
<i>Elbasan</i>	city and also a county in Albania
<i>Esztergom</i>	Gran, Estergom (Hungary)
<i>Filibe</i>	Plovdiv, Bulgaria
<i>Guirgevo</i>	Guirgiu, Yergöğü (Tr.), Yerköy, Iurgiu, Romania
<i>Gümüshane</i>	town in northeastern Turkey

(Continued)

Place	Variant
<i>Harput</i>	fortress in southeastern Turkey
<i>Hasköy</i>	section of Istanbul
<i>Hawran</i>	Hawran plateau, Syria and Lebanon
<i>Hezargrad</i>	Razgrad, Bulgaria
<i>Hotin</i>	Khotin, Khotyn, Ukraine
<i>Ioannina;</i> <i>Yanya (tr.)</i>	city in Greece, seat of Ali Pasha 1786–1821
<i>Îbrail</i>	Brăila, Romania
<i>Imereti</i>	province in Georgia, Imertiz, Imertia
<i>Iron Gate</i>	Demirkapı (Tr.), Gorge on Danube River; site of present dam
<i>İsakçı</i>	Isaccea, Romania
<i>İsmail</i>	Izmail, Ismail, Ukraine
<i>İzmit</i>	capital of Kocaeli Province, northwestern Turkey
<i>Nablus</i>	West Bank, Palestine
<i>Jassy</i>	Yasi, Iași, Romania
<i>Kamenice</i>	Kamenice, Kamieniec, Poland
<i>Karahisar</i>	Afyonkarahisar, Turkey
<i>Kartal</i>	Kagul, Kahul, Moldova; site of major Russo–Ottoman battle, 1770
<i>Kerch</i>	Kerç, Crimea
<i>Kily</i>	Kilia, Kiliya, Ukraine
<i>Kuban</i>	Kuban River region flanked by Don River basin and Caucasus annexed by Russia in 1783
<i>Kurdufan</i>	Sudan
<i>Kütahya</i>	City in western Turkey; site of major Ottoman defeat 1833
<i>Maçin</i>	Măcin, Romania
<i>Maros river</i>	Mureș, Hungary and Romania
<i>Mingrelia</i>	province in Georgia, also Minrelia
<i>Missolonghi</i>	Mesolonghi, Gulf of Patras, Greece
<i>Moldavia</i>	Boğdan (Tr.); Ottoman Principality, Romania and Moldova
<i>Monastir</i>	Bitola, Macedonia
<i>Morea</i>	Peloponnesus, Greece
<i>Nablus</i>	West Bank, Palestine
<i>Nauplion</i>	Napoli, Nafplion, Nauplia Greece
<i>Navarino</i>	Anvarin, Peloponnesus, Greece
<i>Niš</i>	city in Serbia
<i>Nizib</i>	city in province of Gaziantep; site of major Ottoman defeat 1839
<i>Ochakov</i>	Özü, Ochakiv, Ukraine
<i>Odessa</i>	Russian city in Bessarabia, present-day Moldova
<i>Olenia</i>	Little Wallachia; also Küçük Eflak (Tr.)
<i>Olenitsa</i>	Oltenitza, town on Danube, Romania
<i>Ossetia</i>	region in North Caucasus Mts.
<i>Plovdiv</i>	Filibe (Tr.), Bulgaria
<i>Poti</i>	port on Black Sea, Georgia
<i>Pravadi</i>	Pravadia
<i>Prut</i>	Pruth, River and site of major Russo–Ottoman battle in 1711
<i>Qusayr</i>	Qosseîr, Cosser, Egypt

(Continued)

Place	Variant
<i>Rawandiz</i>	city in Iraq
<i>Rosetta</i>	now Rashīd, port in Egypt
<i>Rumelia</i>	formerly Ottoman Europe; also Rumeli
<i>Rusçuk</i>	Russe, Ruse, on Danube, Bulgaria
<i>Salonika</i>	Selanik (Tr.); Thessaloniki, Greece
<i>Sevastopol</i>	Port on Black Sea; also Sebastopol, Aktyar, Ukraine
<i>Selimiye</i>	Barracks, now hospital in Istanbul, Asian side, built by Selim III,
<i>Sibiu</i>	Transylvania, on Cibin River in Romania
<i>Sidon</i>	Sayda, Lebanon
<i>Siirt</i>	town in southeastern Turkey
<i>Silistre</i>	Silistri, Silistra, fortress town on Danube, Bulgaria
<i>Sinop</i>	Black Sea fortress and port in Turkey
<i>Sistova</i>	Svishtov, northern Bulgaria; also Zistova
<i>Sivas</i>	Town and province in central Turkey
<i>Siverek</i>	town in southeastern Turkey
<i>Sofya</i>	Sofia, Bulgaria
<i>Şumnu</i>	Shumla; Shumen, Bulgaria
<i>Taganrog</i>	Russia's first naval base, on Sea of Azov 1698
<i>Temeşvar</i>	Timoşoara, Romania
<i>Tiflis</i>	Tbilisi, capital of Georgia
<i>Tokat</i>	town in central Turkey
<i>Tophane</i>	arsenal in Istanbul
<i>Trabzon</i>	city and province on Black Sea, eastern Turkey
<i>Travnik</i>	city in Bosnia and Herzegovina
<i>Tulcea</i>	Tulçu, Tolçu, Horatepe (Tr.), Romania
<i>Urfa</i>	Şanlıurfa, Turkey
<i>Uyvar</i>	Nové Zániky in Slovakia
<i>Üsküdar</i>	city/district on Asian side of Istanbul; assembly point for Janissary campaigns to points east
<i>Üsküb</i>	Skopje, Macedonia
<i>Varna</i>	Black Sea port, Bulgaria
<i>Vidin</i>	fortress town, on the Danube, Bulgaria
<i>Wallachia</i>	Ifлак; Ottoman Principality; also Eflak, Romania

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
<i>acemioğlan</i>	novice soldier
<i>akçe</i>	silver coin; <i>asper</i>
<i>alay, laylan</i>	regiment
<i>asker, askeri</i>	military; tax-exempt military class
<i>ayan</i> (s. & pl.)	provincial magnate, notable, warlord; Ottoman provincial officials
<i>bashibozuks</i>	irregulars; mercenaries, başibozuks (tr.)
<i>bedel-i askeriye</i>	military exemption tax for non-Muslim men
<i>berat</i>	license of privilege; warrant
<i>bölük</i>	(military) company
<i>boyar</i>	landowner; notable, ruler in Wallachia, Moldavia
<i>cizye</i>	non-Muslim poll tax
<i>corvée</i>	forced labor
<i>dar-al-Islam</i>	abode of Islam
<i>dayı</i>	Also <i>dey</i> , protector or enforcer, used for Janissary commanders acting as rulers, governors
<i>delis</i>	irregulars, mercenaries
<i>derebey</i>	provincial notable; warlord; also <i>ayan</i>
<i>devşirme</i>	Janissary levy of Balkan Christians
<i>divan</i>	council of state; sometimes social gathering
<i>dragoman</i>	translator, interpreter
<i>esnafı</i>	merchants; artisans; guilds
<i>Eşkinci</i>	name briefly of reorganized infantry just prior to 1826
<i>eşkiya</i>	bandit; brigand
<i>fellahin</i>	Egyptian peasants
<i>ferde</i>	head tax imposed on Syria by İbrahim Pasha
<i>ferik</i>	lieutenant-general (military rank)
<i>fetva</i>	religious ruling
<i>firman</i>	ruling; edict of the sultan
<i>fitne</i>	rebellion
<i>gazi</i>	mercenary; raider; warrior for the faith
<i>haidamak, haydamak, hayduk</i>	Ukrainian/Turkish: paramilitary, peasant, marauder, bandit
<i>hospodar</i>	local official, but also ruler, esp. Principalities (Romanian); also <i>voivoda</i>
<i>hüccet</i>	court affidavit
<i>kadi</i>	judge [also kazi, kadı, qadi]
<i>kantar</i>	unit of measure = 56.449 kilograms
<i>kanun</i>	sultanic ordinances, law, collections of laws
<i>kapuhalkı</i>	household entourage, provincial governor's forces
<i>kapukulu</i>	Janissary

(Continued)

Term	Definition
<i>kapudan, kapudanlık, Kadudan-ı Derya</i>	commander, captain or local notable in Balkans; holdings of kapudan; Admiral of the Navy
<i>kapisiz levendat</i>	unattached or demobilized irregulars
<i>kaymakam</i>	substitute official, for example, in absence of grand vizier from Istanbul; also governor of <i>kaza</i> under Mahmud II; see also <i>kethüda</i>
<i>kaza</i>	administrative district under <i>kadi</i> —under <i>kaymakam</i> with Mahmud II
<i>kese</i>	bag, purse, usually of 500 <i>kuruş</i> —accounting notation
<i>kethüda</i>	<i>kahya</i> , deputy, substitute, second-in-command to grand vizier, steward
<i>khedive</i>	viceroy of Egypt 1841–1952
<i>kile</i>	unit of weight = 25.659 kilograms
<i>kleft</i>	bandit, mercenary, freedom fighter, south Balkans
<i>knezes</i>	Serbian notables
<i>kuruş</i>	unit of money, silver coin equal to 120 <i>akçes</i> ; piaster
<i>levend, levendat</i> (pl.)	mercenary, militia, <i>sanca, sekban</i> , irregular(s)
<i>malikane</i>	lifetime tax farms bid on at annual auction
<i>mamluk/Mamluk</i>	slave soldier, largely from Caucasus; latterly style of rule through households in Cairo and Baghdad
<i>meclis</i>	council; assembly
<i>mektupçu</i>	secretary of a diplomatic delegation; part of <i>reis</i> staff
<i>menzil</i>	way-station, bivouac
<i>Mevlevi</i>	sufi order
<i>millet</i>	religious community; by 19th century also “nation”
<i>miralay</i>	colonel
<i>miri</i>	belonging to the state land; also used for fixed price (state regulated)
<i>miri levendat</i> (pl.)	state-funded mercenaries; militias
<i>mirliva</i>	brigadier general
<i>mubayaacı</i>	state purchaser/commissary, regulated prices (<i>mubayaa</i>)
<i>mülazimlik</i>	Lieutenant
<i>müsadere</i>	confiscation (of disgraced official’s property and wealth)
<i>müşir</i>	field marshal
<i>mutasarrıf</i>	governor (sometimes deputy governor) of district (<i>sancak</i>); tax collector
<i>mütesellim</i>	tax collector; deputy governor; local official
<i>Naqshbandi</i>	sufi order
<i>Nizâm-ı Cedid</i>	New Order—Selim III
<i>nizamiye</i>	<i>Asakir-i Nizamiye-yi Şahane</i> , or <i>nizamiye</i> , the Ottoman Army after 1843
<i>ocak</i>	regiment; the Janissary corps
<i>ordu</i>	army
<i>ordu akçesi</i>	cash contribution for campaigns by guilds
<i>orta</i>	battalion; later <i>tabur</i>
<i>peksimed</i>	biscuit, hardtack

(Continued)

Term	Definition
<i>Philike Hetairia</i>	Greek liberation secret society
<i>reaya</i>	peasants, tax category
<i>redif</i>	reserve soldier; later <i>iẖtiyat</i> , <i>yedek</i>
<i>reis</i>	chief, head, of chancery; latterly foreign affairs minister
<i>Reisülküttab</i>	Chief of the Scribes
<i>riyal</i>	Egyptian coin
<i>sancak</i>	sub-district of province (<i>vilayet</i>)
<i>sarica</i>	see <i>levend</i>
<i>sekbān</i>	see <i>levend</i> ; also briefly used as the name the reorganized troops of Alemdar Pasha in 1808
<i>Serasker</i>	commander-in-chief; minister of war; also regional commanders during campaigns
<i>şeyhülislam</i>	grand mufti
<i>sipahi</i>	fief-based cavalry; also <i>timariots</i>
<i>Sublime Porte (Bab-ı Ali)</i>	office of the grand vizier, and seat of Ottoman government
<i>Sunna</i>	way, teachings of the Prophet Muhammad
<i>talimli askerler</i>	trained soldiers, Selim III's troops
<i>tabur</i>	battalion; earlier <i>orta</i>
<i>tekke</i>	sufi, dervish lodge
<i>timar</i>	land grant, fief
<i>timariot</i>	fief-based cavalry
<i>vakf, waqf</i>	charitable endowment
<i>vali</i>	governor of province (<i>vilayet</i>)
<i>vilayet</i>	province (<i>eyalet</i>)
<i>voyvoda</i>	local official, also see <i>hospodar</i>
<i>yamak</i>	new recruit, irregular, Janissary in waiting
<i>yerliye</i>	local auxiliary services, local Janissaries
<i>zimmi</i>	protected non-Muslims; 'people of the book'

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