



REVOLUTION AND CONSTITUTIONALISM
in the OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND IRAN

NADER SOHRABI

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Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran

As a wave of democratic social movements, under the influence of “velvet” revolutions, is sweeping the Middle East, this book calls attention to an earlier wave that swept the region a century ago. In his book on constitutional revolutions in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, Nader Sohrabi considers global diffusion of institutions and ideas, their regional and local reworking, and the long-term consequences of adaptation to local exigencies. There are lessons to be learned here. The revolutions, despite the differing social structures of the societies in which they happened, shared the same objectives and demands. Furthermore, the suddenness and simultaneity of their appearance point to a commonality that transcended the localities. Arguing that revolutions are time-bound phenomena whose forms follow global models in vogue at particular historical junctures, the book challenges the ahistoric and purely local understanding of them. Furthermore, it provides a strong case that macrostructural preconditions alone cannot explain the occurrence of revolutions; rather, global waves, intervention of agency, and additional contingent events work together to bring them about in competition with other possible outcomes. Beyond concern for how and why revolutions happen, the book offers a comparative account of the process of institutionalizing constitutionalism in two settings. The comparison highlights many similarities in the power struggles, including the paradox inherent in the “constitutional revolutions.” Comparison also affords exploration of a key difference: the reason for greater resilience of democratic institutions in the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey in contrast to Iran. In making his case, Sohrabi draws on a wide array of archival and primary sources that afford a minute look at the revolutions as they unfold.

Nader Sohrabi is an Associate Research Scholar at the Middle East Institute, Columbia University.

*To my mother, Shirin Hakimi,
in memory of my father, Yadollah Sobrabi*

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NADER SOHRABI

Columbia University



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This book is dedicated to my parents, whose unconditional love, and love of learning, have been constant sources of inspiration. I wish my father had lived long enough to see it.

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Introduction

The rise of modern states in Turkey and Iran are generally credited to two military leaders, Atatürk and Reza Shah. Often depicted as larger-than-life figures acting outside history, they are portrayed as fashioning modern states and new political arrangements single-handedly, bringing about transformations that had defied preceding generations. If some historical continuity is acknowledged in the best accounts – continuity with nineteenth-century reforms – it is widely agreed that something extraordinary was taking place under the new rulers, that something more fundamental than reform was indeed unfolding. This book should help make clear that, more than the new rulers, it was the preceding revolutions that were responsible for the radical reorientation to politics, institutions, religion, and nationality. Without the revolutions, the transformations later would indeed appear to be outside history.

The Ottoman Empire and Iran experienced near-simultaneous constitutional revolutions in the early years of the twentieth century. The present book explains why and how the revolutions happened and what made them constitutional. As part of that explanation, it enquires what the broad spectrum of actors understood by constitutionalism and why they joined the movement. Furthermore, it accounts for why the Ottomans and the successor Turkish republic fared better than Iran in preserving the new system. Its more general ambition is to propose a historically grounded understanding of revolutions. At a time when a wave of largely peaceful uprisings is sweeping the Middle East to bring about fundamental change, movements that have an eye on similar insurrections throughout the world and the region, it is time to take stock of the changing form of revolutions through history.

As an analytical, comparative approach to the Young Turk revolution of 1908, the book draws upon the Iranian constitutional revolution of 1906 to give greater weight to its generalizations, highlight major similarities, and probe deeper into distinctive features of each. The comparisons are carried out in the spirit of “commentary on one another’s character.”¹

¹ Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 4.

The book engages these histories in implicit dialogue between the social sciences, history, and area studies. The hallmark of social sciences is generalization and theory building through comparison and concept formation; history relies at its core on narrative as a superior mode of explanation and displays extreme sensitivity to the sequence of events that unfold through time; area studies is adamant about uniqueness of the object under study and its irreducibility to other contexts. It is apparent that these three approaches are in tension, if not outright contradiction. How can the irreconcilable elements be resolved, and to what benefit? It should not be hard to fathom that if each approach has unique powers in generating valid insights, it will be possible to attain a deeper understanding by drawing upon them all, supposing that their core principles are not violated. Can we proceed comparatively and be concerned with generating robust, general concepts, but remain faithful to complexities of causal narrative, contingency, and agency, and probe deeper into each context in search of its unique characteristics? I can hardly offer a general method, but in this instance I believe that tensions may be reduced by recognizing the shortcomings of each approach and then overcoming them by relying on the strengths of others. This is done by considering these events at the global, regional, and local levels.

Historians are often weary of ahistorical social scientific notions, such as revolution defined as a concept for all times and places, and their sensitivity to context makes them not keen on drawing strong conclusions about revolutions and particular social classes. In that spirit, the present book does not aim at a more precise definition of revolution. Instead, it offers a historically grounded generalization that takes note of revolutions' changing form through time. Placing the historical era at the forefront of analysis, it distinguishes contentious episodes organized under the constitutional rubric after the French Revolution from events under the sway of Bolshevism. The book thus historicizes revolutions by considering the times – and the ideologies associated with those times – as a chief organizing principle. Fine distinctions between political and social revolutions, and between narrow and popular social movements, are less significant here. Assumptions about the tight connection between classes and revolutionary ideologies are also deflated. Instead the book calls for reversing the order by first paying attention to revolutionary programs – historical products of their times – and then looking to the actors that rallied behind them, investigating the actors' reasons for wanting them, and evaluating their capacity to implement them. The popular or narrow base of a movement certainly figures in calculations of actors' capacity, but that effect is not always straightforward. The more popular revolution in Iran lacked, for example, the well-placed actors of the Young Turk revolution, and hence it fared much worse in confronting the monarchy. This is not to argue that it is immaterial if the participants are peasants, or members of the working class, the middle class, the bourgeoisie, or other groups. However, the approach implies that the connection between social classes and *general* ideologies (e.g., constitutionalism, socialism) is more tenuous than generally acknowledged. Naming revolutions after their political

form (constitutional) rather than after the social actors identified a priori by theory (bourgeois) is preferable, for it gives priority to the political over the social, highlights the most general characteristic, and affords a better basis for classification and comparison. In agreement with area specialists, these events are ultimately unique, but their singularity should be arrived at and not taken for granted. Systematic comparison can single out *relevant* particularities, after allowing recognition of general global and regional currents that organized each conflict and gave it a shared form. Generalities and singularities become recognizable only by moving outside the particular setting.

CONSTITUTIONALISM IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

The revolutions in the Ottoman Empire and Iran were continuous with the short-term wave of democratic movements that swept across Russia in 1905, Mexico in 1910, China in 1911, and Russia again in February 1917. These in turn were part of a much broader long-term wave of democratic movements in England, America, and France, a wave that continued with the 1848 revolutions in Europe. To this could be added the Meiji restoration of 1868 in Japan, the Young Ottoman uprising in 1876, the 1881 Urabi revolt in Egypt, and a host of other revolutions and uprisings, successful or not, including the Young movements in Europe.²

These movements had in common their timing – they all took place between the French and Russian revolutions – and this is crucial in understanding their constitutional political form. The temporal juncture of the globe, the ideological “world time,” informed the movements’ political ideals and defined the broad contours of conflict and its processes. Revolutions thus gave birth to globally recognizable distinctive political regimes and institutions associated with that juncture.

Although I insist on the influence of global time, I consider revolutions to be intensely local phenomena. In fact, revolutions are approached here as a series of unrelated, heterogeneous, local conflicts over particular issues. At a distance they

² For waves of democracy, see John Markoff, “The Great Wave of Democracy in Historical Perspective,” Western Societies Occasional Paper #34. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1994; John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 1996); John Markoff, “From Center to Periphery and Back Again: Reflections on the Geography of Democratic Innovation,” in Michael Hanagan and Charles Tilly, eds., *Extending Citizenship, Reconfiguring States* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 229–46; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991); Charles Kurzman, “Waves of Democratization,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 1998, 33 (Spring):42–64. Charles Kurzman, *Democracy Denied, 1905–1915: Intellectuals and the Fate of Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). For neglected Egypt, see Juan R.I. Cole, *Colonialism and Revolution in the Middle East: Social Origins of Egypt’s “Urabi Movement* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1999). Donald Malcom Reid, “The ‘Urabi Revolution and the British Conquest, 1879–1882,” in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, pp. 217–238.

appear like a single, homogeneous event,³ but the singular voice breaks into multiplicity at close inspection. Given the heterogeneity of actors and the disparity of grievances, it is only logical to expect conflict and difference to be roiling under the uniform veneer. Nonetheless, for some brief period, contradictory goals, interests, and messages dissolve to reappear as a single unifying notion. In the interest of unity and sometimes after explicit compromises, a variety of grievances and local revolts become channeled into a single stream and transformed into abstractions acceptable to all. This conjunction of various revolts and the accompanying ideological progression is what distinguishes revolutions from mere rebellions or localized uprisings that do not reach the national stage, and whose demands never attain the intellectualism of hegemonic abstractions.

The often-forgotten early theorists of revolution also insisted on the distinction between revolts and revolutions by pointing to the ideological leap from the particular to the general, from specific, target-oriented revolts to the far broader goals of revolutions.⁴ This insight, and the role accorded to intellectuals, should be taken seriously, although we may go further. If, under some circumstances, local conflicts become national, in the course of revolutions ideologies leap from the national to the international arena. In the process the available choices become surprisingly few – certainly far fewer than if particular demands had developed to generality on their own and without negotiation with global currents.

In fact, the choices are astoundingly limited. For two centuries, the great majority of revolutionary events (successful or not) were either constitutional or of the Bolshevik type. These orientations were neatly marked off temporally.

³ In the search for the “true” revolutionary class, there has been an emerging consensus that no class or group of actors is inherently revolutionary or antirevolutionary. The decision to participate, or how to participate, is an outcome of particular circumstances rather than of any inherent proclivities or teleological tendencies. For Lefebvre and Furet’s thoughts on the issue, see François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 8. See also Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945–1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 23–24; Doug MacAdam and William H. Sewell Jr., “It’s About Time: Temporality in the Study of Social Movements and Revolutions,” in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, eds. Ronald R. Aminzade, Jack A. Goldstone, Doug MacAdam, Elizabeth J. Perry, William H. Sewell Jr., Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

⁴ Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1952); Lyford Edwards, *The Natural History of Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); and George S. Pettee, *The Process of Revolution* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938). This is not to be confused with Tilly’s insightful conclusion about the gradual progression of revolts to revolutions over a broad span of time. For Tilly, as states progressively monopolized means of coercion (or laid claim to such a monopoly), concentrated power in one location, penetrated to the deeper layers of the social, and claimed greater control, they progressively made themselves the natural target of grievances and protests. Revolutions are the most forceful expression of protest against the power wielded by modern states. See Tilly, *European Revolutions*. For a wide-ranging review of literature on revolution, see Jack A. Goldstone, “Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* vol. 4 (2001), pp. 139–187.

The constitutional type was in vogue in the era started by the American and French revolutions and came to an abrupt end with the October Revolution of 1917. “Russia . . . took the place of France as the nation in the vanguard of history,” is how Furet characterized the French Revolution’s fall from grace. This meant that “the French Revolution ceased to be the model for a future that was possible, desirable, hoped for . . . Instead, it became the mother of a real, dated, and duly registered event: October 1917.”⁵ But before France lost its place, it was the central features of that revolutionary model, assisted by its aura of success, that were congealed into master-frames or master templates that traveled from one context to another.⁶ As Anderson notes, “patents are impossible to preserve” on the invented twins of revolution and nationalism that became modular at the end of the eighteenth century.⁷ Yet, if it is surprising that multiple actors may speak in a unified voice even in a single context, it must seem bewildering that actors in disparate times and places across the globe may articulate the same language of revolution.

The historiographic debate of the French Revolution is of help in navigating this puzzle. At the core of this debate is the revaluation of the relationship between the political and the social, or rather, the socioeconomic. It questions the extent to which the political form – in this case the liberal constitutionalism of the French Revolution – was a product of the actions of specific social classes, the bourgeoisie in particular; and whether this or other classes could be endowed with the Hegelian teleological task of bringing their “historic mission” to fruition. In a more general mode, the debate between the Marxists and the revisionists was over whether the political was to be reduced to the socioeconomic, or, alternatively, accorded autonomy.

If indeed the “bourgeois” political form could appear in contexts where capitalism was far from making any headway and the bourgeoisie did not yet exist, as in 1906 Iran; and if emerging social classes other than the bourgeoisie

⁵ Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, pp. 5–6.

⁶ For master template and the related concepts of framing, frame extension, and “movement entrepreneurs,” see David A. Snow, E. Burke Rochford Jr., Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benford, “Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation,” *American Sociological Review* 51:4 (1986), 464–81; David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest,” in Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 133–55; Sidney Tarrow, “Mentalities, Political Cultures, and Collective Action Frames,” in Aldon D. Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 174–202; Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Doug MacAdam and William H. Sewell, Jr., “It’s About Time: Temporality in the Study of Social Movements and Revolutions,” in *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics*, eds. Ronald R. Aminzade, Jack A. Goldstone, Doug MacAdam, Elizabeth J. Perry, William H. Sewell Jr., Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Framing in the context of social movements is an elaboration of Goffman’s classic formulation; see Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York: Harper, 1974).

⁷ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition (London: Verso, 1991), p. 156.

could be the champions of the bourgeois political form, as in the 1876 and 1908 Ottoman Empire (even if it is generously assumed that an Ottoman bourgeoisie existed); or if the bourgeoisie finally threw in its lot with the monarchy to oppose the bourgeois political order, as in 1905 Russia, then the autonomy of constitutional politics from the bourgeoisie and its lack of a historic mission needs to be taken seriously.⁸ Examples beyond France certainly favor the revisionist orientation in this limited sense. Need one invoke socialist revolutions without the working class?

When the model traveled beyond France, it was the politics of the French Revolution that cast a shadow. What became modular was a political form abstracted from social and historical context.⁹ This is not to claim that the French Revolution or the events inspired by it were devoid of social content, or to argue that the bourgeoisie or other social classes had little to do with the revolution's occurrence, sustenance, or results in France. No serious revolution can avoid the social question, but to conclude that the social classes and their projects determined the political form is another matter altogether. Rather, I argue that in the Ottoman Empire and Iran, various social groups and their concerns found expression in a political framework that was external to them.

For the constitutionalists, although the symbols, slogans, and language of the French Revolution occupied a privileged position, an ahistoric model bereft of context was at the forefront of revolutionary consciousness. It was the legacy rather than the historic event that mattered. The legacy hollowed out the experimentations, improvisations, and hesitations of its making and inserted itself into the teleological march of the inevitable, be this the triumph of liberty, rationality, an economic system, or something else. The later constitutionalists were positively uninterested in knowing that the meaning of the constitution in its modern form was fixed only in the course of the revolution,¹⁰ or that the French Assembly began as a traditional and undemocratic council of estates that was yet to assume representative character and legislative powers, or that it took the revolution a few years before it could utter the words "old regime." The French Revolution improvised and wrote its own script, with some help from

⁸ The revisionists also asked the question with respect to France, where "bourgeois" revolution happened in an agrarian setting with minimal capitalist development. For a sophisticated argument about the connection between bourgeoisie and democracy, see Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

⁹ A critical social program of the French Revolution was the abolition of feudalism, even though the meaning of the term was contested. For one of the latest and most important contributions to this issue, see John Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords and Legislators in the French Revolution* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

¹⁰ Keith M. Baker, "Constitution," in *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, eds. François Furet and Mona Ozouf (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Ozouf is less ambivalent about revolution's intentions from very early on: "But even if one is willing to concede that the French Revolution nursed illusions of restoration in its earliest days, these dreams were extremely short lived. From the first the Revolution thought of itself as breaking all historical molds." Mona Ozouf, "Revolution," *Critical Dictionary*, p. 809.

Britain and America. For the constitutionalists, it was the modern political culture – the legacy – that mattered the most, and this turned all constitutional polities in Europe into valid examples. Still, France derived its intellectual resonance from being the first European site of popular sovereignty, modern revolution, and theoretical and institutional challenge to the methods and privileges of monarchy.

The French Revolution and the Russian Revolution of 1917 were thus transitional paradigms that effected radical ruptures in global history. Their actors stepped into unknown and unknowable futures. This uncertainty was lost to later emulators who read results back into beginnings, and attributed them to the earliest intentions of real or imaginary actors. Modular models were stripped of history and circumstance, ready for adoption by the enthusiast.¹¹

It is by separating the two events that a historicized notion emerges. At one level, their differences were obvious – one is associated with capitalism and the other with socialism; one consolidated private property and the other abolished it.¹² Yet, as different as their social programs were, their politics set them apart in a more fundamental way. Breaking down the constitutional type into its basic constituent parts will help to differentiate them. The transition to a constitutional polity entailed a redefinition of the legislative and the executive, the separation of the two,¹³ and the creation of a delicate and difficult-to-achieve balance. It entailed the transfer of sovereignty from the monarch to the nation, giving the latter the right to decide its future through its own independent agency and rationality. The rules of the political game were set down in written constitutions. Constitutional polities themselves were differentiated by the content of constitutions and their modes of defining sovereignty, the kind and number of governmental branches and subdivisions, the degree of power and oversight of each branch and institution, the franchise and definition of nation, and the like. Theoretically and practically, the monarchs could survive revolution but were reduced to having mere ceremonial functions, or prevailed with minimal loss of power.

In contrast, for Bolshevik-type events, revolution meant uniting the separated legislative and executive into one. It also meant the complete transfer of sovereignty from the nation (or monarchy, if it still happened to be intact) to a class far less inclusive than the nation but with the purported greatest degree of generalized interest. In practice, sovereignty was exercised through a single, undivided political party.

¹¹ At some moments, in their indeterminacy, actors in “subjective time” produce new models that shift the paradigms of action and, as Ermakoff points out, create new “objective times” of revolution. These objective times are products of indeterminacies, hesitations, false starts, and reversals of subjective times that are selectively forgotten by the emulators. For a discussion of objective and subjective times, see Ivan Ermakoff, “On the Time of Revolutionary Conjunctions,” 33rd annual Social Science History Association meeting, October 2008.

¹² William H. Sewell, Jr. 1985. “Ideologies and Social Revolutions: Reflections on the French Case,” *Journal of Modern History* 57, 1:57–85.

¹³ I am ignoring the place of judiciary, which detracts from our major concerns here.

The actual process of the French Revolution, as opposed to its legacy, makes my points on two counts: first, as a transition point between the old and new, and second, as an experiment in creating a new legislative and executive, and balancing the two. As is well known, the revolution started with a conflict between the nobility and the crown over taxation and resulted in the invoking of tradition and the recalling of the Estates-General, a body that had not met since 1614. In the course of events that followed, the Estates-General was transformed into the National Assembly, into the National Constituent Assembly, and into the National Convention, undergoing a transformation from a body composed of the three traditional estates into one that represented the nation. This body was to give itself the power to write the Declaration of the Rights of Man and various versions of the constitution, and to abolish feudalism and the monarchy and declare a republic. Along the way it experimented with various ways of separating the legislative from the executive.¹⁴ How far the Reign of Terror and the Jacobin dictatorship tarnished its liberal reputation has been the subject of much controversy. Whether it was an overreaction to a real necessity, a contingency, or an organically related and logical culmination of the thought and political processes of the democratic revolution are issues beyond our concern. Suffice it to say that even at the height of the Terror, when the constitution was suspended and terror was the order of the day, the Convention, however manipulated and abused, continued operations. And although the constitution was put aside temporarily, as Woloch has noted, “the legislature remained the sole source and interpreter of [the] law.”¹⁵ In addition, “the committee [of Public Safety]’s virtually dictatorial powers . . . derived from a monthly ritual in which it reported to the Convention and received a new mandate. What the Convention granted with regularity month after month it could in fact withhold. The Robespierrists were ultimately overthrown in Thermidor not by an armed coup, but by the Convention’s sudden decision to oust them.”¹⁶ The Robespierrists lacked a permanent theory of uniting the legislative and executive; and when they nearly united the two in practice, they did so by pointing to war and internal threats. However true or exaggerated their claims, it could only be temporary. Lasting less than a year, the extremists gave way to the Thermidorian regime. Yet, still entangled with striking the right

¹⁴ The Estates-General met at Versailles in May 1789 after the Assembly of Notables refused to cooperate with the government’s reforms for more taxation. Although a radicalizing mood swept the country in the interim, the Estates-General declared itself the National Assembly after the disputes that arose over the voting procedure. The Third Estate argument prevailed; its 1,200 members were to vote as individuals and not along traditional lines as three distinct estates. By allowing itself the right to draw up the constitution, it then transformed itself into the National Constituent Assembly, and then, in September 1792, into the National Convention that proclaimed the abolition of the monarchy and inaugurated the Republic.

¹⁵ Isser Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789–1820s* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994), p. 40.

¹⁶ Woloch, *The New Regime*, p. 43.

balance between the executive and legislative, that regime's failure to reach stability delivered it into Napoleon's hands.

For a good part of the twentieth century, the popular and social scientific conception of revolution was colored by the events in the Russia of 1917. Associated with violent and permanent seizure of the state executive organs, this kind of revolution overshadowed the constitutional type of transformation, which looked reformist at best in retrospect. The encyclopedias and dictionaries predating 1917, however, give us a different impression. Here revolutions were described as the forcible substitution of a new form of government, by the old government's subjects, that entailed a fundamental change in structure and constitution that was sudden and violent and accompanied by rapid and significant transformation of society. Nowhere before 1917 does one come across violent seizure of the state executive organs on a permanent basis as the yardstick by which revolutions may be judged a success.

A recent ambitious analysis of revolutions during the Cold War era by Goodwin shows the intellectual hold of the Bolshevik legacy. Goodwin defines "a revolutionary movement . . . as that type of social movement which attempts to overthrow, supplant, and/or fundamentally transform state power." To this he adds, "when revolutionaries fail to seize power, we may speak of a failed revolution."¹⁷ By failing to seize power, Goodwin means failing to seize state power, the latter defined as "those core administrative, policing, and military organizations, more or less coordinated by an executive authority, that extract resources from and administer and rule (through violence if necessary) a territorially defined national society . . . As Lenin put it, by 'state' or 'apparatus of government' is meant, first of all, the standing army, police and officialdom."¹⁸ Although this is a perfectly good definition for the period under consideration, it fails us in the pre-Bolshevik era. Constitutionals as a rule did not aim at seizing executive power, and if they did, it was not to monopolize it permanently but on an interim basis, until it could be transferred to an independent executive. Revolutions are not timeless categories with fixed definitions suitable for all eras.

The 1917 revolution raised the stakes tremendously. It was a model in negotiation with constitutionalism that broke from it gradually and reluctantly, as the French revolution had broken from premodern uprisings. For later generations, it signified a different type of regime change: the sudden seizure of the executive and the overthrow of the entire structure of the old regime. Yet the actual, not the legendary, 1917 shared the earlier constitutional processes. Only a final decisive moment transformed the model of revolution, and its definition.

¹⁷ Jeffrey Goodwin, "Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements," *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization*, Thomas Janoski, Robert R. Alford, Alexander M. Hicks, Mildred A. Schwartz (eds.) (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 404-422 (quote from p. 405). See also Jeffrey Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 9-10.

¹⁸ Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, p. 11.

The tremendous influence of the French Revolution over Russia in 1905 and especially 1917 is too well known to be in need of commentary.¹⁹ But 1917 as an inventive moment deviated from 1789 when it introduced elements that made it uniquely Bolshevik. These novelties were later read back into the event as if they had been its principal purpose from the start by the activist intent on emulating the results.

In Trotsky's memorable phrase, 1905 was a dress rehearsal for 1917. The statement intimates that the first event, whose goal was a constituent assembly and a written constitution – and thus was modeled after the French – came to be the inspiration for a revolution that was itself a trend-setter. This raises the question of the extent to which 1917 was different from 1905. A more detailed look at 1917 is warranted to establish the difference and demonstrate the dynamics of a transitional case that heralded a new era of revolutions.

In 1917 there were two revolutions in one, February and October. The February revolution came in the context of a downturn in Russia's military fortune during World War I. Combined with grave political mistakes at the domestic front, the crisis led to serious disputes between the deputies to the Fourth Duma and the government. The latter, a remnant of the 1905 revolution, was an institution badly weakened. In the aftermath of 1905 revolution, the autocracy had drastically reduced the Duma's legislative powers and narrowed the franchise substantially. Despite this, in the midst of the military and political crisis of late 1916, the Fourth Duma could still demand a serious enough revival of its powers to prompt the tsar to order its dissolution and postpone elections for a year.²⁰ This crisis coincided with protests on the international Women's Day on 23 February 1917, which escalated to workers' protests and ended in a widespread mutiny of the army in Petrograd on 26–27 February. By 2 March, the Petrograd Soviet (also a remnant of 1905) had been revived, the Duma had annulled the government and appointed the provisional government, and the tsar had abdicated.²¹ The provisional government was formed in anticipation of the elections to the Fifth Duma, which was widely expected to be the most representative and powerful of all the legislative assemblies Russia had seen so far. The Petrograd Soviet, however, refused to participate in the Duma-appointed cabinet, and on 1 March issued the famous Order No. 1 that gave it substantial control over the rank and file of the military, among other powers. Thus, with the tsar's abdication (on 2 March; it took another six months for the republic to be declared on 1 September), the Russian state came into de facto possession of two legislative and two executive organs. The conflict now moved

¹⁹ On this relation see Dmitry Shlapentokh, "The French Revolution in Russian Intellectual Thought, 1789–1922," in *The Global Ramifications of the French Revolution*, eds. Joseph Klaits and Michael H. Haltzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 72–88; Dmitry Shlapentokh, *The French Revolution in Russian Intellectual and Political Life, 1789–1922*, PhD dissertation (University of Chicago, Department of History, 1988); and Keep, John, "1917: The Tyranny of Paris Over Petrograd," *Soviet Studies* 20, No. 1 (July 1968):22–35.

²⁰ Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991), pp. 255–271.

²¹ Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 278–280, 286–289.

to that between the provisional government and the Soviets; formally and by agreement, however, their relation was to be mutually reinforcing and cooperative. These arrangements inaugurated the well-known dual sovereignty period. It was expected that general elections, the establishment of the constituent assembly, the writing of the new constitution, and the appointment of a new government through the legislature would resolve the situation.²² Thus came the freest period in Russian history, surpassing even the Days of Freedom in 1905.²³

This was also the period of almost complete hegemony of the socialists, but not only within the Soviets; by the beginning of July the socialist Kerensky had risen to the helm of the provisional government and the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) had received ministerial appointments. Furthermore, with the support that the Soviets, the other half of the government, received from the socialist parties, it was logical for the future government and the Duma to implement the socialist program of reform. By September 1917, Russia was no longer the kind of monarchy it had been in 1905; the political agenda had taken a sure turn toward socialism and the fortunes of the political parties on the left had prospered significantly. Nonetheless, nothing in the February Revolution's methods of politics and political goals had set it apart from other constitutional revolutions, including 1905. There were only expectations of the greater liberalism of the future Duma and its socialist, more radical reformist agenda.²⁴ The political framework of constitutionalism, in this and in other contexts, was amenable to a wide range of social programs. Hence my insistence that the crucial difference between the two revolutions was their political form; this is not to trivialize the differences in social programs, but to argue that as different as they were, the social programs were amenable to either of the two political regimes.

Considering that the originality of 1917 is at issue here, it may then come as a surprise that the October revolution too claimed nothing other than sanctity of the constituent assembly. The Bolshevik party, after a first aborted attempt at takeover in July 1917,²⁵ used the Soviets as a front to stage a successful coup on the night of 24–25 October, capture the government executive organs, and oust the provisional government.²⁶ Thus came to an end the precarious dual

²² Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 289, 296, 304–307, 316–317, 323. Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution, 1917–1932* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 34–43.

²³ Robert Service, "Introduction" in Lenin, V.I., *The State and Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. xiii.

²⁴ As Fitzpatrick notes, "In February 1917, the autocracy collapsed in the face of popular demonstrations and the withdrawal of elite support for the regime. In the euphoria of revolution, political solutions seemed easy. Russia's future form of government would, of course, be democratic." Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, p. 34.

²⁵ Fitzpatrick has a different interpretation of this event and does not attribute the July uprising to the Bolsheviks and Lenin, while Pipes argues that it was in fact instigated by Lenin and the reason it did not culminate in a full-fledged coup was because Lenin lost his nerve. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 402, 419, 423; Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 50–52.

²⁶ Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 427, 482–486, 489, 491.

government. When the legality of the act was repeatedly protested by the Mensheviks and the SRs,²⁷ the Bolshevik party tempered serious opposition by proclaiming its loyalty to the constituent assembly and to the elections that had been planned by the dual government for 12 November. In fact, after the coup, the Bolsheviks proclaimed themselves “the Assembly’s champion” and the only party that could save it from a counterrevolution by the right (imagined or real)²⁸ – thus legitimating the takeover in support of the constitutional program of the February Revolution.²⁹ Meanwhile, they consolidated control over the executive.³⁰ More significantly, when the 12 November elections’ results proved contrary to Bolshevik expectations and they emerged as a weak minority, they took the drastic measure of dissolving the Assembly after its first meeting on 5 January 1918.³¹

With this act, a single party came to collapse the legislative and the executive and to dominate both in the name of a class.³² This political intervention was the most original quality of the Bolshevik revolution and what definitively marked it off from the previous generation of revolutions. The theoretical justification came from the notion of the “dictatorship of the proletariat,” the term used by Engels in the introduction to Marx’s 1871 essay on the Paris Commune (itself modeled after the Commune of the French Revolution). Here Marx had praised the Commune for being “a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.”³³ Lenin, in explicit reference to the essay, developed the concept in his *The State and Revolution*, published in 1918. In a chapter

²⁷ Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 56–58.

²⁸ For a differing opinion on the intentions of Kornilov and his attempt at takeover, see Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 439–463. The latter considers the affair to be a “comedy of errors” and a result of Kerensky’s misjudgments. For a contrasting view that takes the notion of a planned counterrevolution from the right seriously, see Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 52–54.

²⁹ Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 493, 500–501, 506, 537.

³⁰ Although the Bolsheviks had taken power under the slogan “all power to the Soviets,” in place of transferring power to the Central Executive Committee of the Soviets (*Ispolkom*), which would have been the logical choice to replace the provisional government, they refused to share power with other political parties and instead granted this power to the new Council of People’s Commissars, with at first a majority, and then exclusively, Bolshevik membership. Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 58–59. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 520–533.

³¹ The Bolsheviks had won only 175 out of 715 seats, and even after including their close collaborators, the left SRs, they had come to capture at most 25 percent of the votes and 30 percent of the seats. The SRs, on the other hand, had captured 40 percent of the vote by themselves, not counting the Mensheviks and other parties with anti-Bolshevik proclivities. Although Pipes and Fitzpatrick present very similar numbers, their interpretation of them and breakdown of results is very different. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 541–542; Fitzpatrick, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 59–60. After citing various excuses about the shifting class nature of politics and the outbreak of counterrevolution since the October coup, despite the absolute hegemony of the socialist parties over the newly elected Duma, the Bolsheviks dissolved the assembly after its first meeting on January 5, 1918. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 545–547, 550–556.

³² And furthermore it made all appointments to the three branches itself. Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, pp. 507–509.

³³ Karl Marx, “The Civil War in France,” in *Marx-Engels Reader, Second Edition*, Robert C. Tucker (ed.) (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1978), p. 632 (for Engels, see p. 629).

titled “The Eradication of Parliamentarianism” he called for removing “the division of labor between the legislative and the executive.”³⁴ Our concern here is not the centrality of this idea to Marx’s oeuvre, but its use for an original reworking of the revolutionary model in practice. Of greater concern was that all the major Russian socialist parties were committed to the constitutional political program, and it was only the Bolsheviks, under Lenin’s leadership, that endowed socialism with a new revolutionary strategy: a party composed of disciplined cadres, single-mindedly intent on capturing executive power through a sudden, coup-like overthrow, in the name of a class, with the aim of collapsing governmental branches into one and in need neither of a parliament nor of legitimacy from the nation.

This has led many to call the Bolsheviks heirs to the Jacobin tradition.³⁵ The revisionist school of the French Revolution in particular has been in favor of this interpretation.³⁶ For the revisionists, the inherently illiberal French Revolution found its ultimate expression in the undemocratic revolution spearheaded by the Bolsheviks.³⁷ It is clear that the disagreement stems partly from a lack of clarity about the term Jacobin. If “Jacobin” means a proclivity to dictatorial ways by a political party, and to physical elimination of rivals in the name of revolution and unity, then perhaps Jacobinism did set a new standard that many found worth emulating. But the analogy sounds anachronistic if it collapses a critical difference between the French revolutionary government and the Bolshevik revolution. Although the Committee of Public Safety came to act as if it were the executive arm of the government, over which the Jacobins held total control, it operated from within the legislature;³⁸ and the Jacobins never articulated a theoretical justification for uniting the legislative and executive. This difference was critical.

The implication of the argument is that revolutionary models are political constructions naturalized in different historical epochs. They are frames within

³⁴ V. I. Lenin, *The State and Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 43. “The Commune [Marx wrote] had to be not a parliamentary but a working institution passing and executing laws at the same time . . .” (p. 41).

³⁵ Pipes, *Russian Revolution*, p. 507. The issue becomes even more complicated when in 1904, prior to the 1905 Revolution, Lenin himself explicitly identified with that tradition.

³⁶ For the debates on the Terror and its relatively unmediated, direct link to the modern revolutionary culture, see Furet, *Interpreting*, pp. 164–204. A good part of the *Critical Dictionary* is devoted to this issue; see in particular Furet’s entries under “Jacobinism,” “Terror,” and “Revolutionary Government,” as well as “Paris Commune” by Patrice Gueniffy. Furet and Ozouf, *Critical Dictionary*.

³⁷ For a riveting critique of this position, see Isser Woloch, “Review: On the Latent Illiberalism of the French Revolution, Review of *A Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*” by François Furet and Mona Ozouf; *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 95, No. 5. (Dec. 1990), pp. 1452–1470. See also Michel Vovelle, “1789–1911: The Game of Analogies,” *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Vol. 4: *The Terror*, Keith Michael Baker (ed.) (Oxford: Pergamon, 1994), pp. 349–378. Claude LeFort, *Complications: Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

³⁸ As Furet put it, “the Convention was the unique center of government, and the Committee of Public Safety, the true organ of dictatorship, was not a distinct executive power but simply a committee of the Convention, a part of that body and therefore identified with it.” *Critical Dictionary*, p. 554.

which the public organizes to oppose the state. More significant than the social actors is the model in vogue. The transition between constitutionalism and Bolshevism, the historicized and constructivist notions of politics, can be seen perhaps most clearly in China – one of the best examples, and certainly the most significant demonstration, of this transition, as argued by Maurice Meisner. We learn, for example, that in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, which led up to the revolution of 1911, an event that gave China a constitution and a republic, the influence of the French Revolution on the Chinese intelligentsia was tremendous. Furthermore, it was the political and not the social interpretation of the French Revolution that held sway. Frustration at the pace of reforms under the monarchy had turned activists to the political message of the French revolution, instilling in them the hope of creating a political framework suitable to reforms, while the social aspect, the bourgeois revolution, had remained unappealing. However, with 1911's failure to deliver on its promises and the appearance of the Bolshevik revolution, matters began to change:

Now it was of course the Bolshevik example rather than the French one that assumed immediate political relevance. Yet the French Revolution remained very much a part of the historical consciousness of radical Chinese intellectuals drawn to the October Revolution in Russia. They frequently drew parallels between the two great upheavals, and indeed, the French Revolution served for a time as the standard by which to measure the significance of revolutionary events in Russia Yet the French Revolution as a political model faded into insignificance as the Chinese Communist movement developed in the 1920s and after. In the early 1920s the leaders of the new party looked to the Bolshevik Revolution as the socialist example for China to emulate.³⁹

It was certainly not the changed actors, problems, or the transformed Chinese social structure that had prompted the move from constitutionalism to Bolshevism in such a short time. It was rather the emergence of a new global alternative – later localized as Maoism – that came to be deemed as the solution to China's problems.

THE GLOBAL, THE REGIONAL, AND THE LOCAL

The Synchronizing Global

Recent emphasis on globalization has certainly made us more aware of the material and nonmaterial flows and linkages in an increasingly interconnected and shrinking world. Yet the world has been an interconnected place for a very long time. The patterns of economic flow, trade, and the consequent division of labor, technological transfers, organizational learning and implantation,

³⁹ Maurice J. Meisner, "The French Revolution and Chinese Socialism," in *Global Ramifications*, pp. 177–194 at pp. 182, 185. With the Bolshevik Revolution the class question was introduced into the revolutionary imagination; the connection between Chinese Communism and French Revolution became the Paris Commune of 1871, with Lenin's analysis of the Commune constituting the source for that understanding. Meisner, "Chinese Socialism," pp. 188, 191–192.

alliance-making and diplomacy, warfare, conquest, empire-building, emergence of capitalism, colonialism, cultural, ideological, linguistic, religious flows, the press and print, and migrations by peoples, not to mention the movements of germs, biological species, and crops, are just some of the reasons for our global awareness before the advent of the twentieth century.⁴⁰

Yet historical awareness would require taking note of the “thickening and tightening” of the human web through time. This process acquired a new intensity in the course of the long nineteenth century.⁴¹ Emerging global history shows a greater reluctance to hold the economic and material to be more important than all other influences; is more attuned to the interplay and overlap of multiple networks through which flows occur; lays greater emphasis on the unevenness of flows and their multicentered nature; and is more interested in interaction and the hybrid forms generated during the process. It is also sensitive to context, where “mere parallels become a powerful way of recognizing a more fundamental interconnectedness.”⁴²

Beyond ideological influences, there were other global influences. The geopolitical pressures brought by the rivalry of world powers, especially Britain and Russia, placed the Iranian state in perpetual fear of colonial domination by Britain or of Russian expansion from the north. On the other hand, the Ottoman state in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, after witnessing a steady shrinking of borders for at least two centuries, faced the threat of breakdown of the multiethnic empire. The possibility of European (especially Russian) encroachment, or of the internal rebellion of non-Muslims in the Balkans, in areas that could turn into independent states with assistance from neighboring states, and the prospect of colonization of the empire’s Arab lands, were not to be taken lightly.

In response to internal and especially to external pressures, both states engaged in defensive reforms for a good part of the nineteenth century. Bayly has described these as self-strengthening efforts throughout the non-European world set in motion by geopolitical pressures. The states, financially strained, were struggling to maintain political independence in the age of colonial rivalry and expansion, with the Ottoman Empire’s prospects looking particularly grim in the age of nationalism. Frustrated by the slow pace and irresoluteness of reforms,

⁴⁰ Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Vol. 1: A History of Power From the Beginning to A.D. 1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, 990–1992*, Revised Edition (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992); Immanuel Wallerstein, *Modern World System I–II* (New York: Academic Press, 1974–1980); Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250–1350* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴¹ C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004). John R. McNeill and William H. McNeill, *The Human Web: A Bird’s-Eye View of World History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003); Raymond Grew, “Finding Frontiers in Historical Research on Globalization,” in *Frontiers in Globalization Research: Theoretical and Methodological Approaches* (New York: Springer, 2007).

⁴² Grew, “Frontiers,” p. 275.

the constitutional revolutionaries tried to bring to a full conclusion what had been begun by the old regime. To revamp the state and bring greater centralization, they looked to wholehearted adoption of European political and administrative frameworks, not piecemeal reforms. There was no need for a Tocqueville to recover the revolutions' continuities with the old regime reforms at some future date;⁴³ the revolutionaries proudly professed continuity with that tradition.

Our analysis of the two revolutions proceeds at the global, regional, and local levels of abstraction:

- Global diffusion of constitutionalism prompted similar demands and led to the creation of comparable institutions in Iran and the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, the struggles that were waged under the constitutional rubric created parallel revolutionary dynamics for the two. These features were shared globally.
- Regionally, similar geopolitical challenges turned constitutionalism into hopeful doctrines of self-strengthening. Constitutionalism did not merely serve liberal political ends, but was turned into a "scientific" doctrine of state strength through rational administrative transformation. Another shared feature was negotiating global constitutionalism with similar religious and cultural traditions to broaden its appeal to (Muslim) Ottoman and Iranian publics along highly similar lines. The new meanings that constitutionalism was endowed with as a result of these double transformations, and the forms of action this constitutionalism engendered, highlighted its regional peculiarities.
- At the local level of analysis, Iran and the Ottoman Empire had distinct population makeups and, more important, were quite different institutionally. The presence of certain ideological strands further set them apart. Together, these differences were responsible for the divergent outcomes of the revolutions. The more institutionalized setting of the Ottoman Empire, its broader middle class, and the latter's unique positioning within the army and the administration, were strong advantages for Ottoman constitutionalism. These peculiar features allowed Ottoman constitutionalism to withstand strong local and international challenges, challenges that proved overwhelming in Iran. Furthermore, the politically charged ethno-religious context of the Ottoman Empire had raised expectations about constitutionalism's ability to energize Ottomanism and recast it as a new national bond. Mobilization around this goal, and the debates and actions it prompted over centralization and decentralization, or assimilation against autonomy, endowed the Ottoman revolution with a different dynamic. In the more populist revolution in Iran, the greater salience of the monarch-centered doctrine of the Circle of

⁴³ The elements of continuity that Tocqueville witnessed between the old and revolutionary regimes were, first and foremost, centralization, and then democratic participation. Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* (New York: Anchor Books, 1955). See also Furet, *Interpreting*, pp. 132–163. The revolutionaries in the two contexts viewed the earlier reforms in their own societies as centralization attempts and they saw themselves as finishing off what had started under the old regimes.

Justice, and its influence on public forms of action, set the two contexts further apart. Finally, although the agency of participants played decisive roles in each, its form of operations and effect were different in each.

It is by keeping all three levels in mind – the global, regional, and national – that we can move beyond constitutionalism as simple ideological diffusion.

Globalization has highlighted emergent uniformities throughout the world; and here we can indeed point to similar patterns generated by the modular constitutional model in terms of setting of goals, processes, and results. The actors, employing the language of liberty, equality, and fraternity, agitated for political regimes with distinctive legislative and executive spheres, popular sovereignty, representative assemblies, and written constitutions.

Although similarities may be more readily discerned from goals and outcomes, the parallel dynamics of constitutional revolutionary struggles were also owed to global diffusion. Without thought of seizing the state executive organs, these revolutions had a sensibility different from that of Bolshevik-type events. The latter raised the stakes tremendously and dated victory from the time of the capture of the executive. Constitutional revolutionaries had an easier route to power, and celebrated their victory while the old regimes still retained a good part, if not all, of the executive. Contrary to expectations, concessions made by the old regimes heightened social tensions by providing legal channels for the expression of pent-up frustrations. In this period of respite, civil societies or public spheres sprang up as if overnight. Formerly clandestine and illicit opposition forces gained momentum, legitimacy, and popularity, and some became political parties in the making. The conflicts of the old society found voice in the parliaments, the press, the parties, the associations, and in gatherings and rallies, both large and small. Such venues became places to press for political and social reform, sometimes of a radical nature. The Ottomans and Iranians certainly shared these dynamics. The French Revolution, the Russia of 1905 during its Days of Freedom, and the Russia of 1917 between February and October, shared it with them. However, it was absent in revolutions that unfolded in the shadow of 1917 and operated under the logic of all-or-nothing internal war.⁴⁴

Monarchical concessions for constitutional polities had little clarity about the terms of compromise. The immense ambiguity surrounding the set-up of a new legislature, the recasting of the executive, the transfer of sovereignty, and the conduct of elections, allowed a wide range of possibilities. The global models themselves ranged from the weak Japanese and German legislatures to the powerful centralized French and *laissez faire* British models. The new regimes did not feel restricted to these possibilities either. There thus began a struggle over the meaning of compromise and over creating a stable balance between the executive and legislature. The ambiguity was fodder for political conflict; its

⁴⁴ Although many revolutions are preceded by a period of political reform, their period of “dual sovereignty” is not commensurate with the legal period under a constitutional regime that legitimizes the opposition by granting it a legal status.

fluidity was also a chance for actors to fix the political contours at the founding moment with an eye on molding them to their own advantage.

That the monarchies still retained a good deal of power made the new power-sharing arrangements inherently unstable from the beginning. Given the old regime's resistance to radical reforms, the revolutionaries resorted to extra-legal methods to intimidate opponents into submission. In the Ottoman Empire and Iran the instabilities culminated in a counterrevolution that was resolved by placing revolutionaries in tighter control of affairs. But even then, it should be emphasized, they prevailed in the name of the nation and were without a mandate to fuse the legislative and executive into one. No state that called itself constitutional had collapsed the two on a permanent basis.

This period witnessed contentious struggles between the legislative, the executive, and the monarchy. These were times to define the power of the legislature, the relation of lower and upper houses, and the other bodies that could initiate or block legislation. These were times for endless confrontations with the executive, ministerial dismissals, and the fall of governments. Similarly, these were times for struggle over the authorship, content, amendment, and interpretation of the constitution, and for fights over the franchise. The nature of sovereignty and the contractual relationship between the ruler, the state, and the citizens were being reestablished. Even the prior existence of a written constitution, as in the Ottoman Empire, did not alter the confrontations in any fundamental way. The constitutional revolutionaries' emphasis on rationality and their anti-privilege stance were some other key areas of conflict, especially as they formally acknowledged the entrance of the public into politics beyond the elite. When conflicts flared into violence, they revealed the constitutionalists' uneasy attitude toward violence: encouraging violence contradicted the spirit and letter of the law; abstaining from it left matters in the hands of adversaries. It was indeed difficult, not to say a contradiction, to be both a constitutionalist and a revolutionary. One derived legitimacy from respect for the law, community consensus, stability, and continuity, while the other owed its legitimacy to itself – the act of revolution and its spirit, without which there would not have been a constitution. The period was thus rife with paradox.

However, pointing to uniformities generated by revolutionary modular forms (or master frames) does not take us much beyond a one-way flow of institutions or ideas.⁴⁵ The Ottoman and Iranian constitutional structures were products of

⁴⁵ John W. Meyer, "The Changing Cultural Content of the Nation-State: A World Society Perspective," in *State/Culture: State Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. G. Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 123–143; John W. Meyer, John Boli, George Thomas, Francisco Ramirez, "World Society and the Nation-State," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 103, no. 1 (1997), pp. 144–181; John Boli, "World Polity Sources of Expanding State Authority in National Constitutions, 1870–1970," *Institutional Structure: Constituting State, Society, and the Individual*, G. Thomas, ed. (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1987), pp. 71–91; John Boli-Bennett, "The Ideology of Expanding State Authority in National Constitutions, 1870–1970," in *National Development and the World System: Educational, Economic, and Political*

negotiation with the global model, and a hybrid result of interaction, absorption, and adaptation to regional and local exigencies. It is to these that we now turn.

The Descent to the Regional

The uniformity-imposing modular forms appeared in contexts that were inherently different culturally, socially, economically, and politically. In this colorful and complicated scenery, the master frames interacted with myriad actors and social structural features to result in unique synthesis. Coming to terms with these transformations requires interpretative engagement with the major ideologies, wants, interests, and understandings of the primary social actors, while not losing sight of social structural features, chief among them the state. Chatterjee's engagement with Anderson over another modular form – nationalism – is instructive here. Even if the discourse of Indian nationalism conformed to abstract outlines (popular sovereignty, patriotism, citizenship, grand narratives of the nation, and so on), its content, meaning, and practice was an outcome of negotiation with the Indian context; the agency and creativity of actors together with resources on the ground turned generic nationalism into an original and unique Indian phenomenon.⁴⁶

At the regional level, one prominent feature shared by Iranians and Ottomans was that they were not colonized – a rarity by contemporary global standards – but were subjected to intense geopolitical pressures. Furthermore, they shared a history of defensive reforms and significant cultural, religious, and political features.

The Young Ottoman movement, the Young Turks, and contemporary Iranian reformers all associated constitutionalism with strength. The Young Turks, by which I principally mean the Committee of Union and Progress, were the best representatives of this thinking. The search for self-strengthening ways and methods was general throughout the non-European world, and this association for radical reformers was not unusual. The question that Yen Fu, an influential Chinese intellectual steeped in Enlightenment thought, asked – “What was the secret of Western wealth and power?” – had animated many outside Europe for the same reasons.⁴⁷ The intelligentsia consistently made a significant association: all vibrant and strong polities shared one thing in common: parliamentarianism. If these advocates of constitutionalism identified with a stream of past reformist movements that had self-strengthening and centralization, but not liberalism, as their main goal, the identification of the new generation with the past reformers was not trivial. Constitutionalism was understood as a tool for

Change, 1950–1970, J. W. Meyer and M. T. Hannan, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁴⁶ Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post Colonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁴⁷ Benjamin Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power, Yen Fu and the West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), p. 29. The Sino-Japanese War began what the Russo-Japanese War was to do later on a grander scale; *ibid.*, pp. 42–43.

self-strengthening and regeneration, features that took precedence over all the other aspects of this discourse. The Russo-Japanese war was a magical confirmation of their arguments: a Great Power that had failed to implement the political framework of the other European powers – even against the wishes of its public – was decisively and embarrassingly defeated by a small Asian nation that had made this transformation. With this spectacular event, constitutionalism's reputation as a purveyor of strength was confirmed beyond doubt.⁴⁸

The association had a profound implication. The obsession with self-strengthening did not come entirely at the expense of liberal principles such as public sovereignty, representation, freedom of expression, or other features. These were integral to the constitutional discourse and could not be simply brushed aside, but statism cast its shadow over them.⁴⁹ Liberalism was thus a byproduct, a consequence of adopting the constitutional discourse, not the other way around. Furthermore, the constitutionalists did not hail from the elite (although this was more true of the Ottomans than the Iranians) and were ardent advocates of broadening politics beyond the traditional elites. A major component of this desire, especially for the Young Turks, was opening avenues of mobility. These wants were combined with a strong antiauthoritarian current that ran through these movements. In the final analysis, it was more the rational, merit-based qualities of modern administrative systems – states that all happened to be constitutional – that appealed to them. This regional interpretation was of immense consequence.

The intelligentsia also played an enormous role in wedding the global discourse to the local language of religion and politics. A glaring achievement of the reformist circles was to broaden constitutionalism's appeal by recovering its forgotten Islamic roots. This happened first and foremost by the linking of the social contract, constitutionalism, legislative assembly, and representation and national sovereignty, with the Islamic traditions of consultation and investiture. The inventive and sophisticated undertaking became hegemonic with time, including among clerical circles. If there were serious religious challenges to it, they came well after the assemblies had received the clerics' legitimizing blessing.

⁴⁸ Ivar Spector, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962). Renee Worringer, "'Sick Man of Europe' or 'Japan of the Near East'?: Constructing Ottoman Modernity in the Hamidian and Young Turk Eras," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 36, No. 2 (May 2004), pp. 207–230. Selçuk Esenbel, "Japan's Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900–1945," in *American Historical Review* Vol. 109, No. 4 (October 2004), pp. 1140–1170. Roxane Haag-Higuchi, "A Topos and Its Dissolution: Japan in Some 20th-Century Iranian Texts," *Iranian Studies* Vol. 29, No. 1–2 (1996), pp. 71–83; Anja Pistor-Hatam, "Progress and Civilization in Nineteenth Century Japan: The Far Eastern State As a Model for Modernization," *Iranian Studies* Vol. 29, No. 1–2 (1996), pp. 111–126.

⁴⁹ I find Schwartz's discussion of Yen Fu illuminating here, but I have in mind the Young Turks who were concerned with very similar Western sources, far more than the Iranian intellectuals whose statism was less rationalized on intellectual grounds. Schwartz, *In Search of Wealth and Power*, pp. 97, 140–141, 149, 218–222, 228–229, 231–233, 239–243.

Their labors invented a constitutional tradition for Islam⁵⁰ that traced its roots to local and legitimate sources, disarming possible challenges against its foreign pedigree. Their earlier prosperity and successes, it was argued, had been because of Islamic consultation and justice, and a return to those principles was the secret to regeneration.

The Local as Unique

The intellectuals further localized constitutionalism by connecting it to the parochial concerns that were unique to individual settings. In the process, constitutionalism acquired more local coloring and was further domesticated. If exorbitantly high taxes were at issue, and they happened to be in both contexts, these were argued to be characteristic of weak despotic regimes in decline, not of constitutional administrations that instituted fair and just taxes. If ethno-religious conflict was of concern, and it was far more so for the Ottomans than for the Iranians, constitutionalism was argued to grant equal rights to all: it brought religions and ethnicities under one roof in a legislative assembly, reestablished patriotic bonds with the nation, and gave Ottomans the chance to enact laws collectively through their representatives. In a context where the definition and practice of Ottoman citizenship was highly contested, constitutionalism came to be equated with Ottomanism itself, and the debate over its definition also became a debate over the definition of minority rights and citizenship under a constitution. These included debates over a federalist administration with provisions for self rule, or a centralized administration without it; the extent to which citizens were to be subject to state supervision (especially with respect to schools); the extent of non-Muslim obligations such as taxation and conscription; and the like. The definition of constitutionalism was inextricably linked to the definition of citizenship, and the latter went to the heart of Ottomanism.

Finally, the bureaucrats and officers were infuriated by blocked mobility, administrative inefficiency, the persistence of patrimonialism, and the introduction of neopatrimonial norms. The conflict of this core group with the state, especially over mobility, was the driving force of the Young Turk revolution. For them, constitutional states were the most streamlined, merit-based, rational, indeed “scientific” systems. They were active and interventionist states that addressed all social ills on behalf of the public, as the European states were supposedly doing.

A strong interventionalist state and administrative rationality remained central concerns to the Iranian constitutionalists as well, but the ethnic or minority issue was not as high on the agenda. When the topic of minority rights did come up, the constitutionalists were ready to jump to its defense. But

⁵⁰ E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

it was not an organizing motto and insisting upon equal rights was mostly an opportunity to confront the clerics over the definition of the nation. Given the religious makeup of the Iranian population, and the far greater role the clerics played in public and social life, Islam, the religion of the majority, was in fact the contested topic. At issue was whether Iran was an Islamic nation, under the tight guidance of the clerics, or a secular nation, sovereign and represented by an assembly of citizens. This was one area where localization of constitutionalism began to diverge from the local coloring it had acquired in the Ottoman context. After the revolution, Iranian constitutionalists were hit harder for their instrumental use of religion.

Another peculiarity of Iran that contributed to the localization of constitutionalism was the overwhelming concern with justice. The politico-cultural tradition of the Circle of Justice was relevant in both settings, but more so for the Iranians than for the Ottomans. Public mobilization and forms of public action become more meaningful if this point is kept in mind. Attention to it also provides an opportunity to look at the agent-driven manipulation of political culture by the public. In the event that my insistence on traditional politics in Iran appears to be textual-freezing,⁵¹ I broach the issue with “practice.” The public approach to the monarch-centered notion was complex. On the one hand, the public was not credulous enough to believe in the justice of the reigning monarch; its use of traditional language of loyalty was a shield and a cover; it was the “public transcript” while the public was defying and resisting the reigning monarch.⁵² On the other hand, the public accepted the tenets of kingship, expressed its belief in monarchy (if not in the reigning monarch), and remained within its bounds.⁵³ The cycle of reproduction that had already begun to crumble with the introduction of the assembly finally failed with the assassination of the reigning prime minister; the cultural structure of politics shifted as well, though again not as radically as one might have thought.⁵⁴

It may be tempting to fall in love with the romance of liberation – but liberty’s meaning is subject to change historically and contextually, even within a single society.⁵⁵ If public support for the constitutional cause is interpreted as an

⁵¹ Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵² James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁵³ For a sophisticated example of explicit defiance of culture while remaining within its bounds, see Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

⁵⁴ Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981); William H. Sewell, Jr. “Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at Bastille,” *Theory and Society* 25, 6:841–81 (1996); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Sherry B. Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties,” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, 1 (January 1984), pp. 126–166; Sherry B. Ortner, *Anthropology and Social Theory: Culture, Power, and the Acting Subject* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁵⁵ Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998).

unmistakable desire for modern citizenship and rights, then this understanding is certainly off the mark. But if it is approached as protest against the tyranny of officials and administrators, unfair elitism and favoritism, all manner of injustices, and the hardship of onerous taxes, the issue has greater resonance. One should bear in mind the subaltern studies' cautions against the rush to equate the hopes and desires of the historians, chroniclers, and leaders with those of the voiceless participants. Care should be taken to understand actors in their own terms, rather than to appropriate them for the grand narratives and beliefs, hopes, and aspirations of the educated, interested, and like-minded participants and commentators.⁵⁶

I find Appadurai's notion of ideoscape of particular relevance. He has pointed to the inflection of political concepts of the Enlightenment with new meanings in their global travels into new diasporic contexts. Thus, much as individuals standing on various locations in a landscape view the terrain differently, the actors' global vantage points shape their understanding of these concepts. The analogy is applicable not only globally, but also within the boundaries of a single nation. Different orientations toward the master framework stemmed from the differential positioning of actors within the landscape of revolution.⁵⁷

OF STATES AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

In what terms the executive, the assembly and the constitution would be fixed – whose interpretation over the culturally constituted and localized terms of the compromise would prevail – was an open question. The outcome depended largely on the lineup of social forces, on the strength of the states, resources, networks, and organizations, and on a host of other factors to which the state-centered theories of revolution and the resource mobilization school have contributed a good deal and have provided concepts and language for analysis.⁵⁸ Yet it is necessary to keep in mind that the social structural dimensions of the story are not too far off from the politics of meaning as resources gain relevance, become available, or vanish in a culturally constituted context. This is a point upon which the resource-mobilization and social movement theories have begun to converge.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India," in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, Guha and Spivak, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments*, pp. 158–172.

⁵⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 33, 36.

⁵⁸ For the state-centered approach to revolution, see Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Tilly, *European Revolutions*; Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*.

⁵⁹ R. Aminzade, J. Goldstone, D. McAdam, E. J. Perry, W. H. Sewell, Jr., S. Tarrow, C. Tilly. *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001);

This became evident in the refusal of Ottoman officers to capture the executive on several occasions when they had a clear chance and very good justification. Their refusal is of relevance to our discussion of Russia and France. Their reluctance stemmed from constitutional commitments that tamed their tendency to remove in one stroke all barriers against their free rein and brought them back to the legal fold. The opposition denounced them as Jacobins, a reasonable accusation so far as it concerned their rough handling of opposition and undemocratic proclivities that challenged the constitutional framework. In the final analysis, however, they did not transcend that framework, not because they did not want to, but because they did not know how to: they lacked a theory of – that is, political legitimacy and justification for – the takeover of the executive.

The differing state structures in the Ottoman Empire and Iran were some of the fundamental sources of divergence between the two revolutions. As already mentioned, both Iran and the Ottoman Empire shared a history of defensive reforms over the previous century in reaction to internal and geopolitical challenges. The Ottoman state, as the result of its previous centralized legacy, institutional development, greater economic resources, and more successful reforms, was in a far better position to continue with them than was Iran. Furthermore, even when its treasury hovered on the brink of bankruptcy, the resources the empire could devote to it were always more. By the time of revolution, the state was a neopatrimonial institution. It had penetrated into layers of the social, not on the same level as its European rivals, but certainly along the lines of a modern state. Its tight control over dissent and over the press should give us some idea of its comparative strength against the Iranian state. The Iranian state came out of a decentralized patrimonial tradition quite different from the centralized Ottoman one. Although both states suffered breakdowns, the reason in the Ottoman Empire were tensions created by partial rationalization; in Iran the disintegration of central authority was owed to the state's inability to yet impose monopoly over the means of coercion.

Related to this was their histories of educational reforms. The aggressive Ottoman policies had turned out a comparatively large number of graduates to form the basis for the emergence of the modern middle class. Absorbed into the administration and military, these came to experience a myriad of problems. Compensation and general disorganization were serious enough issues, but the blocked mobility and unfair treatment these graduates experienced and blamed on patrimonialism was their greatest source of discontent. This well-positioned and cohesive class served as the backbone of Ottoman constitutionalism. Iranian constitutionalism lacked this support. Modern education had remained by and large private, not state-sponsored. The modern middle class was small and incapable of acting as a weighty social force. Even when it came to play a disproportionately large role in the constitutional movement, it suffered from a major institutional weakness in so far as numbers in the administration and the

army were concerned. The constitution in Iran did find some support among the court and high-ranking elite statesmen, but this could not compare with the weight and radicalism of large numbers of mid-ranking officers and bureaucrats of the Ottoman state.

The Ottoman Chamber of Deputies came to have teeth against the executive through the backing of this group. A good part of the evidentiary basis of this book is devoted to demonstrating the Ottoman constitutionalists' method of consolidating their position: they interfered in administrative matters as they saw fit, they forced out state and military men, and they enforced their own vision of reforms. Their cornerstone policy of purges, aimed at strengthening the state, coincided not accidentally with the interests of an upwardly mobile class of bureaucrats and officers. The extensive semiclandestine network that supported the constitutional administration was manned and supported by devoted mid-ranking officers and bureaucrats. These were pejoratively, yet accurately, referred to as a "government within the government," and it is a mistake to think of them as chance developments. The justifications for such a secretive body under a constitutional administration, even when it violated its spirit, were put in place in pre-revolutionary days. The Young Turks had no qualms about acting through extra-legal, extra-constitutional channels; constitutionalism was only a means to rescue the empire.

Finally, contrary to portrayal of the revolution as a narrowly based, coup-like event, here I discuss its extensive popular backing in the Macedonian countryside, which was complemented later with support in the urban areas. The distaste of the major constitutionalists for popular participation ended public activism. Le Bon's warning against the masses was used as theoretical justification for what they feared most: ethnic and religious flare-ups in a politicized multiethnic context.

Iranian constitutionalism was a clear contrast to this. It was a movement that actively sought, and received, increased popular backing as it went along. Popular committees that played a pivotal role sprang up around the country as if overnight. Without meaningful political parties, the committees became connected to the Assembly informally. In the absence of support from within the state, this was welcome, and the Assembly transformed the provincial committees into official organs of the state. Hence, these provided a partly legal and partly extra-legal way of confronting the monarchy-executive and the provincial magnates. Unlike the disciplined party branches in the Ottoman Empire, no group, including the Assembly, had the ability to exert definitive control over the popular forces in Iran, giving the revolution a mind of its own. This major weakness of the Iranian constitutionalists was apparent in the comparative functioning of the two assemblies, the stability of governments, and success at implementing legislation. Furthermore, the Iranians were forced to deal with basic institutional issues, such as rational taxation, rampant decentralization, and the opposition of provincial magnates, before embarking on more lofty goals.

"As every schoolboy knows," noted Alfred Cobban, the precursor to the revisionist historiography of the French Revolution, "the perfect cliché for any

period of history since the expulsion from Garden of Eden is the rise of the middle classes.”⁶⁰ The biting polemic seems to highlight a contradiction in the present analysis. Having started with an appraisal of the revisionist position, underlining the autonomy of the political, it is now ending by laying emphasis on the relevance of the social, and especially social class, for both movements, and as a key to understanding the Young Turk movement. Yet the argument put forward here merely aims at discounting the historic mission of classes, and turning attention to the sources of discontent of a middle class that were particular to one set of circumstances. Had the state not faced the danger of disintegration, and had the modern middle class not experienced unfair mobility, it was hard to imagine it as revolutionary. Furthermore, had its grievances found expression at a later juncture of global time, it would have had alternatives other than constitutionalism. As such, the class was not connected to a particular teleology. A study of revolution cannot dispense with the social or with social class. The problem, in my view, emanates from the determinism attributed to the social. Relaxing some assumptions, acknowledging the autonomy of culture, politics, and the social while keeping in mind their close relation and mutual inflection, and seeking explanation in interaction rather than singular determination, may be a better way to approach historical transformation.

PRODUCTIVITY OF AMBIGUITY

The constitutional message worked in several ways. In pre-revolutionary days, constitutionalism was packaged as everything to everyone – an elixir. A political message that satisfied everyone was obviously multivocal⁶¹ and multivocality spelled ambiguity. Ambiguity in turn had different effects depending on context. In the pre-revolutionary days, it was a catalyst for consensus and coalition-building among groups with contradictory and conflicting interests. In the revolution’s aftermath, it came to have a destabilizing effect. It invited clash over the fixing of its meaning in a rush before it was defined by rivals, including the governments.

Ambiguity emanated from two sources. The global array of constitutional possibilities provided a wide range of choices. In the Ottoman Empire, groups with preference for a British-like *laissez faire*, decentralized system, for example, could lay claim to the title constitutionalist with the same authority as could the advocates of a French centralized model. Even more important was the indeterminacy in meaning that resulted when constitutionalism was couched in the language of religion and tradition. These left the door open to varied interpretations.

⁶⁰ Alfred Cobban, *The Social Interpretation of the French Revolution*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶¹ V.N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

If the recognizable language made it less threatening to the governments and eased compromise among coalitions, it also had a cost. Naming the assemblies after traditional institutions or practices opened the possibility that they might be reduced to just that – advisory councils of reform, the advice of which the monarchs could heed at their own choosing.⁶² The fact that in both instances the monarchs claimed the institutions were granted out of their own will (as the tsar had done in 1905) heightened the tension.⁶³ Yet the fate of these institutions was not sealed within the semantic field, but was to be determined from the array of forces and interests that rallied for or against them. The idea that using Islamic discourse was a sure recipe for failure as it lacked the tradition of popular sovereignty or natural rights, as some have argued, engages in textual freezing and takes these societies out of the realm of social and politics. Not only was the invention of tradition already a step in the direction of widening the semantic field, many actors struggled against allowing unfavorable interpretation by the old regimes or other challengers such as the conservative clerics. This is not to dismiss offhand the effect of semantic choices. In fact, the monarchies did try to cast the shadow of tradition over the new bodies to render them ineffective, and in both contexts the conservative clerics did challenge the institution in the name of religion. And these attempts were stronger in Iran, where the assembly was experienced for the first time. Yet, it was the semantic choice that had placed constitutionalism on the agenda of politics to begin with, and whatever the drawbacks, the advantages far outweighed them.

HISTORY, CONTINGENCY, AND AGENCY

Are revolutions contingent occurrences, products of heterogeneous forces impinging on a single moment, or can they be accounted for by isolating a limited set of factors? Some of the best social scientific works have grappled with this issue and come up with answers that range from necessary and sufficient causes, to suggestions about the conditions of possibility, which I consider more illuminating.⁶⁴ The state, its expansion, its particular configuration, and its crisis – combination of geopolitical and financial standing – have been identified as central to the revolutionary process.⁶⁵ Within the social sciences, a general emerging trend in studies of revolutions and

⁶² Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Arabic Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁶³ For a comparative look at the three movements, see Nader Sohrabi, “Historicizing Revolutions: Constitutional Revolutions in the Ottoman Empire, Iran and Russia, 1905–1908,” *American Journal of Sociology* Vol. 100, No. 6 (July), pp. 1383–1447.

⁶⁴ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion*; Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*; Tilly, *European Revolutions*; Moore, *Social Origins*.

⁶⁵ Brinton, *The Anatomy*; Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*; Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion*; Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*; Tilly, *European Revolutions*.

social movements has been a departure from what Sewell has termed experimental teleology⁶⁶ and a turning toward the study of mechanism and processes.⁶⁷ Although this development has brought social scientists' method closer to the historians' method, social science's appeal has been its ability to narrow down causes within a structuralist framework and to assign them weight. Historians, in contrast, have remained content with pointing to the heterogeneous array of factors, with less ability to isolate and prioritize them. Their theoretical strength has derived from skillful narrative, a sophisticated sensitivity to the sequence of events which in fact remains indispensable for delineating causal mechanisms – also a central concern of social scientists. The narrative approach also allows for full consideration of contingencies – chance-like happenings with significant influence over the course of developments. Yet, contingencies are as a rule dismissed by social scientists, for they do not fit comfortably with the stable, long-term structures that social scientists rely on to construct what they consider as reliable, systematic, and robust explanations.⁶⁸ The present study is indebted to these influences insofar as it adheres to structuralism and considers the state as the central player in revolutions, and is interested in causal delineation and narrowing down the range of causal forces, but it remains faithful to processes, maintains sensitivity to the unfolding of events through time, and pays heed to contingencies.

⁶⁶ This is in reference to Mill's method, which was adopted by Skocpol in her influential study. The method assumes equivalence and independence of cases, conditions that are impossible to meet in the social arena. The idea of the spread of revolutionary influences from one context to another, or emphasis on contingency and agency, are incompatible with its assumptions. Yet I find the method useful as a heuristic device for starting the investigation; it forces the researcher to peer into areas that may not have appeared significant. The restrictive assumptions can subsequently be relaxed. Yet the method may prove counterproductive, that is, produce trivial or indefensible results when it is taken too literally and its natural science assumptions are applied too rigidly. For criticisms of the method, see William H. Sewell, Jr., "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology" In Terence J. McDonald, ed., *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 245–80. The argument is further developed in his *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 81–123. See also Michael Burawoy, "Two Methods in Search of Science: Skocpol versus Trotsky," *Theory and Society* 18, 1989, pp. 765–769. Jack A. Goldstone, "A History and Sociology of Historical Sociology," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, Vol. 47, No. 5 (2006), pp. 359–369. Charles Ragin, *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). The latter is one the best expositions of the underlying logic of the method.

⁶⁷ Jack A. Goldstone, "Toward a Fourth Generation of Revolutionary Theory," *Annual Review of Political Science* Vol. 4, pp. 139–187. MacAdam, Tarrow, Tilly *Dynamics of Contention*. Aminzade et al., *Silence and Voice*.

⁶⁸ Sewell, *Logics of History*, pp. 1–123. There is some overlap here with the themes raised by Stone in his famous essay. The difficult challenges posed by Stone have been elegantly worked out in satisfying fashion by Sewell in this most serious attempt to integrate the differing but complementary logics of the social sciences and humanities. Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History" in *The Past and the Present Revisited* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 74–96.

Agency also remains central to revolutions and it is an issue intimately related to contingency. Not all discussions of agency may be reduced to considerations of contingency, however, nor are all contingencies agent driven. But the two are in many instances connected and we have a chance to consider a number of contingencies and different modes of operation of agency with or without connection to one another. Agency can be effective only when the structural context provides the conditions of possibility for its realization in the form of opportunities; but these opportunities may be exploited or go unrealized, which is why the study of agency, and the acknowledgement of its relative indeterminacy, is important. The fluidity of revolutions provides some of the best instances for investigating historical contingency and agency.⁶⁹

A reflexive approach to contingencies that insists on considering them in embedded durable structures enables us to distinguish between the more and less consequential ones. The class of occurrences referred to as grand events, after Sahlins and Sewell, are defined as “that relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transforms structures.”⁷⁰ These weigh heavily on structure to effect transformations of a fundamental nature. Better yet, they place structure at risk, halt the cycle of reproduction, and effect change; by definition, they create history. These should be distinguished from another class of contingencies that at most accelerate what would have been gradual change without effecting fundamental reevaluation and alteration. I shall refer to these as triggers.⁷¹ In single-case studies there is sometimes a tendency to confound triggers and events; thinking more theoretically and comparatively along these lines may allow us to better distinguish between the two.

I will leave the detailed exposition of contingency and agency to the following chapters. Suffice it to say that the Russo-Japanese war and the Russian revolution of 1905, whatever the circumstances that brought them about, were contingent developments for actors in the Ottoman Empire and Iran that managed to begin a small wave of constitutional movements. The agency of actors inspired by them resulted in the outbreak of movements with similar ideologies at roughly the same time.

The fundamental indeterminacy of agency and contingency makes revolutions unpredictable. The best we can do is to account for their conditions of possibility, and not the certainty of their occurrence.

Iran became constitutional after a mass-based revolution in 1906. The Ottomans made their first attempt in 1876, but the more lasting one occurred

⁶⁹ The work of Marshal Sahlins on event and structure, and its skillful extension to studies of revolution (indeed to all instances of social change by Sewell) has certainly been a critical advance in bringing these elements together. Sewell, *Logics of History*, pp. 197–224.

⁷⁰ Sewell, *Logics of History*, p. 100.

⁷¹ Triggers may have a hidden significance: they may foreclose the occurrence of other intervening causes that could have changed the course of events. We can also think of occurrences that slow down the course of things without effecting fundamental change.

in 1908. Yet national history and historiography have not been as kind to the Ottomans as to the Iranians. If the latter is remembered with a sense of pride, as a fight against a degenerate monarchy in the name of freedom and revival, the other is almost written out of history – remembered for the painful memories it evokes of the dismemberment of the empire, war, loss, ethnic cleansing, and the accompanying tragedies for all those concerned. This is not to say that the achievements of constitutionalism are not celebrated today in Turkey. To the contrary; yet, in place of appreciating the paradoxes and complexities of history in their full force, this is managed through a clinical separation of the Kemalist movement from the Young Turk Revolution, as if participants in the first were not the very same individuals who participated in the second.

From a strictly institutional perspective, the Young Turk revolution created lasting political institutions. The Iranian constitutional movement, on the other hand, did manage to transform the political culture radically and to place liberalism, republicanism, and aggressive state-building on the agenda of politics, yet it became only a shadow of what it had hoped to accomplish. The state- and nation-building strong men that emerged from the ashes of these movements – one an authoritarian, dictatorial constitutionalist and the other an autocratic despot – had decisive influence over the endurance of the constitutional structures created by the earlier events. Although this book is not about them, a closer look at these movements may provide us with some clues as to what was similar about them, and why they differed.

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Revolution and the Neopatrimonial State

Revolutions often step in to speedily finish off, *in their own way*, the reformist undertakings of the old regimes. This was as true for the Ottomans as it was for the Iranians; the seeds of revolution were cast during the reform era of the nineteenth century. The late Ottoman Empire was ripe for a revolution. The rationalizing and centralizing reforms of the nineteenth century had partially transformed the patrimonial bureaucracy and tightened the state's grip on its far-flung territories, but the state was held back because of severe financial strains. The overwhelming geopolitical pressures on an agrarian state vying to hold its own amidst the well-financed armies of industrial or industrializing nations, internal rebellions, and tax-collection problems forced the state to declare bankruptcy in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Abdülhamid, the monarch that assumed power at this time of crisis, aggravated the tensions. His novel policies were not a reflection of the personal idiosyncrasies that are favored in some accounts, but one logical response to the multiple and contradictory challenges facing the empire. While insisting on the previous mission of the reformists, he broke with preceding reformers by introducing an alternative model of modernity that sought to make the European-inspired reforms consonant with religious and bureaucratic traditions of the empire. This resulted in his well-known Islamist policies, among them the new importance of the title "caliph." Within the bureaucratic and military realms, it resulted in combining rational bureaucratic norms with some aspects of past patrimonial traditions, such as placing loyalty to the person before loyalty to the office, and basing advancements and rewards partially on this criterion. It also meant revamping the Palace as the center of all bureaucratic and military decision-making. These became major points of contention for a growing internal opposition.

The synthesis that the Hamidian regime provided found its inspiration in an earlier opposition movement that had invented a new constitutional tradition by creatively blending Islam with Western liberal notions. Known as the Young Ottomans, this was an elite bureaucratic, military movement that succeeded in deposing the reigning sultan, produced a written constitution, and for a brief

period, established a parliamentary structure. The new generation of the opposition movement that developed from 1889 onward – the Young Turk movement – was under the direct ideological influence of the Young Ottomans and benefited enormously from their synthesis of constitutionalism and religion.

The structural underpinning for the rise of the new movement was laid under the Hamidian regime, whose aggressive education policies created the middle class. Unlike the elite Young Ottoman movement of a previous generation, the new movement was a middle-class opposition that drew from mid-ranking military and bureaucratic elements with a modernist orientation. This was particularly true of the faction that became the movement's dominant actor, the Committee of Union and Progress. Its strength lay in its numbers, and aspirations of mobility its hallmark.

This aspiring, educated middle class was especially disgruntled by the neo-patrimonial, clientelist policies of the Hamidian regime, which, it felt, had blocked its upward mobility. Additional frustration came from the slow and inconsistent pace of rationalization in the overstuffed, nonuniform, and inefficient administration. Its formula for saving the empire from impending disintegration was constitutionalism, and its unique challenges colored what it meant by this. On the one hand, constitutionalism, intermingled, indeed equated, with Ottomanism was offered as a doctrine of equality of all citizens and a consensus-forming machinery. As such it was a promise to end the growing religious and ethnic strife that seriously threatened the empire's chances of survival. On the other hand, constitutionalism was interpreted in a technocratic-scientific light as the doctrine of state efficiency. This meant a streamlined, rationalized, and centralized modern military and civil bureaucracy that broke off with neo-patrimonial policies and reformed aggressively to turn the state into a streamlined instrument of social intervention and military efficiency. In this way, constitutionalism was not only expected to save the ailing empire, but also to deal thoroughly with the grievances of a disgruntled middle class that aspired to be at the empire's helm.

FROM REFORM TO REVOLUTION

For the Ottoman Empire, the era of reform is divided, with good justification, into three periods: the reign of Selim III and Mahmud II (1789–1839), the era of Tanzimat reforms (1839–1876), and the Hamidian period (1876–1909). Unified by the pursuit of centralization and introduction of legal-rational norms along Western lines, they were divided by degree of intensity and style. Through selective borrowing from more successful rivals, the reformers aimed to strengthen the state internally and improve its world standing. The vast stretch of the empire, and its unusually broad ethnic and religious makeup, made this a formidable task. More critically, the empire's main rival, Russia, had started its Westernizing reforms earlier and had made impressive strides in administration and industry during the nineteenth century. The Ottoman Empire remained an agricultural empire with an outdated taxation structure. Reformers thus faced

chronic shortage of funds and a financial outlook that worsened with wars and internal uprisings.¹ Although the reforms effected changes, some major, in all facets of Ottoman society, and certainly far more than in Iran, they failed to achieve the results originally sought by the reformers.

Defeat in the Russian war of 1787–1792 brought the need for reform fully home. Rising to power in the midst of the war, Selim III (1789–1807) initiated in the years 1792 and 1793 the *Nizam-ı Cedid* or New Order. Its important fiscal and administrative dimensions are described by Findley as “a first explicit evocation of that shift of orientation, away from traditionalism and toward the creation of a rational-legal order.”² Focused primarily on the military, the New Order aimed to bring the Ottoman army up to par with its rivals.³ Aside from financial difficulties, the internal impetus came from the need to check the rise of strong local notables – mostly long-term tax-farmers – and bureaucratic-military elements, and from the non-Muslim uprisings in the Balkans.⁴

With a temporary setback after the revolt of the Janissaries, the New Order was revived in 1826 by Mahmud II. He ruthlessly crushed the Janissaries to replace them with a new, Western-style army, and dealt severe blows to their allies, the guilds and the popular Bektashi Order, officially banning the latter.⁵ Mahmud continued to consolidate his control over the provinces by suppressing the provincial notables.⁶ Egypt remained the exception, but it was an example

¹ For the link between industry, finance, and war-making, the heart of European state-making, see Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1992). William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

² Carter V. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789–1922* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 113.

³ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 56–58. Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), p. 71. Erik J. Zürcher *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), pp. 24–25.

⁴ Berkes, *Secularism in Turkey*, p. 71. Karpat considers the internal stimuli primary. Kemal H. Karpat, “The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789–1908,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 3, 1972, pp. 243–281 (see esp. pp. 251–252). For the growing power of local notables, in the Balkans in particular, see Bruce McGowan, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, Vol. 2, 1600–1914*, H. İnalcık and D. Quataert, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 637–679, 710–749. For a view critical of the centralization drive as a means for strengthening the state, see Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to Modern State* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence*, pp. 78–83. Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of The Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, Vol. 2: Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808–1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 19–24, 41–45. John P. Brown, *The Dervishes* (London: Oxford University Press (1867) 1927), pp. 163–164. John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London: Luzac and Co., (1937) 1965), pp. 16, 77. Uriel Heyd, “The Ottoman Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II,” *Scripta Hierosolymitana*, Vol. IX, pp. 63–96, see esp. 64–69. Hans Joachim Kissling, “The Sociological and Educational Role of the Dervish Orders in the Ottoman Empire,” ed. G. E. von Grunebaum, *American Anthropologist* 1954, Memoir 76.

⁶ Lewis, *The Emergence*, pp. 79–80, 89. Zvi Yehuda Hershlag, *Introduction to the Modern Economic History of the Middle East* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980), p. 30. Karpat, “Ottoman State,” p. 256.

that proved the astonishing potential of the reforms had they been well financed, as they were under Mehmet Ali, the governor of Egypt.⁷

The bureaucratic norms of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century dictated recruitment “first from the sons of scribes and other persons reared in scribal households and secondarily from others who were not from scribal households but had established patronage relationships with scribal figures.”⁸ In the premodern scribal service, the combination of both skill and attachment to a grandee was the best route to success.⁹ Despite reforms, a complicated form of this pattern survived and became a central point of contention for the Young Turks.

The first reform era also saw a further weakening of the clerical establishment. The diversion of religious endowment revenues toward the treasury, educational reforms, and bureaucratization resulted in its more rigid integration into the state. As a consequence, already existing divisions between lower- and upper-ranking clerics became more pronounced.¹⁰

The immediately following Tanzimat period (1839–1871) claimed four goals: the establishment of property rights, rational taxation in place of tax-farming, regular military conscription, and legal equality of all subjects.¹¹ Although the goals were not fully realized, they ushered in new institutions that further undermined the religious establishment, reorganized the provincial administration, and made rationalizing inroads. The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education took away a large share of the institutional functions of the clergy at this time.¹²

Lack of trained personnel and shortage of funding, however, prevented creation of a homogeneous rational-legal order. Although the civil rank table was introduced, it could not function properly in the absence of a centralized fiscal system and the old patterns persisted. The bureaucracy, however,

⁷ Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁸ Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, p. 50. ⁹ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 97–98.

¹⁰ Heyd, “The Ottoman Ulema,” pp. 68–69. Lewis, *The Emergence*, pp. 90–92, Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 28, 47–48.

¹¹ “The Hatt-ı Şerif of Gülhane, 3 November 1839” in J. C. Hurewitz (ed.), *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record* 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 269–271. For influence of the “French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen” of 1789, see Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 61. Whether this was a genuine attempt to reorganize the state or a means to appease the Great Powers, and the extent of involvement of bureaucratic interests to change their status from slaves of the sultan and guarantees for preservation of private property, are debated issues. Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 53. M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 29. Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 26.

¹² For the effect of establishing state secular schools and courts outside the clerical domain (sometimes resulting in confusion in legal affairs), see Lewis, *The Emergence*, pp. 97–98, 108, 113–114, 118–123; Berkes, *Secularism*, pp. 174–175; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 106–107, 118–119; Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 234–235, 256, 282–292, and Richard L. Chambers, “The Ottoman Ulema and the Tanzimat,” in *Scholars, Saints and Sufis*, ed. N. Keddie (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972).

continued to grow.¹³ With conflicting rules for recruitment, promotion, and allocation of rewards, the divide between the patrimonial and the new breed of administrators became more pronounced, both culturally and structurally.¹⁴

The differentiation of the state into various ministries and departments began a power struggle between the Sublime Porte and the Palace and signaled a shift of authority from the Palace to the bureaucrats of the Porte. This struggle was part of the emerging conflict between patrimonial and rational bureaucratic norms.¹⁵ Another Tanzimat achievement was the introduction of consultative assemblies and commissions.¹⁶

THE FISCAL CRISIS

Tanzimat also introduced a new provincial administrative system, modeled after the French. Staffed with salaried officials, the new system was to supplant “the loose knit, quasi-feudal association of Pashas and tax-farmers of earlier times.”¹⁷ By all accounts, however, it had only limited success. The tax collection apparatus, with its centrally appointed tax collectors, affected the authority and influence of the governors only partially. Furthermore, tax farming, a principal target of the reformers and the government’s chief source of revenue, continued as before.¹⁸

With the onset of the Crimean War in midcentury, the state was thrown into a downward fiscal spiral. The first foreign loan, with moderate rates, acquired in the midst of the war in 1854, was followed by many others; because of eventual loss of credit, many of these were acquired at exorbitant rates. By 1875, most loans went toward servicing the debt, absorbing up to 80 percent of the yearly state revenue. The bulk of what remained went toward the purchase of modern weapons or the financing of wars, leaving very little for public expenditures. As a result of this and other harmful short-term methods of raising revenue – issuing paper money, debasing the currency, issuing bonds, and acquiring short-term

¹³ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 155–163, 167–168, 195–196. Findley holds that between 1790 to 1900, the size of the bureaucracy grew from a mere two thousand to thirty-five thousand. This is a revision of Findley’s earlier estimate that put the size of the bureaucracy at from 50,000 to 100,000. See Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁴ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 201, 217–218.

¹⁵ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 140–150; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 36–38.

¹⁶ Whether these bodies were proto-parliamentarian or had real power is questioned. Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 61; Ayalon, *Language and Change*. For a contrasting view, see Roderic Davison, “The Advent of the Principle of Representation in the Government of the Ottoman Empire,” in *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774–1923* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 96–111.

¹⁷ Lewis, *The Emergence*, p. 108; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 83–84; Davison, *Reform*, p. 147; Zürcher *Turkey*, p. 63.

¹⁸ Halil İnalcık, “Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* Vol V, 1973, pp. 97–127; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 96–98; Hershlag, *Modern Economic History of the Middle East*, pp. 32, 298. Zürcher calls the central tax collection system introduced by Tanzimat “a complete disaster.” Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 62–74.

loans from Galata Bankers – in 1875 the state defaulted on its loan and declared bankruptcy, suspending all payments.¹⁹

Alarmed by the economic loss threatened by the insolvent Ottoman state, the European states established a semicolonial financial administration on the empire's soil in 1881, some six years after the declaration of bankruptcy. A collaboration of six European powers (particularly Britain, France, and Germany), the Public Debt Administration (PDA) was formed to protect European investment in Ottoman securities and to collect part of the empire's revenue for use toward servicing and repaying the foreign debt. The PDA eventually came to control a third of the empire's revenue. A staff of 3,000 in 1881 grew to 5,500 by 1913, making the PDA larger than the Ottoman Ministry of Finance. Enjoying a high degree of autonomy, the PDA allocated revenue as it saw fit and even interfered in budgetary decisions. In exchange for the partial loss of sovereignty, the state improved its finances, and, although it continued to contract foreign loans, it now did so on more favorable terms. Overall, the PDA was successful in moderately reducing the debt.²⁰ Even the nationalist Young Turks exhibited ambivalence toward the PDA and considered it a model of efficiency worthy of emulation.²¹

Despite some improvements, the severe financial crisis continued throughout the Hamidian era.²² Salaries were regularly in arrears, often forcing state employees and army staff to sell their salary receipts to speculators at discounted rates.²³ Still, such hardships do not produce revolutionaries. The sources of discontent ran deeper within the state.

¹⁹ In 1875, out of a total budget of eighteen million gold liras, fourteen million were assigned for debt servicing, leaving a budget deficit of five million. Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy 1800–1914* (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 100–109; Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey*, pp. 321–324; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 96–97, 221–223; Charles Issawi, *The Economic History of the Middle East 1800–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 95–102; Zvi Yehuda Hershlag, “The Late Ottoman Finances: A Case Study in Guilt and Punishment,” in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071–1920)*, ed. Osman Okyar and Halil İnalçık (Ankara: Meteksan, 1980), pp. 298–306; Hershlag, *Modern Economic History of the Middle East*, p. 55. For a detailed analysis of the revenue, various taxes, and their effects, see Stanford Shaw, “The Nineteenth Century Ottoman Tax Reforms,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, pp. 421–459.

²⁰ Donald C. Blaisdell, *European Financial Control in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), pp. 1–7, 108–117, 177–179; Owen, *The Middle East* pp. 191–194. Issawi, *The Economic History of Turkey*, pp. 102–103; Issawi, *Economic History*, pp. 361–363.

²¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 11, 5 September 1902/1 Cemaziyelahir 1320, “Bir Misal,” p. 1.

²² Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid: Tahsin Paşa'nın Yıldız Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1990), pp. 337–338.

²³ A British consular report in 1896 related that salaries were in arrears for only three months. For the salary problem within the army, see *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* (hereafter *B DFA*), Vol. 19, Doc. 39, 30 March 1896, pp. 146–147; *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 93, 11 July 1908, p. 491. Ahmet Bedevi, *Kuran İnkılap Tarihimiz ve Jön “Türkler”* (Istanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1945), pp. 84–88. Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 116–117, 130–131. İsmail Hami Danişmend, *Sadr-i-a'zam Tevfik Paşa'nın Dosyasındaki Resmi ve Hususi Vesikalara Göre 31 Mart Vak'ası* (Istanbul: İstanbul Kitabevi, 1961), p. 7. The latter ignored the deeper structural roots of discontent and attributed the soldier's participation in revolution to mere lack of pay.

THE YOUNG OTTOMANS

A note should be made of the ideology of Ottomanism, which was an integral component of reforms. The Tanzimat era was a period of negotiating the identity of the empire and its subjects against the model of nation-state and citizenship. That from early on the Ottoman state had dealt with the populations under its rule according to religious categories is well known. Traditionally, non-Muslims were organized under the *millet* system headed by the Greek Orthodox, Armenian, and Jewish ecclesiastic leaders.

Two things distinguished the late Ottoman period. One, there was a growing economic disparity between the Christian and Muslim populations, which the European capitulatory system and the privileges it extended – such as citizenship rights and the extraterritorial advantages that went with them – magnified. Second, the *millet* system, however noble its contribution to inculcating toleration and encouraging the peaceful coexistence of ethnicities and religions, had, by the age of the nation-state and of nationalism and citizenship rights, become an anachronism, as it continued to uphold political inequality based on religion; that is, the political superiority of Muslims over non-Muslims. At a time when the economic balance was tilting the other way, this policy appeared especially out of date. Internally, the inequalities prompted increasing pressure from the prospering non-Muslim communities, and externally, their unfairness was a convenient excuse for European powers to interfere in Ottoman affairs under the pretext of protecting the empire's Christian *millets*. A principal rationale of the Tanzimat was to resolve this discrepancy and to catch up with “world time” by creating a modern citizenry. The solution it offered was Ottomanism, the idea of a citizenry defined purely on territorial terms without regard for religion or ethnicity. The cautious moves of the 1839 decree in this direction were reiterated more forcefully in the 1856 decree that also called for the reform of the *millet* institutions and the election of leadership through broader public participation.²⁴

The first constitutional movement – the Young Ottoman movement – made its appearance between 1865 and 1878, toward the end of the Tanzimat era. Both continuous with and a reaction to the reform process, the Young Ottoman movement exerted enormous influence on the Young Turk movement. On the one hand, it demanded liberal concepts such as citizenship and individual rights more aggressively than ever. On the other hand, it considered some Westernist tendencies of Tanzimat to be superficial mimicry. It was this complexity – continuity with the reforms, a deeper liberalism, and the attempt to come up with a genuine synthesis between the Western mode of governance and Islamic-Ottoman traditions – that was of particular relevance to the later Young Turk movement.

²⁴ “Sultan Abdülmecid’s Islahat Fermanı Reaffirming the Privileges and Immunities of the non-Muslim Communities, 18 February 1856,” Hurewitz, *Documentary Record*, pp. 315–318.

The creation of a genuine constitutional and Islamic political discourse was the greatest intellectual achievement of the Young Ottomans. The project was a collective one that spanned the Islamic lands. Egypt in particular played an important role in providing intellectual inspiration through its intelligentsia past and present (e.g., Tahtawi, Fazıl), its successful reforms, and in the haven it provided for Young Ottoman intellectuals, many of whom spent some time in Egypt.²⁵ The ingenuity of Young Ottomans lay in recovering an array of Islamic and traditional concepts, reworking them, and extending their meanings to put them to new uses. Although the press, the statesmen, and other thinkers and writers throughout the Islamic world had engaged in similar reworkings before, the Young Ottomans should be credited with the most systematic effort on this front, and for success in popularizing them. The synthesis of the local language of politics with European constitutionalism proved to be an effective strategy. That the Young Ottomans were eclectic – they drew freely from both various schools of Islamic thought and from the ruler-centered and state-oriented “mirrors for princes” tradition that could contradict religious teaching – or that they were sometimes inconsistent and contradicted themselves, or that they took concepts well beyond what precedent had or would allow, there is no doubt. Yet their attempt ended in creating a constitutional tradition for Islam. Was this a genuine tradition? Were the building blocks for a constitutional theory that only needed reworking and extension already there, or did constitutional notions contradict Islamic religious tradition (s) altogether? There is, to be sure, a division of opinion. For our purposes, however, traditions are genuine so long as they are accepted by the relevant audience. By that definition this tradition was as genuine as any, as it went unchallenged on account of religion during the Young Ottoman movement.²⁶

The first concepts reworked by the Young Ottomans were consultation and its variations (*meşveret*, *şura*) from which they developed a conception of representative government;²⁷ community (*ümmet*) or people (*halk*) with political rights as

²⁵ Mardin, *Young Ottoman Thought*, pp. 190–192, 276–282. Berkes, *Secularism*, p. 205. Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²⁶ When challenged under the Young Turks, the revolution had already happened, and the opposition was not to constitutionalism per se, for the most part, but to specific reforms and cultural Westernism. Its rejection in Iran also happened afterwards, but was more doctrinal. In both, it was the original synthesis that had made revolutions possible. For other Ottoman invented traditions, see Selim Deringil, “The Invention of Tradition as Public Image in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1808 to 1908,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (1993): 3–29.

²⁷ The two Quranic passages cited to legitimize consultation “*wa-amrühum shura baynahum*” (whose affairs are settled by mutual consultation) and “*wa-shawirhum fi ‘l-amr*” (and seek their counsel in all affairs) are supplemented with Prophetic tradition and other religious sources. See Ash-Shura (“Consultation”) and Al-Imran (“The Family of Imran”) in *Al-Qur’an: A Contemporary Translation*, ed. and trans. Ahmed Ali (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988). For an early example of this practice, see Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, edited by ‘Abbas Iqbal (Tehran: Intisharat-i Asatir [485/1092] 1372/1993, 2nd ed.), pp. 112–113. For differing interpretations of the abiding powers and functions of consultation in early Islamic history, see B. Lewis, “Mashwara,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition* (P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, and W.P. Heinrichs, eds.) Brill, 2011 (hereafter *EI*²) and Roy

a group and as individuals; consensus of the community (*icma'-i ümmet*) and the public opinion (*efkar-ı unumi*); fatherland (*vatan*) and nation (*millet*) beyond the religious community; citizens or subjects without distinctions of religion (*tebaa*); freedom and liberty (*serbestiyet, hürriyet*) as a divine grant; and the contract of investiture (*biat*)²⁸ which gave the community the right to break it off if the ruler failed to fulfill his obligations. The theory of natural rights, the social contract, the delegation of those rights, methods of gauging legitimacy, and a theory of resistance were all developed here. Related to these were also the notions of separation of powers, of the interests and rights of the nation, and of servants of the nation and service to the nation. Not all these ideas were necessarily well developed or taken to their logical conclusion. For instance, the theory of resistance was not extended to mean the right to revolt; the idea of national sovereignty did not end in republicanism.²⁹ Yet this was the most successful constitutional political discourse in the Islamic lands to date; its resonance is still felt today.

The intellectual movement gained a following among the high-ranking statesmen who staged a coup on 30 May 1876 to depose Sultan Abdülaziz in favor of the crown prince, Murad, who had convinced them of his constitutional leanings. After renegeing on his promises, the unstable Sultan Abdülaziz was soon replaced with his brother Abdülhamid, who had made similar promises. The outline of the constitution that was drawn up by the well-respected (and once Grand Vizier) Midhat Pasha, based on the Belgian and Prussian constitutions, was reworked, or perhaps rewritten, by a commission of twenty-six (sixteen civil officials, ten *ulema*, two generals). It was when the document reached the cabinet, however, that the most conservative changes were introduced.

Significant changes, whether by the commission or the cabinet, were as follows. Limits on the sultan's authority were removed for the most part. The independence and authority of the prime minister as the head of the government (i.e., the premiership) was undermined, and the prime minister's responsibility and the responsibility of his cabinet, and of individual ministers to the parliament were greatly reduced, as they became first and foremost responsible to the sultan.³⁰ Despite some initial resistance, the principle of Ottomanism and the equality of all regardless of religion was established with the inclusion of non-Muslims deputies,³¹ but the provisions that ended discrimination against the

Mottahedeh, "Consultation and the Political Process in the Islamic Middle East of the 9th, 10th and 11th centuries," in *Islam and Public Law*, ed. Chibli Mallat (London: Graham & Trotman, 1993), pp. 83–88. For the late Ottoman period, see Carter V. Findley, "Madjlisal-SHura" *EP*²; Ayalon, *Language and Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 119–122.

²⁸ Roy Mottahedeh, *Loyalty and Leadership in an Early Islamic Society* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2001), pp. 50–54.

²⁹ Mardin, *Young Ottoman Thought*, pp. 81, 91–92, 189–190, 261–263, 266–267, 272–274, 276–283, 293–296, 303, 308–309, 326–328; Berkes, *Secularism*, pp. 210–213, 261–262.

³⁰ Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study in Midhat Constitution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), pp. 47–49, 56, 67–68.

³¹ Although the election established quotas, a formal violation of Ottomanism, it was a positive move that allowed the election of minority candidates in far greater numbers. Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 49–50, 124–125, 130–135.

testimony of non-Muslims in religious courts, a change that Midhat had planned, were ignored.³² Finally, against initial concessions made to minority languages, the final draft of the constitution made Turkish the official language of the state.³³ If later generations of constitutionalists were to rid the constitution of its autocratic structure in one of their first chances,³⁴ they remained quiet on the last point.

The constitution was promulgated on 23 December 1876 in the midst of the Constantinople Conference, which had been convened at the initiation of the British government to deal with the latest Balkan crisis and Russian support for the Bulgarian demand for radical reforms and autonomy. The delegates, astounded at the roar of cannons that inaugurated the new era, were told that “from this moment on Turkey has joined the ranks of constitutional governments”;³⁵ that all were now equal in the Ottoman domains; that the present problems would be solved under a constitutional administration; and that as a result, there was no further need for the conference. In the following days, the European powers’ unconvinced representatives insisted on the agreement they had drawn up, but the Ottoman delegates refused to accept its terms, especially as the constitution had emphasized the integrity of the Ottoman domains and thus foreclosed the possibility of negotiating territory.³⁶ The conference ended without results and in April 1877 Russia began a military campaign that ended in the Istanbul suburb of San Stefano, forcing the government to accede to a disastrous treaty of the same name in March 1878 (moderated by the Berlin treaty in June). The sultan used the war to shut down the Chamber of Deputies and to bring an end to the constitutional government until 1908, more than thirty years.

Yet, the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, despite its short duration and disempowerment under the final version of the constitution, set a significant precedent in its bold confrontation with the Porte and the sultan. The Chamber had two rounds of elections, the first completed within three months of the constitution’s announcement. These resulted in a respectable mix of Muslim and non-Muslim deputies when the Chamber of Deputies sat for two sessions (19 March–28 June 1877; 13 December 1877–14 February 1878).³⁷ Its first session

³² Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 37, 75–76.

³³ Article 12 originally stipulated free use of language for all communities, which was meant to guarantee the teaching of mother tongues in schools, the prevailing norm. The ministers had objected that it placed every language on equal footing with Turkish and could turn the Chamber to a tower of Babel. Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 55–56.

³⁴ See chapter 5, keeping in mind that autocratic clauses gradually reappeared in later revisions.

³⁵ Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani ve Devr-i Saltanatı: Hayat-ı Hususiyeye ve Siyasisiyesi* 3 volumes in 1 (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Osmaniye, 1327/1911), pp. 166–167.

³⁶ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 1, 170–181.

³⁷ For the first session, Devereux puts the total number of deputies at 113 with 71 Muslim, 44 Christian, and 4 Jewish deputies and 32 (1 added, thus 33) senators. The second session had 64 Muslim, 43 Christian, and 6 Jewish deputies, and 36 (2 added, thus 38) senators. Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 144, 229–230. For slightly differing figures see Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 1, pp. 197–202. For dates, I have relied on Hasan Kayali “Elections and the Electoral

was most memorable for the surprising professionalism and harmony of its variegated deputies, not its combativeness.³⁸ The second session was sharply defiant of the government and even the sultan. The first meetings began with an interpellation of the Minister of Navy (Said Pasha) for his conduct of war.³⁹ In debating the “Answer to the Throne” the Chamber harshly criticized the cabinet for incompetence, thus affronting the sultan, who had handpicked the cabinet. This resulted in the resignation of the head of the artillery (Damad Mahmud Pasha) and the stepping down of the grand vizier (Ethem Pasha), thus showing the Chamber’s capacity to achieve results.⁴⁰ The following sessions saw an interpellation of the ministers of navy and war, which worsened their standing. The prospect of more resignations resulted in some changes by Abdülhamid. These included the temporary abolishment of the grand vizierate and the appointment of the previous head of the Chamber as the head minister in his place, a change that could have been interpreted as a step toward the creation of a premiership. The Chamber was in a confrontational mood, however, and rejected the abolishment of the grand vizierate for unconstitutionality, requesting that the previous grand vizier be tried for his wrongdoings.⁴¹ Furthermore, the Chamber continued to criticize the army and its minister (Serasker Rauf Pasha), and it fought the cabinet over the press laws, provincial laws, and martial law regulations, while refusing to accept the cabinet’s recommendations. On February 12, a meeting in the Yıldız Palace attended by the sultan brought a surprisingly terse public rebuke of the sultan from a deputy, which was perceived as a great insult. The next day, using the emergency situation created by the war, the sultan prorogued the Chamber of Deputies. It should be noted that the temporary suspension was within constitutional limits. According to the conservative constitution, it was the sultan’s prerogative to suspend the Chamber when and if the cabinet and the Chamber reached a stalemate, which they had. Although the constitution was never abrogated – it appeared formally at the opening of yearbooks (*salname*), and members of the Upper House continued to receive hefty salaries – the thirty-year respite defied both the constitution and the definition of temporary.⁴²

Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1919,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27 (1995), pp. 265–286 (see p. 267); these are slightly different from those given by Devereux.

³⁸ Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 152–153, 186–206.

³⁹ The deputy from Halep, Nafi Efendi, who demanded the interpellation, had been arrested as a prisoner by the Russian navy while traveling in the Ottoman navy ship *Mersin*. This had happened despite the dearth of Russian and abundance of Ottoman warships in the Mediterranean. He criticized the government for accruing a huge debt, the sole beneficiary of which had been the navy ships that had now proven to be useless. Because of technological ignorance of its staff, quite a modern ship with a crew of 800 and communication capability had fallen to a few Russian boats. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 1, pp. 337–338.

⁴⁰ Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 207–209, 235; Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 1, pp. 337–339.

⁴¹ Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 213, 239–240; Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 1, 339–341.

⁴² Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 243–244; Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, pp. 341–342.

The top-ranking military and bureaucratic elite played a pivotal role in deposing the sultans and instituting the new regime in the course of the Young Ottoman movement. Yet these were not firmly connected to the Young Ottoman intelligentsia of the early years, even though it was the ideas of the latter that were ultimately employed. Mardin has suggested that members of the Young Ottoman intelligentsia were drawn from the middle strata of the bureaucracy and that their real grievance was their blocked mobility, for which they held the state and Tanzimat statesmen responsible.⁴³ Even if one uncritically accepts this depiction of the exceedingly small intellectual wing, the same could not be said of the elite state actors who deposed two sultans and instituted a constitutional regime. In sum, the Young Ottoman movement was an elite movement.⁴⁴ This contrasted sharply with the Young Turks, whose vastly larger numbers were drawn from the middle ranks of the military and bureaucracy and its intelligentsia and activists were intertwined. It is yet unclear why some key members of the Abdülaziz regime turned constitutionalist, but the urgency of emulating Europe and convincing it to stop interfering certainly had something to do with it. Furthermore, as pointed out by Devereux, “They appear to have been constitutionalists not because they desired a constitution as an end in itself but because they saw in a constitution the best hope for the regeneration of the Empire.”⁴⁵

The Young Ottoman movement was akin to a dress rehearsal. The Young Turks self-consciously identified as heirs of that movement and strove to restore the Midhat constitution. If the secret society of the Patriotic Alliance of the Young Ottomans drew upon the Carbonari (liberal secret society) model of organization, and was influenced by various Young European movements with liberal constitutional goals, such as Young Italy, Spain, and France, and if Garibaldi was a principal inspiration,⁴⁶ the same could be more or less said of the Young Turk movement.⁴⁷ The designation of the Young Turk era as the second constitutional period within Turkish historiography makes this point.

Ayalon has argued that the traditional concepts, consultation in particular, used by the Young Ottomans to popularize parliamentarianism in the Islamic lands contributed to the multivocality, and thus the ambiguity, of the term, with a detrimental effect on the growth of democracy in the region.⁴⁸ This view ignores that ambiguity worked in favor of the spread of constitutionalism. Inventing a new tradition can burden the new with the weight of old connotations. This is the pitfall that Ayalon regretfully reflects on. Yet the fate of the new invention is never determined solely, or even principally, from within the semantic field; a constellation of social forces and circumstance more often than not has

⁴³ Mardin, *Young Ottoman Thought*, pp. 122–125. ⁴⁴ Berkes, *Secularism*, p. 207.

⁴⁵ Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Mardin, *Young Ottoman Thought*, pp. 20–23.

⁴⁷ Hanioglu is less certain about the direct influence of Carbonari on the Young Turks, but does not question it for the Young Ottomans. *Young Turks in Opposition*, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Ami Ayalon, *Language and Change in the Arab Middle East: The Evolution of Modern Arabic Political Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 120–122.

the final say. Skillful movement leaders have always tried to reach broader audiences by modifying and extending familiar frames while proposing the new. This is not to trivialize semantic choices in favor of an overt materialism, but to argue that in the trade-off between the search for legitimacy and mobilizing support, and having a constitution and an assembly that were more open to manipulation because of their tradition-bound appellations, the adopted strategy was certainly a better option.

For the Young Turks, having the Young Ottoman movement in the background mattered a good deal, despite the lingering ambiguities. The Young Ottomans' Chamber of Deputies had shown that despite the cloud of tradition that hovered over it, it was far from an advisory council or a docile and submissive institution. Thus, by the time of the Young Turk revolution, although it was unclear what the powers and functions of the assembly would be in the overlapping of semantic and material forces in the field of power, the concept of consultation had been partially drained of its semantic ambiguity. In the Iranian context the semantic field was even more clouded, but it helped to broaden the constitution's appeal. Even when it exposed the assembly to the danger of trivialization as an advisory municipal council, the indeterminacy of semantics allowed the constitutionalists to gain a foothold. More than a drawback, it was an opportunity exploited to its fullest extent.

THE HAMIDIAN STATE

Understanding how the state operated under Abdülhamid II (1876–1908) is critical for understanding the Young Turks and their criticism. The Hamidian state's centralizing and rationalizing zeal have prompted some to call it a culmination of the Tanzimat, even though the shift of power from Porte to Palace is acknowledged as a deviation from the Tanzimat.⁴⁹ Yet the shift was symptomatic of a more fundamental break from the rationalist spirit of the Tanzimat and signaled the turn toward neopatrimonialism. Greater religiosity was another feature that contrasted with Tanzimat secularism. The Hamidian period was a complex and inventive reaction to the blind Westernism of Tanzimat, and as convincingly argued by Deringil, Fortna, Karpat, and Somel, a time that witnessed the burgeoning of an alternative vision of modernity.⁵⁰ Active synthesis of Ottoman traditions with Western institutions and cultural elements, in Fortna's words, was an adaptation of Westernism rather than its simple adoption. Some of the most perceptive contemporary critics of

⁴⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Emergence*, pp. 178–179. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 212.

⁵⁰ Selim Deringil, *The Well Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998); Benjamin C. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom: Islam, the State, and Education in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of the Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Kemal Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Restructuring Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Abdülhamid, such as Yusuf Akçura, condemned his animosity toward the Young Ottoman movement but considered him their student in this respect.⁵¹ Yet many contemporaries, including Akçura, were not fond of the synthesis.⁵²

The empire's geopolitical pressures had created enormous financial burdens and also discredited it after humiliating political setbacks. These have received considerable attention and will not be treated here in any detail.⁵³ The state suffered a dual crisis of legitimacy because of them, one on the world stage among the European system of states, and one internally, in the eyes of its own subjects/citizens.⁵⁴ The pressures served as the backdrop to revolution.

The neopatrimonial policies worsened the problems by exacerbating the bureaucratic and military divisions. This major source of discontent for the civil and military ranks, or the emerging middle class, prompted them to take action. The external pressures reduced the financially strapped state's ability to deal with these tensions.

Patrimonialism, Neopatrimonialism, Rational Bureaucracy

The Hamidian state operated with a conflicting set of norms. When the new sultan assumed the throne in 1876, the Tanzimat reforms, despite all shortcomings, had to some extent shaken the patrimonial traditions of recruitment and mobility. The ideal of legal rationality was still far from realized, however, and large sectors of the army and bureaucracy adhered to the old rules. These structural and cultural cleavages made the Ottoman bureaucracy and army especially conflict-ridden environments.⁵⁵ If these tensions had also existed in preceding eras, the growing ranks of Westernized bureaucrats now made them acute. The era also witnessed an additional source of tension. The sultan's neopatrimonialism entailed concentrating administrative power in the Palace and reinstating loyalty to the person of the sultan rather than to the office. The rationalization drive continued unabated, but now the sultan aimed to become the sole patron of the new administrative machinery.⁵⁶ This was the ideal, in any event; in practice, the neopatrimonial policies also tended to encourage

⁵¹ Yusuf Akçuraoğlu, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Kadir, 1327/1911).

⁵² Somel is the most skeptical about the success of synthesis. Somel, *Public Education*, pp. 4, 168.

⁵³ Mustafa Aksakal *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Engin Akarlı, *The Problems of External Pressures, Power Struggles, and Budgetary Deficits in Ottoman Politics Under Abdülhamid II (1876–1909): Origins and Solutions* (unpublished PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1976). Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 172–212, and Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 52–94.

⁵⁴ Deringil, *Well Protected Domains*, and Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*, have argued these points most cogently.

⁵⁵ “Split-up modernization” is the term of choice by Findley after Eisenstadt. See Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 200–201, 217–218.

⁵⁶ For Hanioglu's interesting discussion of the Hamidian regime's concessions to Tanzimat's modernity and traditional patrimonialism while being neither, see *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 23–24, 26–27.

a proliferation of patrons who operated not from households, but from within the modern bureaucracy.

Seventeen years before the revolution, a systematic criticism of the patrimonial bureaucracy was articulated in a novel by Mehmet Murad, the Russian-born and -educated literary figure, Ottoman bureaucrat, and opposition figure. Published in 1891, the novel claimed to be set in Istanbul in the 1860s, although it clearly was a contemporary critique of the government and social life at the capital. The protagonist was a young doctor, Mansur, who turned patriotic bureaucrat when he took a new job at the Foreign Ministry – secured through a prominent uncle – that left him without any well-defined duties, responsibilities, or sufficient work for the day. These conditions, as he soon found out, prevailed in all offices at all times.⁵⁷ The bureau chief's untalented nephew epitomized the unfairness and highlighted the cultural tensions; like the old-style bureaucrats of scribal service, he had been educated at home, and, like them, he had a rudimentary knowledge of Persian and Arabic. The lack of modern education and ignorance of European languages, however, were not obstacles to his advancement.⁵⁸ Mansur himself was the object of favors; he was assigned a front-row desk, and quickly accorded a promotion and salary increase. It was not hard for Mansur to discern that the interest in him by the chief scribe and the head of the office was not owed to his stellar performance but to the prestige of his influential uncle. Such sponsorship politics resulted in pay of 1,500 *kuruş* for one and 50 for another, and entitled another to a mere 150 *kuruş* after eighteen years of continuous service.⁵⁹ These and similar fictional examples highlighted the injustice of basing rewards and promotions on connections instead of merit, qualification, and service. The future revolutionary government made these issues central, surpassing Murad's prescriptions for reductions and rational reforms by good measure.

The administrative issues of the Hamidian period have been identified as overstaffing (underemployment), undereducation, disproportionate and irregular compensation, corruption, bribery, and, the most serious of all, adherence to patrimonial norms.⁶⁰ Similar problems existed in the military, with the most severe being the division between officers with modern education (*mektebli*) and rankers (*alaylı*).⁶¹ The opposition consistently highlighted these.

It may be therefore surprising to know that the Hamidian state pursued rationalization more than all its predecessors. For the first time some of the reformer's central goals, such as the general rules of official service, including the system for keeping personnel records, rules for recruitment, promotion,

⁵⁷ Mehmet Murad, *Turfanda Mı Yoksa Turfa Mı: Milli Roman* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey, 1308/1891), pp. 117–119, 298–299. For a similar discussion, see Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, p. 217.

⁵⁸ Murad, *Turfanda*, pp. 119–120, and see pp. 125–127, 190–197, 241–244. Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, pp. 217–218.

⁵⁹ Murad, *Turfanda*, pp. 119–121, 125–127, 190–197.

⁶⁰ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 234–235, and Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, pp. 217–218, 220, 300, 305.

⁶¹ For further explanation see the following and Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, p. 60.

compensation, retirement and dismissal, were written into the law. And to assist these, a statistical office for gathering information and implementing policy was created.⁶² Indeed, a careful examination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the most modern ministry, demonstrates that modern-educated Muslim officials had the upper hand in terms of mobility compared with their traditionally educated Muslim peers.⁶³

In fact, despite severe financial woes, the Hamidian state devoted unprecedented resources and emotional energy to education, which may be counted as its greatest achievement. A critical consequence of expansion in mass education was the rise of the educated middle class, many of whom were absorbed into the military and bureaucracy.⁶⁴ An oft-repeated irony is that the Young Turks were the products of schools the Hamidian regime had attentively nurtured. To fully appreciate the woes of this discontented class, the sultan's neopatrimonial policy should be scrutinized.

Yıldız the Center

The Palace's ascendancy over the Porte was accompanied by an unprecedented expansion of its administrative apparatus. Its fifteen divisions, although officially unacknowledged, allowed it to trump the Sublime Porte. All important affairs, foreign or domestic, required Palace consultation and thus the Ottoman ambassadors, governors, and provincial officials contacted it directly for military or civilian matters of significance. The Sublime Porte's loss of credibility was further highlighted in its inability to independently appoint high-ranking military and civil officials, and sometimes even subgovernors; the Palace followed the selections closely and made independent background checks before approving official announcements. The Palace's autonomy was further reinforced by its private military force and its spy network.⁶⁵

This extensive spy network has been the subject of much commentary. It became an integral part of the Palace apparatus for monitoring all government activities following the suppression of the Young Ottoman movement.⁶⁶ It siphoned off an inordinate part of the revenue as reports were reciprocated with cash, medals, jobs, promotions, and salary increases. Monies and rewards

⁶² Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 249, 270–271, 285. Akarlı, *The Problems*, pp. 138–139.

⁶³ Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, pp. 279–280, 325.

⁶⁴ Fortna has argued the new push for education to be the result of the struggle for the hearts and minds of the public, an issue intimately related to the internal “legitimation deficit” (Deringil 1998) of the Ottoman state. The foreign, the missionary, and the *millet* schools provided a good deal of competition for the state schools, which became an impetus for improvement and expansion. Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*; Somel, *Public Education*; Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, pp. 93–106. See also Lewis, *The Emergence*, pp. 181–183; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 249–251; Berkes, *Secularism*, p. 256; and Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 82.

⁶⁵ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 20–29, 31, 34–36, 38, 41. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, vol. 2, pp. 591–593.

⁶⁶ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol.1, pp. 191–192.

funneled though the system were used for information gathering and to buy loyalties or reinforce them. Perpetual writing of reports (*jurnal*), from the highest to the lowest ranks, created an atmosphere of unhealthy competition, jealousy, and intrigue, that pervaded the administration.⁶⁷

As Palace insiders recalled, individuals introduced themselves by reference not to their jobs but to their protector in the Palace – that they were the agents of such and such a bey or pasha at the Palace secretariat (*mabeyn*). Even the prime ministers and cabinet ministers had such protectors at the Palace. This created for the sultan an extensive and reliable information network: a minister's undersecretary reported to the sultan on the doings of his superior through his Palace contact, his underling reported on the undersecretary through a Palace contact of his own, and so on down various administrative levels.⁶⁸

Yet even the critics were wont to acknowledge that the Palace administration was the most modern in the Ottoman bureaucracy. Its personnel were first-rank graduates of schools of higher learning, in particular of the School of Civil Administration (*Mülkiye*), an institution that was nurtured by the sultan. In selecting the Palace staff, he did not take heed of class backgrounds, and consequently many hailed from poor families.⁶⁹ Still, education was not their only or most significant qualification.

Although Abdülhamid encouraged replacing the old-style bureaucrats, he violated an essential modern administrative principle: he expected loyalty to his person, granting a large portion of promotions and rewards in exchange.⁷⁰ Despite the premium placed on educational credentials, especially for the inner circle, he first sought unflinching loyalty and obedience. This included ministers, Palace secretariat employees (*mabeynciler*), and holders of top military posts.⁷¹ It was thus required of many, including the prime minister and cabinet ministers, that they express loyalty and servitude (*sadakat, ubudiyet*) regularly in person. This they did in routine twice a week visits to the palace during which the sultan did not even receive them unless there was important business.⁷² Even the

⁶⁷ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 11–12, 23–24, 103–104, 183–184, 203–204. Nuri Abdülhamid-i Sani, Vol. 2, pp. 496–532. In addition to other secretive communications channels with the Palace, the sultan had established a private, secret communication office (*Hususi Şifre Dairesi*) through which governors, military commanders, and ambassadors could contact the sultan directly using a secret code. Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, p. 26.

⁶⁸ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 38–39. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 2, pp. 591–593.

⁶⁹ Abdülhamid also paid particular attention to the appointment of district and sub-provincial governors from the ranks of the *Mülkiye*. Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 22–23, 47–48. Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 2, pp. 499–500. For additional commentary see Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, *İnkılap Tarihimiz ve İttihad ve Terakki* (Istanbul: Tan Matbaası, 1948), pp. 59–61; Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 64, 234; Lewis, *Emergence*, pp. 178–179; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, pp. 212–215; Berkes, *Secularism*, p. 256; and Akarlı, *The Problems*, pp. 103–104.

⁷⁰ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük, Cilt I: (1889–1902)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1985), pp. 62–63. Findley; *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 235, 287–288, 324.

⁷¹ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 48–49; Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 1, pp. 191–192.

⁷² Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, p. 39.

children's teachers were chosen, first and foremost, for their demonstrated loyalty.⁷³

Part of Abdülhamid's strategy was to have every member of the administration in permanent indebtedness, pretending that promotions were made by him alone, and that individuals were thus beholden to his person.⁷⁴ The high-ranking statesmen complied with this norm and were ready to accuse of treason anyone deviating from the principles of loyalty and devotion.⁷⁵

The civil officialdom reflected these changes in its language, which rehabilitated words, such as "loyalty" and "obedience," that had fallen into disuse.⁷⁶ The language shift was on display, for example, when Colonel (*miralay*) Ismail Bey, an aide-de-camp (*yaveran*), addressed the sultan to request a gold medal of merit for Ahmed Tevfik Bey, the military attaché of the Ottoman embassy in Paris, for being a worthy soldier.⁷⁷ His sensational dispatches warned that "a fortress is captured from within" and that the fifth columnists were closer than the sultan imagined. Praying that God may rid the sultan of traitors hiding behind a mask of loyalty (*sadakat maskeli hainler*), he described Tevfik as a servant who was surely deserving of a medal for his true loyalty (*sadakat*). According to him, Tevfik had felt overlooked upon seeing his friends – companions to a certain General Şakir – receiving gold medals continuously. He urged the sultan to do the same for the neglected Tevfik, and as proof of unflinching devotion (*ubudiyet*), he pointed to Tevfik's heart-wrenching translation of European press articles for review in Istanbul.⁷⁸ Beyond the shift in language, on display were the unhealthy competition of patrons and clients; attempts to protect and deliver the goods to clients; and handouts from the Palace in return for loyalty and the Palace's role in fueling rivalries.

Also noteworthy for the use of "loyalty" and "obedience" (eight times in the eleven surviving lines) was the Third Army Commander, Nazım Pasha, in a letter to the sultan on the eve of his controversial appointment as the minister of war in 1909: "The loyalty and obedience of the Army to our sultan is evident . . . I am absolutely certain that the military administration will always remain loyal and obedient to the sultan, the Commander in Chief, and my loyalty and all the soldiers' loyalty is inseparable from the person and spirit of the sultan. As for my loyalty, it should not be doubted at all . . . I desire loyalty only to our Sultan."⁷⁹

In the post-revolutionary period, one sensationalizing populist pamphlet's only redeeming quality was its insight about the effects of the spy network, with the logic of the network depicted as analogous to all spy systems under modern

⁷³ Better known was that his Albanian personal bodyguards were chosen for their loyalty. After them, the Bosnians had a special place. Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 30–31.

⁷⁴ The First Secretary recounted his own promotion to the new job in 1894 as an example. Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 1–5.

⁷⁵ Hanioglu, *Jön Türklük*, p. 57. ⁷⁶ Hanioglu, *Jön Türklük*. ⁷⁷ Y.EE. 15–78, n.d..

⁷⁸ Y.EE. 15–78, n.d..

⁷⁹ Y.EE 15–175, n.d.. This was the controversial appointment of Nazım Pasha to the ministry of war by Kamil Paşa, which finally led to his downfall

authoritarian rule. Denouncing the police and the spy network as equally despicable tools of tyranny, the pamphlet's author nonetheless found an important difference: "It was possible to protect one's self from the police because visible to the eye." But the second, hidden force made resistance impossible by "penetrating every fiber of the nation's existence, and creating an intolerably frightening effect."⁸⁰ This self-confident force gathered adherents in search of money, position, and prestige, and expanded unobstructed. When it came to loyalty, the author added, "as soon as I penned this word my heart began to ache uncontrollably – yes, 'loyalty' – See how this pleasing quality had become the biggest goal of that cursed profession."⁸¹

A distinction between *journals* that expressed loyalty and spy reports pure and simple is necessary. The two were confounded in the public mind, and this confusion has left its trace on scholarly opinion. The sheer magnitude of *journal* reporting, as convincingly argued by Hanioglu, should not be equated with spying.⁸² Letters that, as a rule, began with expressions of loyalty sometimes did contain valuable security information, but often the information was trivial, written for the record and for purposes other than spying.⁸³ As a prominent Young Turk (Ömer Naci) who had dispatched such reports himself testified later, they were a necessity to protect one's job and avert banishment. Such embarrassing admissions brought with them the unfortunate decision to destroy all such communications in the revolutionary aftermath.⁸⁴ The few surviving letters are to embarrass eternally the comrades in arms who had fallen out of favor. The implicating letters of Abdullah Cevdet, one of the four original founders of the Committee of Union and Progress, are a case in point. These ranged from simple thank-you notes for money received per an earlier request, to solicitation of a job transfer and promotion, to the news of an impending assassination attempt against the sultan of which he claimed to have substantive knowledge. Despite the opposition credentials of its author, the letters' servile tone and expressions of loyalty match any others of this period.⁸⁵

Daily grant of promotions, salary increases, and medals to those who solicited them were without consideration of necessity or attention to financial capacity. First Secretary Tahsin Pasha, one of the system's harshest critics, claimed that a mere 10 percent of requests were granted because of the sultan's personal conviction; the rest were granted because of the incessant and annoying begging

⁸⁰ Anonymous, *Mahkeme-i Kübra, Üçüncü Kitap: Osmanlı İhtilalleri* (n.p., 1326/1908), p. 15. This and similarly hyperbolic populist pamphlets that bore the same name were distinguishable by their subtitles.

⁸¹ *Osmanlı İhtilalleri*, p. 15.

⁸² For the tendency to reduce all dispatches to spy "reports on fellow officers," see Ramsaur, *Prelude*, p. 116. See also Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire*, p. 214.

⁸³ Hanioglu, *Jön Türklük*, pp. 59–60.

⁸⁴ Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, p. 25; *Jön Türklük*, p. 61.

⁸⁵ For a sample, see Y.EE 15–140, 30 April 1900; Y.EE 15–141, 24 July 1903/11 Temmuz 1319; Y.EE 15–142, 2 May 1903, and 14 July 1903/1 Temmuz 1319.

of the elite. The sultan, aware that the information network required the buying of loyalty, did not put a stop to the practice.⁸⁶

The new patrimonialism could perhaps be considered to be in line with the Hamidian alternative modernity that pursued the Westernist aims of Tanzimat but broke with its cultural straightjacket. Yet if this was a success in education – and it was not without its critics⁸⁷ – the hybrid form in the administrative and military was not. This judgment is not in need of an external yardstick. Those touched by the new patrimonialism refused to abide by what they considered a mixed, confused, and unfair logic that undermined the essence of the state's own teachings, and to their detriment.

Similar problems plagued the army and became acute around holidays, with a deluge of requests for promotions and favors arriving especially from the First Army Corps, stationed in Istanbul, the Second Army Corps, partially stationed there, and the Palace officers. Add to this the requests of the heads of the army and artillery submitted in registers (*defter*), which were granted entirely, and the never-ending private requests, which were satisfied for the most part. Officers who had been promoted fairly, on the other hand, had to wait years for further advancement and their commanders' requests on these occasions were turned down for unknown reasons. A case in point was the formal complaint of General İbrahim Pasha, the head of the Third Army (the hotbed of Young Turk activity), to the Palace. He had recommended officers for promotion to the Ministry of War thirteen times, but the names could still not find their way to the registers. Even worse, officers in far-away places, such as those in the Sixth and Seventh Army Corps, were overlooked entirely. Thus, related Tahsin Pasha, to promote again and again the officers in the Palace's immediate surroundings – that is, those responsible for the sultan's personal protection – while ignoring deserving candidates in the outlying regions was both harmful to the treasury and destructive of martial discipline. In his opinion, a major cause of the rebellion in Rumelia was the officers' despondency caused by this injustice.⁸⁸

Spy reports, even when diametrically opposed, supported the contemporaries' observation. An underling of the minister of war, for example, condemned his superior for being angry at the sultan; the cause was the sultan's promotion of

⁸⁶ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 103–104; Hanioglu, *Jön Türklük*, p. 57; Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, p. 25, n. 182, provides a very interesting sample of petitions by civil and military officials to the Sultan. Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 234–235.

⁸⁷ Somel in particular is skeptical of its success in education. *Public Education*, pp. 5, 168.

⁸⁸ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 135–136. A British consular report dated 30 March 1896 denied the rumors about the exceptionally severe financial conditions in the Ottoman army and compared it favorably against the Sublime Porte. Instead, the soldiers' grievances were attributed to "universal espionage, the gross favoritism, corruption, and consequent injustice and the general inefficiency of the Administration." *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 39, 30 March 1896, pp. 146–147. A 1908 report considered lack of pay and unfair selections for promotions as the main causes of dissatisfaction. *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 93, 11 July 1908, p. 491. For additional reports, see *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 112, 24 July 1908, pp. 500–501; *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 113, 15 July 1908, p. 501; *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 114, 17 July 1908. For the Young Turk demands see *B DFA*, Vol. 19, Doc 115, 13 July 1908, p. 506; Ramsaur, *The Young Turks* pp. 116, 130–131.

a group of soldiers at their commanders' request despite a budget shortage. After all, he asked sycophantically, was it too much for the sultan to promote a few capable soldiers? Signaling awareness of the officer corps's distaste for the practice, he placed the blame for the officers' dissatisfaction on the minister himself and his failure to grant promotions on time. Even if the sultan had promoted a hundred, he added, it would not have affected the budget adversely; and it was the minister's job, after all, to balance expenditures. He thus maintained that if the sultan's orders were executed, there remained no room for complaint among the subjects; and that to exercise uncertainty about his orders equaled disobedience.⁸⁹ In contrast, another spy report accused the minister of indirectly sanctioning such unfair practices. A confidential report from the infantry office accused its head, Cemal Pasha, who was reported to be a friend and relative of the minister of war, of systematically overlooking officers with a successful examination record and years of experience. Instead, he promoted their juniors, who lacked appropriate certification and in some cases even suffered from physical handicaps. The report warned that the persistence of this practice prepared the ground for the officers' discontent with the sultan.⁹⁰

Along with spying, censorship received attention for its harshness and notoriety. Contemporaries recalled that words such as revolution (*ihtilal*), liberty, fatherland (*vatan*), constitution, anarchy, injustice, and, in general, words with strong political connotations were banned in the press. But the censors forbade also words of a historical or geographical nature, such as Armenia or Macedonia, and seemingly neutral words such as *taht*, under, because of its resemblance to *taht*, the throne, and *hal*, condition, because of its closeness to *hal'*, depose. Even *saye*, shadow, was restricted to the sultan because of its regal connotations.⁹¹ Religious books could not escape the censors either and were routinely destroyed.⁹²

THE NEW GENERATION: THE YOUNG TURKS

After the closing of the Young Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, it took more than a decade for the second generation of Ottoman constitutionalists to begin to take shape. The opposition that came to be known as the Young Turks considered themselves heirs to the Young Ottoman movement. Inspired by the successful independence movement in Greece (and perhaps modeled after it, as well as after the organizational structure of the Young Italians), the first cell of the Young Turk opposition was formed by four students in 1889 in the Royal Military

⁸⁹ Y.EE 15-165, n.d.. ⁹⁰ Y.EE 15-167, n.d..

⁹¹ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1127-1128 (for a common impression of the spy network, see pp. 1125-1130). See also Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 2, pp. 582-583, 587; Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 160-162.

⁹² These were burned at the bathhouse of Çemberlitaş (Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 2, pp. 587-589). The grievance found its way into the *fetva* issued on the occasion of Abdülhamid's dethronement.

Medical Academy and named the Ottoman Union Society (*İttihad-ı Osmani Cemiyeti*). From there the organization spread to the School of Civil Administration, to the War Academy, to other schools of higher learning, and even to high schools, religious organizations (*tekkes*), and areas beyond the capital, transforming itself from a student group to a relatively sophisticated organization.⁹³ The next few years witnessed the arrests and the subsequent migration of a relatively large group to Egypt and to Europe, primarily France. In Paris, the émigré community founded what became the major opposition organization, with a former provincial bureaucrat, Ahmed Rıza, as its leader. By 1894 Ahmed Rıza had established himself as one of the best-known critics of the regime and had become the leader of the whole European organization, with regular contacts with the opposition organization inside the empire. An ardent follower of Auguste Comte, the positivist, anti-religionist Ahmed Rıza in 1894 suggested the new name Order and Progress (*Nizam ve Terakki*), Comte's motto, for the entire organization in Istanbul and abroad. The Istanbul organization insisted on preserving the term Union (*İttihad*) in the title and in a compromise the new organization came to be named the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter CUP, *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*).⁹⁴ As the original title indicated, "union" stood for unity among the empire's religious and ethnic groups,⁹⁵ and "progress" indicated belief in science and modernity. An early CUP manifesto, undated, and apparently the first declaration of its kind, began as follows:

The Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress, composed of all Ottoman women and men, is established with the purpose of warning our Muslim and Christian compatriots of the present government's method of administration which violates human rights such as justice, equality and liberty, and which has prevented the progress of all Ottomans and subjected the fatherland to foreign domination and abuse (article 1).

⁹³ The founding members were İbrahim Temo, İshak Süküti, Mehmed Reşid, and Abdullah Cevdet. İbrahim Temo, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyetinin Teşekkülü ve Hidematı Vataniye ve İnkılabı Milliye Dair Hatıratım* (Mecidiye, 1939), pp. 10–11, 16–22. Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 71–73. The latter is the definitive account of the Young Turks' early activities and differs, in some important respects, from that of Kuran and Ramsaur. Greek inspiration is the claim of İbrahim Temo, whereas the Young Turks organization is more commonly attributed to the inspiration of the Young Italians and Carbonari. But on this count, Hanioglu maintains that although links between the ideas of Carbonari and the CUP organizational structure are plausible, direct evidence for them may not be found. *Young Turks in Opposition*, p. 72; see also Kuran, *İttihad ve Terakki*, pp. 61–66; Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 30–35, 62; Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 14–18; Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 90–94. For more information on early Young Turk activities in schools and their initial emergence from among the university students, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, "Genesis of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları III* (1982), esp. pp. 278–281.

⁹⁴ Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, p. 74. Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler, 1859–1952* (Istanbul: Doğan Kardeş Yayınları, A. S. Basımevi, 1952), p. 104.

⁹⁵ For one of the most explicit statements that equated union (*İttihad*) with unity among the various ethnic groups, see the resolution of the Second Congress of the Young Turks. Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, p. 241.

Claiming to strive for the public good, indiscriminate of nationality, ethnicity, gender or religion (article 2), the CUP's avowed purpose was to restore and protect the principles of consultation (*usul-ı meşveret*), the guarantor of human rights and the source of the progress of civilizations (article 3). The document also expressed loyalty to Ottoman rule and caliphate, although not unconditionally: if the ruler did not abide by religious and secular laws and did not accept the principles of consultation or uphold individual and civil rights, he was to be dealt with according to the religious and secular laws (article 4).⁹⁶ Worthy of note were associations made between constitutionalism and progress. In 1895 the society began publishing a newspaper in Ottoman Turkish and French with the Islamic title *Meşveret* (*Consultation*). However, Ahmed Rıza's use of the positivist calendar on the mast head of *Meşveret* and his well-known anti-religiosity caused concern among compatriots, who thought his actions might hurt the movement by playing into the hands of opponents.⁹⁷

The years 1895 to 1906 witnessed the regular fleeing of activists to Egypt and Europe, especially after the aborted coup of 1896 and the more vigorous suppression of the internal organization that followed. The arrival of the new émigrés, combined with a weaker internal organization, made the groups abroad the primary locus of opposition. These years also proved to be a testy time for the authoritarian leadership of Ahmed Rıza, who faced his first serious challenge with the 1895 arrival of Mehmet Murad, the nationalist author (whose work was examined), teacher of history at the School of Civil Administration, and reputable editor of the literary and critical newspaper *Mizan*. Murad, unlike Ahmed Rıza, placed great emphasis on the Islamic character of the empire, sultanate, and caliphate.⁹⁸ This outlook, especially the emphasis on Islam, was more in keeping with the attitude of the community in

⁹⁶ Tunaya, *Siyasi Partiler*, pp. 117–122, also Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler. Cilt I: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi, 1908–1918* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1984), pp. 39–45, and Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 75–76. According to Ahmet Bedevi Kuran, Tunaya reports, this manifesto belonged to the student activists in the Imperial Medical Academy. Hanioglu, without contradicting Kuran's claim, writes that it was most probably written by Ahmed Rıza. Hanioglu has also noted the changing position toward Christians and Armenians in the various initial manifestos of the CUP.

⁹⁷ The excessive positivism of Ahmed Rıza has been the subject of extensive commentary. See, in particular, Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 200–295. See also Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, p. 27; Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 23–24, 29–30; Temo, *İnkılabı Milliye*, pp. 82–83. Ramsaur did not consider Ahmed Rıza as genuinely antireligious. Hanioglu's investigation of Rıza's private letters, however, confirms beyond doubt his instrumental use of religious rhetoric to appeal to the general public.

⁹⁸ The strong sense of loyalty to the sultan was prevalent throughout his novel. When the office employees queued to kiss the hem of the robe of the chief who symbolically substituted for the sultan during a national celebration ritual, the protagonist found the act despicable, though not because the sultan was undeserving of such homage but because he was the only personage deserving of it. He thought the employees should have paid symbolic respect to an empty chair rather than to the office chief who had abused the occasion for affirming loyalty to his person. The bureaucrats, rather than the sultan, were therefore at fault. Murad, *Turfanda*, pp. 123–124, 127–128, 307.

exile. This made Murad's journal popular to the point of forcing the Turkish edition of Ahmed Rıza's *Meşveret* out of circulation (it was then published in French only), and leaving *Mizan* as the only opposition newspaper in Turkish. Another point of contention was Murad's advocacy of a Palace coup and of a Great Powers intervention to depose Abdülhamid. This, it should be noted, did not change Murad's strong commitment to the sultanate in general. From Cairo, Murad eventually undermined Ahmed Rıza's dominance over the CUP, a matter that was officially confirmed when a secret ballot transferred the leadership to Murad. The CUP was now split. The Paris branch lost much of its prominence and its organizational contacts inside the empire and abroad, in competition with Murad's faction, which moved to Geneva in February 1897.

Events took a sharp turn in July 1897 when a group of prominent Young Turk leaders, Murad included, were lured back to the empire by the sultan, who promised amnesty, reform, and (more damaging to the Young Turks' credibility) lucrative positions.⁹⁹ When the sultan reneged on his promises yet again, it was a terrible blow to the movement. But it vindicated Ahmed Rıza and placed him at the helm once again.

The second challenge to Ahmed Rıza's leadership came in December 1899 with the arrival of Damad Mahmud Pasha, the sultan's brother-in-law, and his two sons, Sabahaddin and Lütfullah, who had left Istanbul in protest against the sultan. They arrived at a time when the CUP and the Young Turk movement were ebbing. Their arrival was not only a boost to the opposition's prestige, but it also brought badly needed funds from wealthy members of the royal family. More than Mahmud Pasha, who passed away shortly after, it was a son, Prince Sabahaddin, who posed the most serious challenge as yet to Ahmed Rıza's leadership. The family's arrival also revived the interventionist stance that had been silenced with Murad's departure. Ardently pro-British, Prince Sabahaddin and his father consistently appealed to Britain for intervention in Ottoman affairs. To this end they sought the cooperation of Armenian nationalist groups, whom they knew to be favored by the Great Powers.¹⁰⁰

Aside from these two main opposing factions, Hanioglu has identified three additional factions by the time of the first congress of Ottoman opposition in 1902. One group consisted of young medical academy students in Istanbul who had no clearly defined agenda but opposed the sultan. Another, known as the activists, had headquarters in Geneva and was headed by Tunali Hilmi. Influenced by anarchist ideologies, they advocated the violent overthrow of the Sultan. The third faction was the Balkan organization that operated in Romania under the guidance of İbrahim Temo, one of the four original founders of the CUP.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 71–109. Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 40–65. Ramsaur, *Prelude* 27–29, 37–51.

¹⁰⁰ Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 142–166. Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 89–91. Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 52–65.

¹⁰¹ Temo had established the Balkan organization in 1896. Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 89–90, 167–172.

An important development between the CUP's founding and the pivotal congress in 1902 was the transformation of the group from a Muslim-Ottoman organization to one dominated by Ottoman Turks who favored advocating the ethnic cause.¹⁰²

The differences between the two dominant positions, one headed by Sabahaddin and the other by Ahmed Rıza, came out into the open during that first congress of Ottoman opposition, held in Paris in February 1902; the disagreement was made official with a split. Known as the "Congress of Ottoman Liberals," the meeting convened under the leadership of Sabahaddin. Despite the organizers' attempt to attract a cross section of the empire's religious and ethnic nationalities, they succeeded in attracting only the Armenians in a meaningful, representative fashion. Also represented but not as broadly were the Albanians and the Greeks, with the latter having no formal ties to the population in Macedonia. Other nationalities who participated did so as Committee members rather than as representatives of respective ethnic groups. The largest omission here was the Arab population, which had no formal representation. Nonetheless, the congress did succeed in falsely presenting the image of true representation to the European press.¹⁰³

At the conference, the Sabahaddin and Ahmed Rıza factions concurred on constitutional goals, but met resistance from the Armenian delegates who abstained on this issue. The major disagreement between the two was whether violence and the army should be used to overthrow the sultan; and, more important, on whether the Great Powers should be invited to intervene to hasten the process. The Sabahaddin faction, which was in favor of all these measures, received the support of Armenian delegates. Ahmed Rıza's faction rejected them all and denounced foreign intervention especially, arguing that it could only lead to the empire's breakup.¹⁰⁴ In the final analysis, the congress became split not over constitutional goals, or over the use of violence and the military, but over the question of the Great Powers' intervention in Ottoman internal affairs.

The pro-interventionist Sabahaddin faction, which came to be known as the "majority," reached common ground with the Armenian representatives. In a compromise, the Armenians accepted a future Ottoman constitution for all areas, including the six provinces that were home to the majority of the empire's Armenians, but they continued to insist on "special reforms" under the constitutional regime within those provinces. The demanded reforms were those in Article 61 of the 1878 Berlin Treaty, which had not yet been implemented.

¹⁰² Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 168–170, 194.

¹⁰³ Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 173, 182–184.

¹⁰⁴ Ramsaur notes that Ahmed Rıza rejected violence and use of revolutionary means because of dogmatic adherence to positivism. Ramsaur, *Prelude*, p. 38. Although important as a guiding principle, positivism was not the principal reason. More important was the explicitly stated reason, namely the fear of the empire's breakup due to foreign intervention. With receding fear of foreign intervention and assurances against outbreaks of ethnic hostilities, the CUP became more open to violence.

The anti-interventionist stance of the Ahmed Rıza faction brought the activists to its side, and together they formed the “minority” faction. This was a critical development. In fact, this group was the minority only in name; its seven journals, compared with the so-called majority’s one, highlighted this difference, and the “minority” also had a far broader organizational reach and dominance over the networks in Paris, Geneva, Egypt, and Bulgaria. The “majority,” in contrast, had contacts only with the high-ranking bureaucrats in Istanbul. After the 1902 congress, the newly found journal *Şura-yı Ümmet*, published in Cairo and Paris, became the principal mouthpiece of the minority faction or the CUP.¹⁰⁵ The result was the merging of gradualist positivists with activists who were calling for a Palace coup, their point of agreement being dislike for foreign intervention.

Also, the two groups approached the question of administrative centralization differently, a disparity that gained prominence at the second congress of Ottoman opposition in 1907. With the split, the prince established the Society of Ottoman Liberals and its journal *Osmanlı*, and the Society for Private Initiative and Decentralization (*Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti*) and its principal journal *Terakki*. The ten-point program of this society was particularly sensitive to the minority question and the interethnic strife within the empire. It suggested ways, though in only general terms, of managing a multiethnic empire by granting greater representation to minorities in both the administration and the Gendarmerie.¹⁰⁶ If Ahmed Rıza based his ideas on the works of reputable social thinkers, so too did Sabahaddin, who became a rigid follower of Friedrich Le Play and Edmund Demolin, particularly the latter, who had written on the reasons for Anglo-Saxon superiority. Sabahaddin and Liberals severely criticized the CUP’s French centralization model in favor of the decentralized model that supposedly prevailed among the Anglo-Saxons. Sabahaddin argued that the empire’s population, especially the Muslim Turks, should correct a major defect in their attitude so that they would be able to implement such a system of government. This point, it is interesting to note, was basically what Demolin had found to be wrong with the French in comparison with the Anglo-Saxons: that they lacked individuality and initiative, and were accustomed to finding employment at the service of the state.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *Osmanlı* became the publication of the majority, first published in Folkstone and then Cairo after the death of Damad Mahmud Pasha in 1903. Later, *Terakki* became the main journal of Liberals, while *Şura-yı Ümmet* continued, until 1908, to be the main and thereafter one of the more important CUP journals. Haniöglü, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 188–199; Bayur, *İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. 1, Part 1, pp. 268–270; Tunaya, *Siyasi Partiler*, pp. 106–107; Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 151–154; Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 65–76, 120–121.

¹⁰⁶ Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 169–173; Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 81–87. For the announcement of the society, see Kuran, *İttihad ve Terakki*, 234–235.

¹⁰⁷ The Liberals’ central slogan of later years, “decentralization and extension of responsibility/authority” (*adem-i merkezîyet ve tevsî-i mezuniyet*) was equivalent to their earlier “private initiative and decentralization.” For both groups economic development was central and as early as 1908 Sabahaddin had expressed concern for the Turks. Yet the Liberals advocated a decentralized state, a vastly different alternative for solving the empire’s problems. See

After the first congress, the CUP emerged as the key player in the Young Turk movement, a position it continued to hold until the very end. In this and the [next chapter](#) I attempt to reconstruct, from the vantage point of the CUP, the pressing issues that confronted the empire and the CUP's offered remedy. The CUP's primary journal, *Şura-yı Ümmet*, will thus be considered in depth and an attempt will be made to stay as close as possible to the rhetoric of revolution. The reader should bear in mind that from this moment on, all reference to the Young Turks, unless otherwise specified, is to the CUP and not to the broader coalition.

The impact of the first constitutional period on the second went beyond the mere demand for restoration of Midhat's constitution. The Young Turks fixated on the Young Ottoman strategy of revolution from above. Furthermore, the Young Ottoman experience had already made the Young Turks seasoned constitutionalists: organizing an election, handling the delicate issue of Ottomanism, the battles between the Chamber of Deputies on the one hand and the Porte and the Palace on the other, were not abstract concepts. These were tremendous advantages compared with their Iranian counterparts. Even the movement's defeat was an important lesson for future safeguards.

It is also hard to overemphasize the intellectual legitimacy that the Young Ottomans' Islamism brought to constitutionalism. After more than thirty years, the idea was hegemonic among the intelligentsia. This partly explains why the Young Turks did not belabor the Islamic roots of constitutionalism – even the clerics, at least those in higher echelons, did not need further convincing. On occasion, though, the Young Turks did see the necessity of resorting to that language. In 1903, for example, they cited one of the two famous Quranic verses on consultation (the other appeared permanently on the mast head of their main newspaper), and a few *hadith* – “a mistake made after counsel is better than a right without counsel” – to make their point. Not only were the sultans in the age of the glory of empire far better trained by the learned – presumably when the sultans adhered more closely to Islamic principles – but they paid close attention to their consultative assemblies. These bodies deposed despotic sultans who deviated from the law and religion at once. Logic dictated the same because a single ruler was never able to make sound judgments about every aspect of rule. The populist rhetoric, although uncommon, when surfaced resembled that in Iran: “the constitution” protected the treasury of the Muslims from plunder and pillage; “the constitution” prevented the appointment of the present irreligious, base, ignorant, guilty, embezzling ministers and grand viziers; “the constitution” guaranteed the survival and prosperity of the country and was the reason for justice, amazing progress, power, and the daily increase of wealth in Europe. The

M. Sabahaddin, *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Tevsi-i Mezuniyet Hakkında Bir İzah* (Istanbul: Cihan, 1324/1908), and M. Sabahaddin, *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Tevsi-i Mezuniyet Hakkında İkinci Bir İzah* (Istanbul: Mahmud Bey Matbaası, 1324/1908), especially pp. 28–29, 41–43. The various works by Ahmed Bedevi Kuran, Prince Sabahaddin's personal secretary, provides one of the most detailed descriptions of the Liberals' activities. See also Bayur, *İnkılabı Tarihi*, Vol. 1, Part 1.

only way to prevent disintegration of the seven-hundred-year-old government was to depose Abdülhamid, proclaim the constitution and open the Chamber of Deputies.¹⁰⁸ As they were to put it a year later: “To save the fatherland from danger, there is no other solution than to change this administration. It will become easier to prevent foreigners from doing harm not when our country is ruled by the whims of a madman but only when a National Assembly is opened that operates on the joint basis of *şer’* and legal codes and only after Ottoman voices begin to roar.”¹⁰⁹

Other key words from the discourse of Young Ottomans, like the unity of nation and state (*millet ve devlet*), surfaced as well: “Putting into effect the constitutional laws, in addition to protecting the rights and interests of the fatherland, means uniting the strengths and voices of the nation and state. Isn’t such a plan better than letting our government persist with such a weak and feeble state and continue under the influence and domination of foreign powers?”¹¹⁰ Another favorite term with magical powers was public opinion. Modern England, France and America had purportedly come into being after revolutions that had made public opinion central, and no leader in the civilized world, the Young Turks added, managed affairs or made decisions without taking the public’s criticisms and judgments into account.¹¹¹ Borrowed also was the Young Ottomans’ critique of tyranny, but now it was held as the reason for economic stagnation, with constitutionalism as its antidote. The Turks were warned that if they wanted to avoid stooping to such lows as falling under Bulgarian domination, it was incumbent upon them to search for reasons in the highroad of civilization and to set out to remove ignorance and despotic government.¹¹²

Yet, as a rule, the CUP leaders were known for their anti-religiosity. They clung to religion not sincerely but strategically, conveniently, disingenuously, and paternalistically. Their rigid modernity differed from that of their predecessors. It ended rejecting, here tacitly and there explicitly, the alternative modernist vision of the post-Tanzimat era in favor of an “unadulterated” Westernism. If in

¹⁰⁸ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 36, 7 September 1903/15 Cemaziyelahir 1321, “Meşrutiyet İdarenin Ezhercihet Lüzumunu İsbat Beyanındadır,” pp. 1–2.

¹⁰⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 61, 10 October 1904/1 Şaban 1322, “Şundan Bundan,” pp. 3–4 (quote from p. 4).

¹¹⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 42, 4 December 1903/15 Ramazan 1321, “Avrupa, Hünkar, Millet,” pp. 1–2 (quote from p. 1).

¹¹¹ In the West, thousands of newspapers informed the public of the world on a daily basis, but who told the truth to their poor nation? they asked. Who was there to inform them about other countries’ aspirations, progress, and methods of administration? Who was to tell them of the dangers ahead? After referring to the circumstances that had led to the formation of revolutionary thought in France, they concluded it was the duty of intellectuals to do so. Yet, under Abdülhamid, the newspapers reflected his desires alone and instead of informing the public compounded their ignorance. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 73, 20 April 1905/15 Safer 1323, “İkdam Gazetesi Lisana Gelmiş,” pp. 1–2.

¹¹² *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 86, 12 November 1905/15 Ramazan 1323, “fa-‘tabiru ya uli al-absar,” pp. 1–2.

public they insisted on the Islamic roots of constitutionalism, they were not much concerned with this pedigree, and certainly were not persuaded to the same degree as the Young Ottomans. Inevitably, their private beliefs surfaced in less than impassioned public concessions to religion.

Their undeclared anti-religiosity had root in Comtean positivism, Buchner and Vogt's biological materialism, and Darwinism, or more accurately the social Darwinism of Spencer. In addition, Le Bon's antipopulist, antiliberal elitism played an important role in their thinking.¹¹³ With the knowledge of the latest "scientific" advances in the social and natural world, culled from these sources they felt as vanguards of progress and in a position to transform the Ottoman state and society. Their scientific evolutionary outlook came dangerously close to unifying natural and social worlds, and seeing one as reflection of the other.

Constitutionalism, by ushering in material and economic progress, bolstered the state's status and power on the world stage. Material progress in turn was to be achieved by overhauling the state and transforming it into a scientific machine of social intervention. This statist interpretation was not particularly inclined toward liberalism and in fact, viewed constitutionalism first and foremost as a means to save the empire and not as an end in itself. Aside from a scientific doctrine of progress, constitutionalism was a doctrine of political equality that united all Ottoman elements under the law, and brought them together in a legislative chamber. This brought the dissatisfied non-Muslim elements into the Ottoman fold and deprived the nationalists of an excuse to revolt. Consequently, it left the Great Powers without a pretext to intervene in Ottoman affairs. Yet their approach to ethnic identity was less flexible than their predecessors'. Even if we accept Devereux's judgment that "although [the Young Ottomans] viewed non-Muslim co-operation and participation as an essential element of the new regime, they were by no means advocates of abandonment of Turkish-Muslim supremacy,"¹¹⁴ the Young Ottomans could still move more freely, and hence more genuinely, between the three identity poles (Islam, Turkism, Ottomanism) to look for ways to reconcile all three at a time when the tensions between them were intensifying. The Young Turks viewed Islam instrumentally, and although they were serious about Ottomanism, their notion of ethnicity in general, and Turkism in particular, had sharper edges.

In addition to its greater radicalism, lesser Islamism, greater emphasis on progress, a strong statist orientation, and a sense of Turkish nationalism, ideologically, the CUP differed from the Young Ottoman predecessors in one other respect. It targeted the sultan directly. (This was also an important stylistic difference with the Iranian constitutionalists.)

Beyond ideology, the structural difference between the two was of great consequence. The late nineteenth century had witnessed the rise of a new class, an intelligentsia, with far larger numbers and more humble backgrounds (the

¹¹³ Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, pp. 12, 18, 20–22, 31–32.

¹¹⁴ Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, 28.

result of aggressive educational policies). The CUP was a product of this development and as a social group could be found in the middle ranks of the army and bureaucracy. Despite occupying less sensitive positions than the Young Ottoman military and bureaucratic leaders, its strength lay in numbers. Its broader social base made it a more viable force than its predecessors. Its programs had a cohesiveness and radicalism that bore the marks of a class project.¹¹⁵

THE CUP GRIEVANCES

Administration

Ignoring many modernist tendencies of the Hamidian administration, the Young Turks portrayed the sultan as a quintessential traditionalist, an archrival of progress, and enemy of science.¹¹⁶ He was personally blamed for obstructing commerce, crippling the administration, depriving the nation of education, and opposing reforms in the army, navy, agriculture, and in the provincial administration. The unjust taxes collected by immoral and greedy officials were not spent on public works, infrastructure, commerce, security, transportation, agriculture, and the exploitation of mines and forests, but used to fill the Palace coffers, nourish and enrich the Palace staff, or spent on the spy network and the newspapers which praised Abdülhamid – “the biggest enemy of the nation.”¹¹⁷ Even when it came to foreign intervention, Abdülhamid was found to be deserving of the greater part of the blame for having brought the empire to the brink of a breakup.¹¹⁸

How the general public felt about the sultan is hard to decipher. In the CUP assertions one can detect certain anxiety over the ordinary Muslim public’s loyalty. For example, they agonized over the public’s inability to see the depth of the state’s troubles or its tendency to absolve the just and unaware sultan by holding high officials alone responsible (a trope of significance in the Iranian context).¹¹⁹ Similar worries surfaced when they chastised the Islamic clerics to reveal to the public the explicit Quranic recommendations against obeying

¹¹⁵ In contrast, Mardin considers the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks to come from essentially the same social stock, and sees opposition in blocked mobility. For the former this was because of increased numbers, but it was also in opposition to the closed social caste of top bureaucrats created in the post-Tanzimat era. See Mardin, *Young Ottomans*, 122–124.

¹¹⁶ An author argued that personal and constitutional freedoms were an outgrowth of man’s scientific thinking and Abdülhamid was the enemy of science. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 21, 29 January 1903/1 Zilkade 1320, “Nur ve Zulmet” pp. 2–3.

¹¹⁷ These assessments were part of the resolution of the Second Young Turk Congress, of which I have to say more in the following chapter. Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 239–240. For similar accusations see *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 25, 30 March 1903/1 Muharrem 1321, “Ifade,” p. 1.

¹¹⁸ For an example see *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 10, 20 August 1902/15 Cemaziyelevvel 1320, “Saye-i Şahane,” pp. 3–4.

¹¹⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 40, 5 November 1903/15 Şaban 1321, “Vergi-i Şahsi,” pp. 2–3.

tyrants, or to remind them that the Prophet invited the Muslims to consultation while the sultan shirked from his religious obligation.¹²⁰

In contrast, they had plenty of reasons to be sure about the disloyalty of many Ottoman officers. A recruit of the officer training school, for example, reported a feeling of disloyalty, even hatred, that pervaded the officers' ranks and higher military posts. Commenting on the after-dinner ritual of shouting "long live the sultan!" three times, he reported that of 2,500 to 3,000 soldiers, many chose to hide behind the voices of others in place of uttering disbelief. This habit, he added, occasionally created panicky situations when a great majority remained frighteningly silent at the trumpeter's signal.¹²¹

The main CUP journal devoted a good deal of energy to discussing the plight of its main audience, the officers and bureaucrats. Nonetheless, it avoided lengthy discussion of internal divisions within these ranks. As a mobilization strategy this would have been reckless, and even recourse to the sterile language of science and rationality could not have undone its self-serving undertones. Explicit denunciation of lower ranks as a burden deserving of dismissal had to wait.

Sporadic denouncements of lower ranks that found their way to journals came in discreetly. A supporter's letter in 1903 blamed administrative disorder and the failures of ordinary state bureaucrats on erratic and low salaries, and on the promotion of incompetent officials to the highest ranks. Even more significant was pervasive ignorance (*cehalet*), a code word for the lack of modern educational training. The author lamented that concepts such as fatherland, nation, and public spirit (*vatan*, *millet*, *hamiyet*) meant nothing to bureaucrats, and they were not cognizant that pursuit of self-interest could be incompatible with the fatherland's interests and jeopardize its survival.¹²²

A more common tack was to attack the Palace and the torrent of officials connected to it. These were blamed, for example, for the persistent salary shortages that, according to critics, were commonly in arrears from three to seven months, and deducted from on various pretexts. Additionally, military, civil, and religious administrations' retirement accounts were in shambles and paid only five months of the year, forcing the employees to sell their salary receipts to moneylenders (*sarraf*) at disproportionate (some claimed 95%) discounts. The critics were enraged that when the families of martyrs in wars lived in hunger, the scribes in the Ministry of Finance, or the Ministry of War, or the Palace Secretariat colluded with moneylenders to cash in on the discounted receipts.¹²³

These claims were corroborated by readers. A state employee, for example, wrote that he was forced to sell inherited belongings simply to survive. He mocked the state's strategy for raising revenue which was to avoid payments

¹²⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 78, 4 July 1905/1 Cemaziyelevvel, 1323, "Umum Alem-i İslamiye İkaz," pp. 3-4.

¹²¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 91, 9 April 1906/15 Safer 1324, "Mekاتب – Mekteb-i Harbiye'den," pp. 3-4.

¹²² *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 27, 29 April 1903/1 Safer 1321, "Murakabe-i Ecnebiye," pp. 2-3.

¹²³ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 60, 25 September 1904/15 Recep 1322, "Havadis-i Dahiliye," p. 4.

for six to seven months and cut public expenditures in place of cutting waste and bettering commerce, agriculture, or industry. Meanwhile, the Palace's criminal partners received regular salaries and enjoyed frequent increases. He saw no means of rescuing the treasury from these traitors other than by deposing the sultan.¹²⁴ Another bureaucrat highlighted the salary of the minister of navy, which was forty times higher than the salary of his counterpart in Greece, and sarcastically wondered if it was because the Ottoman minister's dedication to the fatherland was higher to the same degree.¹²⁵ In sympathy, the journal wrote that if bureaucrats sold their inheritances to feed children, the Palace poured money into the clients' pockets, as if it had come upon a new inheritance.¹²⁶

The state's boasting of even minor achievements was reason for ridicule. When the government proudly announced in 1905 that it had managed to pay March salaries on time in the three Macedonian provinces,¹²⁷ the CUP highlighted its demoralizing effect on the rest of the bureaucracy in places such as Bursa, Edirne, Yemen, and Syria. The staff there must not have felt anything but anger at the inequity, for one needed only a modicum of wit to recognize foreign pressure as the source of achievement in that location, and this must have led the provincial bureaucrats to wish for foreign control.¹²⁸

The Young Turks intelligently argued for the necessity of taxes and citizens' obligations, yet they also pointed to England, where low taxes and customs duties went hand in hand with high levels of justice. To the unjust category belonged the Ottoman and Iranian states, with taxes so harsh and arbitrary they resembled great historic empires and monarchies in decline. The French Revolution too had its origin in high taxes. The Ottomans were thus urged to do what all of Europe had done by the nineteenth century and assume the right to question the expenditure of their tax monies. Nations unaccustomed to administering themselves were doomed to disappear; the Ottomans could not be freed from financial and moral subservience unless they assumed the right to

¹²⁴ This was despite the fact that the author thought it was these functionaries who bore the greater part of the blame, and not the sultan, who was led astray by them. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 32, 11 July 1903/15 Rebiyülahır 1321, "Bir Memurun Hasbıhalı," p. 3.

¹²⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 35, 24 August 1903/1 Cemaziyelahir 1321, "Şundan Bundan," p. 4.

¹²⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 79, 18 July 1905/15 Cemaziyevvel 1323, "Şundan Bundan," pp. 3-4.

¹²⁷ The salaries were paid on the first day of April through the Ottoman Bank; in locations without a branch, the civil and military financial offices had stayed open on the weekend.

¹²⁸ They countered their own unpatriotic conclusion by adding that bureaucrats surely realized that foreign domination also meant subservience in commerce, in administration, and in every facet of life, a situation far from desirable. The article also questioned the foreign recruits to the bureaucracy, which in older times, it argued, had been capable men from Europe who had escaped the tyranny of their own lands to come to the service of the Ottoman state. In contrast, now they were among the lowliest men of Europe, cheats who were employed at large salaries. The argument also became an excuse to attack the Christian Ottomans who served the state: in previous eras they had been highly capable and performed with the same loyalty as Turks, but the same could not be said of the new recruits. Their numbers had remained the same, but their integrity was questionable. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 79, 18 July 1905/15 Cemaziyevvel 1323, "Şundan Bundan," pp. 3-4.

question their taxes. Only then did they merit inclusion among the community of civilized nations in honor and dignity.¹²⁹

Occasionally simplistic rhetoric identified the problem: “[tax revenue] from the provinces went to the treasury of the Ministry of Finance and from there every night, by means of small carriages, to the Yıldız [Palace].” The sultan’s share was almost twice that of the British monarchy (385,000 liras) from a budget seven times lower (14,000,000 liras, compared with the British 105,000,000 liras), even before unofficial appropriations by the sultan.¹³⁰

Another reason for ridicule was Abdülhamid’s frivolous granting of medals and ranks during celebrations of every kind, public or private. The CUP journal announced the arrest of a group of swindlers who had been running a commercial company specializing in the sale of medals, ranks, and assignments. The charge: competition with the Palace.¹³¹ Similarly, when in 1905 a medal was issued in honor of Abdülhamid’s safe escape from an assassin’s bomb at Friday prayers, the CUP humorously remarked that perhaps a medal should go to the bomb for having missed its target, and questioned why medals were distributed, as if they were alms, on the occasions of avoiding a calamity.¹³²

Officials were warned of the punishment that awaited them for acting as instruments for Abdülhamid’s feats.¹³³ Yet, despite frequent blasting of “insects nourished by Abdülhamid,” the CUP was sophisticated enough to make distinctions among the high-ranking bureaucrats: A small number, who were unhappy with Yıldız, executed orders without choice and with some guilt; others were indifferent to the fatherland’s prosperity or misfortune, like the former grand viziers Said and Kamil Pashas and the *Şeyhülislam* Cemal Efendi (all of whom had significant later dealings with the CUP). Most despicable were the barbaric bureaucrats who executed orders with joy and even acted as guides to Abdülhamid on his path of destruction.¹³⁴

The third category was overrepresented within the Palace Secretariat and the spy network. On assuming the throne, the CUP related, Abdülhamid banished

¹²⁹ They wrote that even the most ignorant could see or feel the disorder in the financial administration; everyone paid taxes but no one knew how they were spent. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 40, 5 November 1903/15 Şaban 1321, “Vergi-i Şahsi,” pp. 2–3.

¹³⁰ In their opinion, Abdülhamid had abolished the Chamber not to be accountable for his expenses. Proportionally, his share should have been reduced to 50,000 liras in place of the 700,000 he received. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 65, 8 December 1904/1 Şevval 1322, “Parasızlık,” pp. 1–2.

¹³¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 50, 1 April 1904/15 Muharrem 1322, “Şundan Bundan,” p. 4. For similar satirical remarks on new medals see *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 27, 29 April 1903/1 Safer 1321, “Şuunat-ı Dahiliye,” p. 4.

¹³² *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 84, 14 October 1905/15 Şaban 1323, “Hükümet-i Hamidiye’nin Son Midaliyesi,” p. 2.

¹³³ “He is the one who transferred the state business from the Sublime Porte to the Palace Secretariat, he is the one who removed the upper and lower chambers and deprived the government of the nation’s (*ümmet*) cooperation and advice, and he is the one who filled the Palace Secretariat with brigands and [personally] selected the ministers and high administrators.” *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 83, 30 September 1905/1 Şaban 1323, “Abdülhamid’in Şüreka-yı Cinayati,” p. 1.

¹³⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 115, 1 June 1907, “Hamidilik,” p. 1.

all Palace employees and chose for his immediate circle young graduates of the military and civil administration schools so that he could mold them to his liking. Similarly purged were the government elite who lacked connections to him. The main duty of his political core, or of his ministers, was to inspect publications and buy out publishers to distort the truth and cover up scandals in the administration. His spy apparatus consisted of Istanbul's 40,000 most notorious characters, who reported to the Palace not only what they had observed but also what they had done to agitate the public. Many, under the official title of inspectors, openly spied on all high-ranking civil and military personnel. And to facilitate their spying, Abdülhamid assigned them to higher ranks, to various government councils and offices, or whimsically created an entire ministry for their sake. An example was the useless State Council, which had grown to include 300 old servants and juveniles from its original size of 30 members. Similarly, the Municipal Council had grown from 12 to 150, a trend that was apparent in many other ministries and departments.¹³⁵

Army

Lack of discipline, military equipment, basic supplies, training, modern education, non-merit-based promotions, and corruption were some of the most frequent complaints about the army. Ridiculing the claims of the Hamidian army that advancement was based on merit and ability, the Young Turks cited the example of the non-commissioned officers' school (*küçük zabitan mektepleri*), where some members of a class of second lieutenants (*mülazım-ı sani*) were appointed as commanders. Similarly outrageous was the assignment of primary school children to the rank of major (*binbaşı*) and their promotion to lieutenant colonels (*kaymakam*) at graduation.¹³⁶ A young recruit in the officers' training school in Istanbul (*mekteb-i harbiye*) complained of inadequate hardware, lack of basic supplies, and insufficient and confused training, conditions that in his opinion pervaded the entire army.¹³⁷ More crucial than military hardware, complained another officer from Salonica, was the lack of commanders and officers who had been educated in the military sciences and had up-to-date knowledge of war strategies, military conduct, and command execution.¹³⁸

Another complained of the misconduct of soldiers and officers in the Fourth Army in Eastern Anatolia, who pocketed rations and impoverished already-poor local villagers by feeding on their livestock and supplies. Although he distinguished educated officers from the rankers, the author regretted the former's

¹³⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, Appendix to No. 116, 15 June 1907, p. 1. The spy network and the State Council were two of the earliest targets of the CUP after the revolution.

¹³⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 88, 24 February 1906/1 Muharrem 1324, "Birinci ve İkinci Ordularımız," p. 4.

¹³⁷ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 91, 9 April 1906/15 Safer 1324, "Mekاتب – Mekteb-i Harbiye'den," pp. 3–4.

¹³⁸ Even the ones with such training lacked experience of maneuvers and remained incapable of translating their knowledge into action. Similar problems remained with a lack of trained soldiers. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 116, 15 June 1907, "Silah Arkadaşlarımız'a," pp. 1–2.

share in the abuse.¹³⁹ The harshest criticism, however, was reserved for the First Army Corps under the direct command of the minister of war (*serasker*). Entrusted with the personal security of the sultan and charged also with keeping an eye on the army in general, the First Army Corps was criticized for living in utmost luxury while the rest of the army lacked basic necessities and suffered all kinds of hardship.¹⁴⁰

These accounts spoke of the frustrating distance between the ideals espoused in military schools (and achieved by adversaries) and the practices of the Ottoman army. One military officer agreed that “lack of martial discipline in the army, the privates’ disobedience and lack of knowledge of military duties, the officers’ stealing, harsh treatment of subordinates, unawareness of military science, corruption, betrayal, and prevalence of ignorance among the top ranks, were some of the everyday observations.”¹⁴¹ Yet he disagreed that all privates, officers, and high-ranking military men were ignorant of the advanced, modern European armies. To the contrary, many had close knowledge of them and translated the latest military manuals, including the training manual of the Ottoman military, which was word for word the same as the German military manual. If the rules were identical, the author asked, why was disobedience, stealing, and corruption so prevalent? Such defects were wrecking the 1,500,000-man strong Ottoman military, allowing its enemies to fight over, or to openly negotiate division of, Ottoman lands as if they were without an owner and defenseless.

Speaking of the centrality of the officers’ training school, he expressed sorrow that, despite the school’s having existed for sixty years, a mere three or four thousand out of a total of twenty to twenty-five thousand officers had been trained there; the rest had risen through the ranks (*alaylı* or rankers). If the educated officers (*mektebli*) were superior or equivalent to their European counterparts, the same could not be said of the rankers. To avoid offending a potential ally, he insisted the rankers were not a uniform lot and that those with some education, who advanced gradually because of their talent and abilities, should be distinguished from the rest. They were smart, capable, and experienced and for the most part knew, or could learn without difficulty, their military duties. A few hundred other rankers, however, had advanced because of a connection to, and recommendation by, the Palace sweeper, the commander in chief’s cook, some other functionary, or Abdülhamid himself. With this exception, the Ottoman officers were for the most part highly competent and qualified. Lack of discipline in the army, once again in the tired criticism of the Young Turks, rested on the shoulders of Abdülhamid, whose decrees regularly annulled

¹³⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 89, 10 March 1906/15 Muharrem 1324, “Dördüncü Ordu,” p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Criticized was also the spy network within the army, where Abdülhamid assigned a regiment of spies for every military regiment and assigned other spies to keep an eye on the spies. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, Appendix to No. 116, 15 June 1907, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 93, 9 May [April] 1906/15 Rebiyülevvel 1324, “Osmanlı Ordusunda Kabiliyet-i İhtizam,” pp. 2.

the military manuals and the procedures the officers learned in foreign or domestic military schools. If compiled, the decrees would constitute the “rules of tyranny,” a rubble that had ruined military discipline; and by simply scrapping them, the Ottoman army could be the envy of its enemies in a matter of six months.¹⁴² In the same vein, a CUP officer called for retirement and replacement of experienced yet uneducated captains (*yüzbaşı*) and adjutant-majors (*kolağası*) with the educated officers, who were better aware of war’s demand for skills and had superior command abilities. Even if retiring them left them without pay, he argued, it was a necessary evil for the good of the nation.¹⁴³

The memoirs of the officers who served in the Third Army in Macedonia, the main locus of revolution, corroborate what appeared in the principal CUP journal in exile. Those that were published soon after the revolution serve as direct evidence, perhaps the best one can hope for, in understanding the officers’ grievances and the reasons why they turned to revolution to solve them.¹⁴⁴

One gets a clear sense of widespread consensus that there was no lack of capable officers, whether trained abroad, or at home in the acclaimed officer school. Yet, once the officers began their careers, the shockingly wide gulf between teaching and practice sank in.¹⁴⁵ The mismatch bore directly on their lives, and by extension, or so they liked to argue, on the fate of an empire that hovered on the brink of extinction.

In very general terms, their criticisms may be classified as follows: patrimonial/clientelist promotions; disproportionate and nonuniform pay and rewards; irregular, insufficient pay and fractional compensation of salary receipts; lack of discipline; corruption; the spy network; and finally, conflict between officers from the ranks and educated officers. Their prevalence, in the words of a revolutionary hero, Adjutant-Major Niyazi, had made the idea of revolution (*fikr-i inkılab ve ihtilal*) a general and all-encompassing one in the military.¹⁴⁶ These

¹⁴² *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 93, 9 May [April] 1906/15 Rebiyülevvel 1324, “Osmanlı Ordusunda Kabiliyet-i İntizam,” pp. 2–3.

¹⁴³ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 20, 14 January 1903/15 Şevval 1320, “Tekaid,” pp. 1–4.

¹⁴⁴ See Ahmed Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi Yahud Tarihçe-i İnkılab-ı Kebir-i Osmani'den Bir Sahife* (Istanbul: Sabah Matbaası, 1326/1908). This is the most important memoir of its kind by the adjutant-major Niyazi in Resne (Monastir province), a hero of the revolution, and the initiator of the uprising in Macedonia. The memoir, written with the assistance of two other Third Army officers for literary style and content, may be considered a collective product. Finished in September 1908 (*Eylül* 1324), only two months after the revolution, it was published the same year. The second in order is that of a high-ranking staff officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Ahmed Refik’s *İnkılab-ı Azim* (Istanbul: Asır Matbaası, 1324/1326/1908). The third was written by Ahmed Refik’s namesake, who was also an officer in the Third Army. The latter’s writings are cited under the third volume of Osman Nuri’s *Abdülhamid-i Sani ve Devr-i Saltanatı: Hayat-ı Hususiyeye ve Siyasisiyesi*. The third volume, despite bearing Nuri’s name, was written in early 1910 by Ahmed Refik, a peer of Osman Nuri. To avoid confusion and to maintain consistency in citation, I refer to the writings of the second Ahmed Refik under Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3.

¹⁴⁵ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, vol. 3, pp. 1123–124. Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 18–19.

¹⁴⁶ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 35.

problems, the officers were aware, were shared by the civil bureaucrats, and hence the quite natural alliance that developed between the two. Furthermore, there was awareness that the most severe issue – more than foreign interference, ethnic conflicts, or this or that personality (with the notable exception of the sultan) – was administrative, and it was this that had turned them into revolutionaries.¹⁴⁷ Tyranny and the injustices associated with it had their root in administrative breakdown. And of all the injustices they suffered, none figured more prominently than the perception of blocked mobility, which was worsened by the presence of all other defects.

These officers were enraged at commanders who had advanced because of connections, spy reports, familial associations, intrigues, or other reasons that were not in military manuals. Particularly bothersome was the rapid ascent of very young sons or sons-in-law of grandees, lackeys, and spies.¹⁴⁸ One, for example, spoke of the injustice suffered by a typical educated officer who, after thirty years of service, earned the title Major (*binbaşı*), while a young man attained the same rank after kissing the hem of a grandee's robe. Similarly unjust was his salary of 1,300 kuruş, the same pay that many 17- and 18-year-olds received.¹⁴⁹ The matter was not made simpler when advancements took place among peers with the same level of education, experience, and training. Surpassing classmates because one was pasha born, for example, even if the difference was only one or two ranks, was, in the words of an officer, the subordination of an equally capable officer to another without superior qualities or knowledge, which created resentment, and ruined discipline.¹⁵⁰ Enraging to many who were in sensitive regions and actively engaged in full or low-scale warfare – such as the Third Army in Macedonia, which continuously pursued Christian bands and committees – was the overlooking of their brave acts, when it was time for promotion, in favor of officers with good connections. Niyazi was certainly not exaggerating when he maintained that the Palace harbored mistrust, suspicion, and insecurity toward educated officers and their schools.¹⁵¹ Its

¹⁴⁷ Niyazi credited the CUP for identifying the administrative defects as the root cause of ruin. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 35. For a similar diagnosis of the central problem of the empire see also Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol.3, pp. 1123–1124.

¹⁴⁸ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 18–19, 35. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3 pp. 1123–1125. Enver Paşa, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları (1881–1908)*, ed. Halil Erdoğan Cengiz (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1991), p. 50. In continuity with the neopatrimonial tradition, and our previous discussion of administration, it should be noted that the exceptionally capable, educated officers could also experience rapid and unusual promotion in the absence of sponsors or connections, simply on the basis of merit. A notable example was Enver Pasha. Yet the rapid advancement (*Enver Paşa*, p. 44) did not stop him from criticizing the practice of nonmeritorious promotion in the army and its debilitating effect on inferiors' discipline. His own circumstances may have contributed to his silence on the related issue of officers' blocked mobility or the conflict between the educated and ranker officers, which is curiously missing in his memoirs.

¹⁴⁹ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 60–65.

¹⁵⁰ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1123–1124. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 50.

¹⁵¹ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 25.

patrimonial, or, more accurately, neopatrimonial practices,¹⁵² especially against the backdrop of the modern training of officers, were frowned on as blatant corruption and as the reason for the officers' blocked mobility.¹⁵³

The officers' rage sometimes gave way to indiscriminate accusations of superiors stealing, bribery, kickbacks, smuggling, and every moral laxity imaginable, only some of which could have been true.¹⁵⁴ Yet one such complaint was frequently encountered in the discussion of civil administration as well. It was of course bad enough to cash in salary receipts at a fraction of face value with local moneylenders and black marketeers. Even worse was the belief that moneylenders acted in collusion with higher authorities, whose connections assured redemption at full value from the treasury. The proceeds, which, according to some undoubtedly exaggerated accounts, amounted to 90 and 75 percent of the salaries of navy and army personnel respectively, were then shared among partners.¹⁵⁵

The CUP took care not to antagonize the rankers with its hyper-rationalizing rhetoric, as their cooperation in the revolutionary struggle was much needed. Yet the CUP was unmistakably hostile toward them.¹⁵⁶ After recounting the hardships caused by Bulgarian bands against the Third Army in Macedonia from 1902 on, Niyazi, for example, admitted to an ironic positive effect: it had prompted reforms in the Third Army by forcing retirements, and forced transfers out or to other military jobs officers who were unfit by reason of age or physically, mentally, or morally. It also forced firings and reorganizations in the lower ranks and prepared the ground for appointment of young and educated officers.¹⁵⁷ Such occasional utterances betrayed the attitude of the officers and hinted at what was in store.

¹⁵² After all, many educated were promoted, but many of these, especially in the army's top echelon, had proven their loyalty to the sultan in one form or another.

¹⁵³ A main hero of the uprising, Niyazi, for example, viewed his transfer to the reserves (*redif*) division in Ohri unfair and not consonant with his performance. Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 25–26. Similarly, on the occasion of premature death of Osman Nuri, a young Third Army officer whose writing is examined here, his obituary spoke of the injustices of his situation as a military man: after 12 years of service in good standing, he could not advance beyond the rank of captain and died an honorable man by not receiving any medals or decorations. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, p. 1203.

¹⁵⁴ For some of many examples see Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 18–19. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1123–1125.

¹⁵⁵ According to Nuri, salaries were paid every three months, or at even longer intervals. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, p. 1125.

¹⁵⁶ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 59–60.

¹⁵⁷ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 34. Niyazi also expressed satisfaction with reforms of the gendarmes in Macedonia (p. 32). The CUP in general was quite happy with the gendarme reforms in Macedonia under European officers and retained many of them after the revolution. Refik, on the other hand, ridiculed the replacement of the old gendarmes with knowledge of topography with high school graduates trained in gendarme schools, dressed in the latest European fashion, but without local knowledge – this, despite his highly negative view of the old troopers. Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim* p. 16.

Once the constitutional mutiny was under way in Macedonia, the military commanders and General Inspector sent a joint telegram to the sultan to report their preparations, requests, and precautions. Their single recommendation for appeasing officers regarded promotions. This was offered in the usual cautious tone: “With regard to promotions, more or less it cannot be denied that because of their delay and lack of serious attention, some among the officers are aggrieved and in despair. This is among the things that is commonly said and sensed. It is obvious that under the Sultan’s banner of justice, the promotion of such unjustly treated [officers] and filling of vacancies will cause universal satisfaction and bring about positive results within the body of the Imperial Army.”¹⁵⁸ Much has been made of the Ottoman Army’s harsh and humiliating defeats in Yemen, which were of course important.¹⁵⁹ The greater problem, however, was the unfairness of daily life as experienced by educated officers and bureaucrats. This had deeper structural roots and turned the emerging middle class into revolutionaries.

¹⁵⁸ The secret telegram, dated 10 July 1908 (27 Haziran 1324), about two weeks prior to the revolution, was addressed from the commander of the Third Army, General İbrahim Pasha, to the Special Commander, General Osman Fevzi Pasha, and the General Inspector Hilmi Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 212–213 (quote from p. 213).

¹⁵⁹ See *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 92, “Mekatib,” pp. 2–3. In 1907, of the 4,000 Turkish soldiers sent to Yemen two years earlier, 2,000 had died of starvation, 1,000 had deserted, and another 1,000 had returned to Basra under duress. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 112, 1 April 1907, “Açlıktan Ölen İki Bin Türk Askeri!,” p. 1.

The Young Turk Revolution and the Global Wave

Can actors assimilate social movements to global revolutionary waves? How do global possibilities on the one hand, and local practical, historical, and cultural constraints on the other shape imaginations? What is the relation between agency and material and ideal structures? Do revolutions influence each other in framing ideologies and demands, forms of action, and timing?

The Young Turks' framing of local grievances in the language of constitutionalism betrayed a global influence. Constitutionalism was taken as reason for political, economic, and "civilizational" advances in Europe. The French Revolution assumed the status of the first constitutional revolution and the principal event of modern history. By the early twentieth century these ideas did not appear new, thanks to the Young Ottomans and a good number of events around world. For instance, the Russo-Japanese war brought to light Japan's immense progress since its supposed constitutional revolution. And the ongoing constitutional agitations in neighboring Russia and Iran, and even in the more distant China, served to confirm that the tide of history was in their favor.

The Young Turks exploited the Young Ottoman legacy of Islamicized constitutionalism. The 1906 revolution in Iran was a confirmation of that strategy. Beside its religious extensions, constitutionalism was further cast as a recipe for alleviating ethnic strife, ending nationalist separatist movements, propelling economic growth, and instituting legal rationality in the military and the civil administration. The emphasis on individual rights and local autonomy took a back seat to developmental (economic and military) issues and to the Young Turk brand of cultural assimilationist plans and centralizing goals. Here, the state's role was reaffirmed as the main instrument of change.

Initially, the most appealing revolutionary strategy for the Young Turks was action from above. The Young Ottoman reliance on the military had made this a familiar trope. Mass participation raised the prospect of religious and ethnic feuding, which opened the way for Great Power intervention – the Russian threat was menacing in particular. The Meiji Restoration had already shown that a swift and bloodless military action that avoided the violent methods of the

French Revolution and the horrors of mass participation could attain the same goals.

Yet, the global and domestic developments of the early twentieth century helped to broaden the possibilities for popular participation. Among these were the popular constitutional revolutions in neighboring Russia in 1905 and Iran in 1906, two external contingent developments that influenced the timing and form of the Young Turk revolution. On the domestic front, the Turkish uprisings in Anatolia and concrete organizational lessons from separatist nationalist bands in Macedonia raised the prospect of popular participation.

In this new context, the activist faction of the CUP abroad exerted its agency to reach to officers, who in turn organized the Macedonian villagers, to wage a military and popular uprising. The new form of action was unique: a widespread mutiny assisted by mass action from below. The results came swiftly with astonishingly little bloodshed. The notion that the uprising in Macedonia was almost purely of a military nature, and very limited in scope, is thus challenged.

Also challenged is the image of a sharp division between the action-oriented officers within the empire and the CUP abroad. The public writings of the CUP show that, beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1905, a faction abroad both advocated violence and embraced a broad strategy of revolution that included the public. Significantly, this faction advocated the new tactics before establishing ties with activist officers inside the empire. By the time the external and internal organizations were unified, the increasingly dominant activist faction abroad was far more in tune with the officers in Macedonia than they were with their positivist compatriots in Paris.

The affinity between the external and internal organizations said something fundamental about their shared understanding of constitutionalism. The post-revolutionary disregard of liberalism has been argued to be the result of the officers' unsophisticated grasp of and unconcern for ideology. Yet the ideologically sophisticated external CUP, whether pacifist or activist, shared with the officers a similar view. The CUP's reflection on other revolutions was a window into its thinking about constitutionalism, its overt concerns about catching up with the West and with holding the empire together, and the central role of the state in this process; unconcern for some core liberal ideals and freedoms was certainly not peculiar to the officers. In the course of observing the backlash against the Young Ottomans, contemporary Russia, and Iran, the ideologues had reached a critical conclusion: the infant assemblies needed support beyond the legal parliamentary framework to survive the onslaught of old regimes and bring about radical social change. The conclusions of pre-revolutionary days laid the ideological foundation for the continued existence of the CUP as a semiclandestine organization.

The late Ottoman state was experiencing severe financial and geopolitical difficulties. The conclusion of macrostructural theory that weakness at the center opens space for public expression of grievances, and creates greater opportunity for subversive activities, is applicable here. Explaining the timing of the revolution and the political system it espoused and finally instituted, however, requires

going beyond macrostructural theory. Why should a collapsing state be replaced with a constitutional administration? Fashionable contemporary global doctrines may give us a clue. Furthermore, attention to agency may tell us why a series of revolutions happen at the same time. More plausible explanations for the timing, form, process, and outcome of this and other revolutions require turning to the nexus of interaction between structures of meaning, ideologies, and cultures on the one hand, and long-term macrostructural forces on the other.

The Young Turks, by keeping an eye on global revolutions and another on local outbreaks, devised a unique strategy of action that made them part of the wave of constitutional movements of the early twentieth century. The global wave, by setting a broad agenda for revolution, was constraining and enabling at the same time. It channeled revolutionary fervor toward constitutionalism and it suggested violence and mass participation as supplements to military intervention. Agency in revolution did not conjure up organizations and resources out of willpower. But by giving direction to what was at hand and by making crucial linkages among disparate elements, agency realized potentials that otherwise would have remained dormant. Finally, the local repertoire of action and the weight of Ottoman history interfered to make this event distinctive. The military assumed the movement's leadership and became the prime organizer of the impressive number of civilian participants in Macedonia.

THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTIONARY WAVE

Constructing a Constitutional Past and Present

No event in modern world history was more admired by the CUP than the French Revolution, to which they gave the privileged position of the first constitutional revolution and the harbinger of progress in Europe. In 1903 they wrote, "some hold that mankind's greatest step forward after the birth of Christ is the French Revolution." But to avoid offending the religious sensibilities of their Muslim audience, they were quick to add, "there is no doubt that it is mankind's greatest step after the emergence of Islam."¹

Convinced that a mass uprising would invite foreign intervention that would end in the Empire's collapse, they rejected the French Revolution's mass participation and violence. As proof, they offered Robespierre as exemplar of the bloodthirsty masses, without whose Reign of Terror the Revolution could have still accomplished its aims. Their commentary revealed the CUP's inherent mistrust of the public: "As a sure way to progress, walking is not enough, they tell us. Haste, a bloodletting haste, is necessary. In our opinion, bloodshed, humanity can do without. One should not show blood to the masses (*avam*)

¹ They remained critical of its violence. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 25, 30 March 1903/1 Muharrem 1321, "Abdülhamid'in Hal'i," 2-3 (quote from p. 3). For one among many indications of its influence on the contemporaries, see Halide Edib Adıvar, *House with Wisteria: Memoirs of Halide Edib*, with an Introduction by Sibel Erol (Charlottesville: Leopolis Press, 2003), p. 192.

and should not get them used to it. Otherwise no end and limit may be found for the awakened human brutality.”² Condemnation of the Terror, positivism, and the current theories of “the crowd” (Le Bon in particular)³ provided the theoretical underpinning of their preferred method: a constitutionalist military take-over from the top.

Yet their affinity for revolution from above was not simply a result of theoretical reflection. Their tradition of military intervention in politics,⁴ and more critically, the precedent set by the Young Ottomans, pointed to it. The rhetorical question with which an opposition article ended, “Did the army see a need for bloodshed when it dethroned Sultan Abdülaziz ?” was meant as a reminder and invitation to the army to do the same with Abdülhamid.⁵

The Young Ottoman failure also became a guide for the future. The Young Turks knew that any appearance of chaos served as an excuse for intervention, the return of despotism, or both. Trust in the sultans was replaced with vigilance after having not one, but two, betrayals by Sultans who had reneged on promises upon assuming the throne. This meant putting in place extra-parliamentary precautions to guarantee the constitution’s survival. The context was highly charged from the beginning and unlike Iran, or even Russia, there was far less dissimulation about the just but misguided monarch.

After the French Revolution, the Meiji Restoration of 1868 appeared most impressive. Its achievements became all the more palpable when, in January 1904, Japan waged a war against neighboring Russia over disputed territories and inflicted a humiliating defeat that was concluded with the treaty of Portsmouth in August 1905. The Young Turks applauded tiny Japan for not being afraid of, and even challenging, their common enemy, the massive empire Russia, with its impressive military and naval force.⁶ The war’s outbreak proved to be a great boon for Japan’s image around the world.⁷ Under the guidance of an enlightened emperor, they wrote, the Japanese had broken away from the motionless state that characterized their kinsmen in China, and had made glorious achievements in the military, schools, science, and industry. Even more significantly, Japan served as living proof that a chamber of deputies (lower house) and a senate (upper house) were preconditions for progress and virtue.⁸

² *Şura-yı Ümmet* 55, 15 July 1904/1 Cemaziyelevvel 1322, “İhtilal,” p. 3.

³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 75, 20 May 1905/15 Rebiyülevvel 1323, “Küstahlık,” pp. 1–2. See also Hanoğlu, 22–23, 206–211. Gustave Le Bon, *Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T. F. Unwin, 1903).

⁴ On the repertoire of military intervention, see M. Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, Military, and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 55, 15 July 1904/1 Cemaziyelevvel 1322, “İhtilal,” pp. 2–3.

⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 29, 28 May 1903/1 Rebiyülevvel 1321, “Çin’den İbret Alalım,” pp. 3–4.

⁷ Born in 1905, Halide Edib’s son was named Hasan Hikmetullah Togo “after the great Japanese naval hero.” Edib, *Memoirs*, 176. See also E. F. Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey: A History of the Turkish Revolution* (London: John Milne, 1909), p. 59.

⁸ Despite opposition to “blood sucking” Abdülhamid, they professed loyalty to the Ottoman dynasty and sought an enlightened ruler from within the Ottoman household. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 46, 2 February 1904/15 Zilkade 1321, “Aksa-yı Şark,” pp. 1–2.

Japan's victory over Russia was hailed as the triumph of light over darkness, freedom over despotism, and knowledge over ignorance. The Russians, they wrote, were part of the Western world, and the principal defenders and propagators of Western civilization in the East for centuries; but the despotism of the tsars had frustrated Russia's progress like a barrier on the highway of civilization. Consequently, in contemporary Russia, governance had been replaced by bribery and embezzlement, justice by oppression, and science by ignorance. In contrast, Japan, which until recently had resembled a society of the early middle ages, thanks to natural Japanese intelligence, unbound liberties (of constitutionalism), a handful of enlightened statesmen, and a nationalist emperor, had experienced five centuries of progress in a mere forty years.⁹

As the only Asian nation that had defeated a European one, Japan became the one nation in Asia that Europe was forced to deal with in a civilized and humanitarian fashion.¹⁰ Japan's victory had proven the might of the so-called yellow races and disproved the idea that Asians were one of humanity's inferior races, wrote the Young Turks. And if this ancient race had been held back by the tyranny of ignorance, it was now rising like the sun from the Far East and refuting once and for all the outrageous association of race with progress. The proven foolishness of Europe's racial schemes was reason for joy. Turks had Asian origins as well, and as a racial group, Europe had relegated them to an inferior position in its concocted hierarchy, along with the yellow races. Japan's victory had shown that Russia, the nation vested with the duty of defending the civilization of the white race against the wild yellow races, was a thousand times inferior in its military prowess. And with the massacre of its own public in 1905, Russia had proven the same on humanitarian and civilizational grounds.¹¹

The official Ottoman press shared this enthusiasm. Nonetheless, the Young Turks blasted its coverage for attributing Japanese progress to schools and education and omitting the most important factor:

⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 64, 23 November 1904/15 Ramazan 1322, "Liao-yang Muharebesi ve Rus Ordusu," p. 4.

¹⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 69, 19 February 1905/15 Zilhicce 1322, "Port-Artur'un Sukutu," 1-2. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 72, 6 April 1905/1 Safer 1323, "Muharebe ve İhtilal," pp. 1-2. That this was quite a common perception in Asia is convincingly argued by Spector. Ivar Spector, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 29-30.

¹¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 69, 19 February 1905/15 Zilhicce 1322, "Port-Artur'un Sukutu," pp. 1-2. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 72, 6 April 1905/1 Safer 1323, "Muharebe ve İhtilal," pp. 1-2. In 1904 a CUP member and central figure for the emergence of Pan-Turkism, Yusuf Akçuraoğlu in his *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* made significant analogies between the political role that the Japanese intended to play for the "yellow" race and the possible future role of Ottoman Turks for the Turkish race beyond Ottoman territories. For further exploration of Ottoman and Japanese Pan-Asianism, see Renee Worringer, "'Sick Man of Europe' or 'Japan of the Near East?': Constructing Ottoman Modernity in the Hamidian and Young Turk Eras," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol. 36, No. 2 (May 2004), pp. 207-230, and Selçuk Esenbel, "Japan's Global Claim to Asia and the World of Islam: Transnational Nationalism and World Power, 1900-1945," *American Historical Review* Vol. 109, No. 4 (October, 2004), pp. 1140-1170.

To be able to advance civilization in a country, the very first necessary conditions are possession of independence by the press and personal freedoms by the inhabitants. And to perpetuate this [progress], the existence of Chambers of Notables and Deputies is indispensable so that they may guarantee the appropriate implementation of laws and freedom of the press. Because the Chambers of Notables and Deputies will have the right and authority to inquire about state revenues and expenditure of national riches, and to punish those who squander or steal them, it will be possible to protect state interests, and advance and heighten civilization.¹²

Japan began its civilizational advance, they concluded, when it replaced its autocratic government with a constitutional administration. It was because of the constitution, the Chamber of Deputies, and principles of consultation that Japan had entered the ranks of Great Powers and conclusively defeated the enormous Russia on land and water. Thus, the reason for the Ottoman state's lack of progress was the absence of the representative chambers of notables and deputies.¹³

That Japan had achieved these results without bloodshed was especially appealing, prompting the Young Turks to write, as late as February 1906, that "knowledge and progress is transferred from one nation to the other, gradually. Yet at some times and under some circumstances the law of evolution can be speeded up. The Grand Mikado and the advanced Japanese are the reason for our opinion. We are ceaseless supporters of revolutions in minds, schools, industry, and knowledge, but not in the streets."¹⁴

When the 1907 Hague peace conference failed to include the Ottomans but invited the Japanese, the experience was a humiliation, and on the world stage. The infuriated Young Turks lamented their loss under Abdülhamid, during whose reign the Ottoman state sank into oblivion after having possessed Great Power status, a large organized army, a moderate navy, six-hundred-year-old institutions, and a parliament. In roughly the same time Japan had risen from nowhere to become a Great Power.¹⁵

At the beginning of constitutional skirmishes in China in 1906, it was prematurely reported that even the sleeping China had accepted the constitution. China was a troubled but grand empire with which the Ottomans had identified: "Like the Chinese we are a nation that has also fallen far behind in the highroad of civilization, and like the Chinese we have received many a beating, and suffered Europe's injustice and domineering."¹⁶ It was now predicted that China too would soon acquire enough strength to resist the European attempt

¹² *Şura-yı Ümmet* 85, 29 October 1905/1 Ramazan 1323, "İstanbul Gazetelerini Okurken," p. 3.

¹³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 85, 29 October 1905/1 Ramazan 1323, "İstanbul Gazetelerini Okurken," pp. 2-3. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 104, 30 November 1906, "İran," p. 3.

¹⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 88, 24 February 1906/1 Muharrem 1324, "Fas," pp. 1-2 (quote from p. 1).

¹⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 123, 15 October 1907, "Şaşmaz mısınız?" pp. 1-2. As Deringil has noted, attendance at international conferences was part of the "image management" project of the late Ottoman state. *Well Protected Domains*, pp. 1-15, 135-49, 153-54.

¹⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 29, 28 May 1903/1 Rebiyülevvel 1321, "Çin'den İbret Alalım," pp. 3-4 (quote from p. 3).

to divide and dominate, or to jeopardize China's independence, rights, and national integrity.¹⁷ In sum, France, the Young Ottomans, and Japan highlighted the advantages of a constitutional revolution from above. But the imagery became more complex with the outbreak of the Russian, Iranian, and domestic rebellions.

If faraway Japan pointed to a possible future, neighboring Russia more intimately revealed the defects of an ailing empire much like the Ottomans' own.¹⁸ Its popular upheavals too suggested concrete protest strategies: public withdrawal of taxes, the sending of delegates to the palace or government centers, and the involvement of religious figures in protest. It highlighted the central role of social movement organizations, a dedicated cadre of revolutionaries, and the importance of the intelligentsia for inciting the masses and setting the movement's broad goals beyond a mere revolt. Finally, it reinforced the necessity of extra-legal organizations in defense of constitutional administrations.

To the Young Turks, Russia was a civilized Western empire decaying under the weight of a despotic monarch opposed to the constitutionalist yearnings of his own people. The world had witnessed in war the incompetence of Russia's military; the selfishness of its commanders and their inability to coordinate action; and, in general, the rampant disorder of the Russian army and navy. The war proved that the Russian state, like the Ottoman state, was rotten to the core, and that autocratic governments were all disorderly.¹⁹

On 9 January 1905, before the conclusion of war with Japan, Russian troops gunned down a peaceful procession on the way to deliver a petition to the tsar. In reaction, Gapon, the popular priest, who was the petition's author and the procession's principal organizer, called for the tsar's removal. The event, known as Bloody Sunday, was a turning point for the disturbances that ultimately forced the tsar to grant the Duma nine months later on 17 October 1905.²⁰ The brutal clampdown served as the perfect occasion to compare the

¹⁷ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 104, 30 November 1906, "İran," p. 3.

¹⁸ "It is obvious that in Europe two governments resemble one another with regard to their administrative methods: Turkey and Russia," began an opposition article. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 75, 20 May 1905/15 Rebiyülevvel 1323, "Küstahlık," p. 1.

¹⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 52, 1 May 1904/15 Safer 1322, "Hükümet-i Mutlakanın Muzırratı," pp. 3-4. On Japanese success at Port Arthur see *Şura-yı Ümmet* 52, 1 May 1904/15 Safer 1322, "Hubb al-watan min al-ıman ve Japonya ve Rus Seferi," p. 3. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 54, 31 May 1904/15 Rebiyülevvel 1322, "Ahval-ı Harbiye," pp. 2-3, and "Ahval-ı Bahriye," pp. 3-4. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 57, 13 August 1904/1 Cemaziyelahir 1322, "Japon ve Rus Orduları," pp. 3-4. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 64, 23 November 1904/15 Ramazan 1322, "Liao-yang Muharebesi ve Rus Ordusu," p. 4. These criticisms came close to those of the Russian constitutionalist opposition. Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 43. Although this criticism served the Young Turk opposition well, from a comparative perspective the Russian state was far more advanced in its "rationalizing" reforms. See Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform and Civil Officialdom*, and Walter McKenzie Pintner and Don Karl Rowney, eds., *Russian Officialdom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980).

²⁰ According to the Julian calendar. Ascher, *Disarray*, pp. 74-101.

two despots: “Like Abdülhamid [the tsar] does not step outside the palace and does not think of anything but his own self, his property and his life.” The tsar reckoned, “If I accept peace, I lose Tsardom [and] if I grant the constitution to the inhabitants, my influence and grandeur will diminish.” To protect his own privileges, the CUP concluded, the tsar was willing to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of soldiers and witness the destruction of many cities. In the wake of Gapon’s reaction to the clampdown, they called on the Islamic clergy to issue a decree deposing the sultan.²¹

The European press reported the Russian upheavals daily; and Russia’s proximity, its substantial Turkic minority, and strategic importance aroused great interest in Russian events. In 1906 *Fikir*, a Turkic newspaper in St. Petersburg, confirmed the Ottoman public’s enthusiasm. Its Istanbul correspondent, a Turkish-speaking citizen of Russia, wrote that Turkish intellectuals kept abreast of the latest Russian details despite a strict ban on news, thanks to the large-scale smuggling of contraband newspapers, magazines, and other news sources to Istanbul and Anatolia. The speeches of the Turkic deputies in the Duma had in particular aroused great interest in revolutionary ideas. After insisting that beyond the intellectuals the general public too followed the news with “extra-ordinary interest,” the correspondent prophesized revolutionary outbreaks in the Ottoman Empire in the near future.²² Disturbances in Russia created ambivalence in the CUP about the model of a limited revolution from above. One reason was the gains achieved by the popular uprising next door, which was successful, at least initially. Another was the opportunity created by troubled Russia’s receding threat. Nonetheless, fearing an unruly ethno-religious conflict, the CUP’s initial reaction was to cast the Russian events in the mold of elite revolution and to underplay its populism: The Russian freedom fighters had shown that a skilled martyr-assassin (*fedai*) was more effective than 10,000 revolutionaries. Their bombs killed and injured top officials, forcing the resignation of government functionaries who feared the same fate; and with the disappearance of the appointees of the tyrant, injustice vanished. Thus, in place of a mass revolution that shed the blood of the innocent and invited foreign intervention, argued *Şura-yı Ümmet*, Russian revolutionaries had demonstrated that eliminating tyrants was a more effective tactic.²³

But signs of ambivalence began to surface soon. Citing the Ottomans’ failure to wage an uprising against tyranny, an author criticized them from the eyes of imaginary Western observers: “O God what are the Ottomans doing? These

²¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 71, 21 March 1905/15 Muharrem 1323, “Rusya’da Fikir ve Asker,” pp. 1–2. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 71, 21 March 1905/15 Muharrem 1323, “Gorki’nin Rus Zabitanına Bir Mektubu,” 3. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 73, 20 April 1905/15 Safer 1323, “Şundan Bundan,” p. 4.

²² *Şura-yı Ümmet* 99, 31 August 1906, “Muktatafat,” 4. As Spector writes: “The outbreak of the Russian Revolution of 1905 had immediate repercussions inside the Ottoman Empire . . . In spite of the Sultan’s rigorous censorship, however, news and views about events in Russia continued to reach Istanbul by way of foreign embassies and consulates, foreign newspapers, tourists, and other channels.” *Impact on Asia*, p. 60.

²³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 73, 20 April 1905/15 Safer 1323, “Şundan Bundan,” p. 4.

Orientalists who could not take lessons from the [Western] nations' historical experience, will they once again fail to benefit from the current events in Russia?"²⁴ Another offered quite contradictory recommendations about violence and passivity, a mass-based revolt, and military intervention. He faulted the Turkish public for indolence toward the seditious uprisings of the Greek, Armenian, and Bulgarian committees, whose designs for independence and breakup of the fatherland threatened Ottoman sovereignty, and advised the Turks to learn from the bloody sacrifices of these nationalities. In a sudden turn of rhetoric he asked them to do so peacefully: unlike independent France or Russia, the Ottomans were not secure from foreign intervention, and an uprising served as a pretext to send ships and occupy territory. Like Russia, he encouraged sending unarmed delegations of clerics, military leaders, and notables to the Palace in Istanbul and to the governors' mansions in the provinces to make peaceful but stern requests for the constitution. Only if Abdülhamid rejected their request, as the tsar had refused his nation's, was the public obliged to restore its rights with the force of arms, as commanded by logic and religion. By the end, he tempered his own conclusion again by noting that the Ottomans' own history provided a better guide than imitating France or Russia – code for military intervention without mass participation.²⁵

One of the last defenses of pure revolution from above appeared early in February 1906. Despite admiring the freedom-loving uprising in Russia, an author argued that a popular uprising in the Ottoman lands was certain to lead to the disintegration of the multiethnic empire, where each ethnic leader jockeyed for advantage against others and imagined independence to be the solution to his own group's problems. Instead, he expected the army to lead a bloodless revolution (*inkilab*).²⁶ Needless to say, the notion of revolution from above was no longer uniformly accepted within the Young Turk ranks.

The successes of the Russian Revolution gave credibility to a more broadly based movement, but it also raised the question of why the Turks had not risen against tyranny. Impatient with notions about the extraordinary passivity of the Turkish masses, the Young Turks placed the blame on the failure of the Turkish intellectuals. The masses (*avam-ı nas*) were incapable of independent thought in all times and places, they argued, and without the active, enlightening participation of intellectuals, they remained as passive as ever. Intellectuals were to ignite the masses against tyranny and injustice, as electricity and heat did for chemical reactions.²⁷

²⁴ The author made it amply clear that by the "Ottomans" he really meant the Turks. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 75, 20 May 1905/15 Rebiyülevvel 1323, "Küstahlık," p. 1–2 (quote from 1).

²⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 86, 12 November 1905/15 Ramazan 1323, "fa-'tabiru ya uli al-absar," pp. 1–2.

²⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 87, 9 February 1906/15 Zilhicce 1323, "Rusya'da İhtilal Hala Ne İçin Muvaffak Olamıyor?," pp. 1–2. Bayur uses this article, along with a previously discussed one (no. 55, 14 July 1904/1 Cemaziyelevvel 1322, "İhtilal," pp. 2–3) to show the CUP's lack of revolutionary intent up until their union with the officers of the Ottoman Freedom Society in 1907 (1963:267).

²⁷ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 75, 20 May 1905/15 Rebiyülevvel 1323, "Küstahlık," pp. 1–2.

The French Revolution itself was not a product of the masses (*halk*), they concluded, but an outgrowth of philosophy and science. Without its guidance, the revolution would have suffered the same fate as the legions of uprisings marking Ottoman history. Without the intelligentsia, uprisings expressed the masses' hatred of despotism and injustice but failed to achieve anything of value.²⁸ Contemporary Russia set an example for the role of this class. Had it not been for the intelligentsia – including many trained professional men and women educated abroad – the Russian masses would have continued to look upon the tsar as their father, rather than as the real source of injustice that he was, and was finally understood to be.²⁹

Russia also highlighted another central issue. European newspapers, despite disagreement on a variety of issues, consistently agreed that it was the revolutionary organizations that had brought an enormous Russia to its knees. By late February 1906, the Ottomans were encouraged to pay particular attention to, and to learn from the Russians, the material and moral means for creating and operating a tightly held secret organization. A secret organization, together with publications, readers were advised, united and mobilized the public; it emboldened them and gave them the means to expel spies, resist illegitimate taxes, and express demands even to the Palace. The CUP demonstrated good familiarity with the cadre of devoted Russian revolutionaries, which had been drawn from both the educated and the uneducated, immersed in the business of revolution, and dedicated to instilling in the public the hatred of tyranny. "If we strive like Russians," they concluded optimistically, "it won't be long before we see even the Sultan's aides-de-camp among our supporters."³⁰ Another astute observation was of the role of the extra-parliamentary organizations after the establishment of young parliaments. The Duma's authority and its deputies' ability to attack the government publicly did not derive from the people, the CUP concluded. Rather, its real power derived from the extra-parliamentary secret organization that instilled terror in the heart of the tsar despite his command over millions of soldiers.³¹ When the autocracy shut down the young Duma in early July 1906, after a mere eleven weeks, the clampdown became a bitter reminder of the infant Young Ottoman parliament. Russian upheaval demonstrated that rulers, with all their promises, at first appeared sincere but then

²⁸ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 73, 20 April 1905/15 Safer 1323, "İkdam Gazetesi Lisan'a Gelmiş," pp. 1–2.

²⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 75, 20 May 1905/15 Rebiyülevvel 1323, "Küstahlık," pp. 1–2. Even more notable was the sacrifice of Japanese students who went abroad for Western education. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 76, 4 June 1905/1 Rebiyülahir 1323, "Vazife-i Şahsiye," pp. 2–3.

³⁰ These secret organizations were supported by *zemstvo* members (provincial governing bodies), lawyers, literary figures, medical doctors, workers and students. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 88, 24 February 1906/1 Muharrem 1324, "Küçüklerden Başlamalı," p. 3. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 95, 23 June 1906, 1 Cemaziyelevvel 1324, "Teşkilat ve Neşriyatın Lüzum ve Faydası," pp. 2–3.

³¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 95, 23 June 1906, 1 Cemaziyelevvel 1324, "Teşkilat ve Neşriyatın Lüzum ve Faydası," pp. 2–3. Comparative analysis with Russia and Iran shows they were correct, not in assessing the power of extra-parliamentary organizations in Russia, but their necessity for the survival of new parliaments. See Sohrabi, "Historicizing Revolutions."

struck without warning. Had not Louis XVI, the most innocent of all tyrants, taken a public oath of loyalty to protect the constitution while scheming with other European governments against the nation? Did not Napoleon III declare himself emperor against the oath of presidency? Did not Abdülhamid, in spite of decrees and assurance to the contrary, destroy the Chamber of Deputies, banish its members, and suffocate its founders in jail? For the CUP, the shutting of the Duma was a declaration of war by the tsar against the Russian nation and leaders of freedom. Russia's (read the Ottomans') fate now lay in the hands of the army and the army's conscience.³²

Immediately after the shutdown, the Duma deputies issued their famous manifesto (July 1906) from a secret meeting place in Vyborg, Finland. *Şura-yı Ümmet* summarized the Vyborg Manifesto: it was an appeal to the Russian people to withhold taxes and military registration until the restoration of the Duma. Yet, instead of reporting the rather moderate Vyborg appeal in detail, the Young Turks presented their readers with verbatim translations of the far more radical appeals of the socialists', workers', and peasants' representatives. The latter's condemnation of tyranny, appeals to the army, and warnings against foreign invasion mirrored the CUP's language far more closely, with the notable exception that the radical Russian representatives had made direct appeals for a popular uprising.³³

Within less than two months, the CUP was to issue its own front-page appeal to the Ottomans, Muslim and Christian, to unite in a general uprising against Abdülhamid.³⁴ Encouraged by successful tax rebellions in Erzurum and Kastamonu, and by the example of Russian opposition, they renewed their call against paying taxes.³⁵

If Russia raised the prospect of a populist rebellion, 1906 Iran demonstrated a popular and bloodless revolution. Its success in a Muslim, and by all indications a more "backward" setting, was proof that the Ottoman public too was prepared for this "advanced" political system.

The CUP rightly assessed the critical inspiration of Russia and Japan for the Iranians. The tyrannical shah's promise to establish a chamber of deputies was

³² *Şura-yı Ümmet* Nos. 96–97, 1 August 1906, "Çar ve Duma," pp. 1–2.

³³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* Nos. 96–97, 1 August 1906, "İcmal-ı Siyasi – Harici," pp. 7–8. Although I cannot confirm with certainty that the reported appeals were actually issued by any of the Russian deputies, the Young Turks, correctly, did not attribute them to the momentous Vyborg Manifesto, a more general appeal issued collectively by a large number (230) of Duma deputies. As Ascher notes, although the text of the Vyborg Manifesto did not make a direct appeal for a general uprising, it clearly implied just that. For the text of the manifesto, see Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Authority Restored* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992) pp. 205–206.

³⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 99, 31 August 1906, "Osmanlılar!," p. 1. The appeal came at a time when rumors of Abdülhamid's fatal sickness began circulating in August after he missed the Friday prayers for the first time. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 99, 31 August 1906, "Maraz-ı Şahane," pp. 1–2.

³⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 99, 31 August 1906, "Ne Yapmalı?" 2–3. For an earlier call to the public to withhold taxes as a method of passive resistance, but not as part of a strategy of general uprising, see *Şura-yı Ümmet* 94, 24 May 1906/1 Rebiyülahır 1324, "İslah-ı Ahvale Bir Çare," pp. 1–2.

not due to his kindness, the Young Turks argued, but was the outcome of the Iranians' sacrifices and a fortunate circumstance – namely, the revolutionary wave that spread like wildfire from Russia and engulfed them.³⁶ Japan in turn breathed new life into the ancient nations of the world, such as China and Iran, which were awakening all Asians, who lived and suffered under tyrannical states, to their deserved rights. Iranians were congratulated for leaving behind the despotic legacy of centuries past and for having entered the highway of progress in the company of civilized nations. Only the Ottomans had not yet awakened to their rights.³⁷ Eyewitness accounts from Tehran confirmed the impact of events in Russia and Japan, especially in Russia, news of which was propagated by the Iranians in Baku.³⁸

The Iranian revolution encouraged the CUP to make better use of religious rhetoric. When discussing Iran, they made unusually frequent references to the rights of the Muslim community (*ümmet*), religious laws (*şeriat*), and consultation (*şura*). Iranians were congratulated on establishing the second consultative assembly in the Islamic lands (here referred to as *şura-yı ümmet*), after the 1877 Chamber of Deputies.³⁹ Furthermore, as did traditionalist writers, they found the reason for decline in deviation from Islam, when Abdülhamid suspended time-honored customs and religious institutions and foreign governments lost respect for the Ottoman state and began interfering in its affairs. Previously, fundamental state laws had rested on religious foundations (*şeriat*), and the Muslim clerics, with a far greater role within the state, had supervised their correct implementation.⁴⁰ These uncharacteristic concessions to religion were made in the hope that the Ottoman clerics might play a role analogous to their Iranian counterparts.

The CUP, which had earlier blasted the *Şeyhülislam* for his pro-Abdülhamid leanings and quietism,⁴¹ called on the Ottoman clerics to end their silence and invite the population to the “true path,” following clerics in Iran and Najaf.⁴² On the other hand, Ottoman soldiers were exhorted to unite and to force upon the traitor sultan the meaning of the sublime Quranic verse “*washawirhum fi 'l-amr*” (and seek their counsel in all affairs), while urged not to fall behind Iran.⁴³

³⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 100, 15 Sept. 1906, “Harici-İran,” p. 4. More accurate reporting of the Iranian events based on British press reports followed in the next issue. See *Şura-yı Ümmet* 101, “Harici-Acemistan,” p. 4.

³⁷ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 104, 30 November 1906 “İran,” p. 3.

³⁸ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 108, 30 January 1907, “Tahrân'da Bulunan Bir Ecnebi Dostumuzdan . . .,” 2–3 (quote from p. 3).

³⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 100, 15 Sept. 1906, “Harici-İran,” p. 4.

⁴⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 101, 1 October 1906, “Kim Hükümet Ediyor?” pp. 1–2. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 102, 15 October 1906, “Yarın,” pp. 2–3.

⁴¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 115, 1 June 1907, “Temenni-i Hamidi,” p. 2.

⁴² *Şura-yı Ümmet* 118, 15 July 1907, “Ulemamızın Nazar-ı Dikkat ve Hamiyetine,” pp. 1–2.

⁴³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 124, 31 October 1907, “Asker Kardeşlerimize,” pp. 3–4. For the sense of competition with both Russia and Iran, see also Spector, *Impact on Asia*, pp. 60–61.

A major venue for news about Iran was newspapers from the Caucasus. The Young Turks cited long passages from these journals to show the intimate connection between Islam and constitutionalism, without themselves sounding too old-fashioned. These excerpts from *Vakit* are a case in point: “The esteemed prophet of Islam gathered the masses in mosque for consultation about all public affairs and frequently abandoned his [own] opinion and abided by the opinion of the public. After him, the first Islamic Caliphs acted accordingly . . . If the successor Caliphs resorted to oppression and tyranny, its guilt is theirs alone and is not to be attributed to Islam, its founder the Prophet Muhammad, or the holy Qur’an.”⁴⁴ The easy, initial success of the Iranian constitutionalists was attributed to Islam as well: “The religion of Islam, from its inception, declared liberty, justice and equality. Yet gradually the value of such exalted principles declined and for this reason Muslims were weakened. Although in Europe and Russia so much blood was shed to acquire freedom, today in the government of Iran, in response to its *ulama*’s request, freedom is granted without any bloodshed, for Islam is built upon freedom and justice.”⁴⁵

Domestic Uprisings

Russia and Iran supplied a good case for popular mobilization. It was in this context that Turkish and Christian uprisings in Anatolia and Rumelia, respectively, gained overwhelming import. Between 1906 and 1907, Anatolia witnessed a series of tax rebellions that came to have enormous symbolic value. According to the CUP, previous anti-state rebellions in this region had been confined to the Armenians and occasionally the Kurds, who harbored autonomy-seeking or separatist motives for the most part. This time the CUP was elated that the Turks had initiated rebellions without any hint of ethnic strife. These had proven to detractors that the Turkish masses, despite their meager history of anti-state activity, were not passive. Together, they solidified the CUP resolve to move toward a more wide-ranging uprising and to issue its most definitive statements in the midst of these uprisings.

The first tax rebellion originated in Kastamonu, where crowds forced out the governor and some officials and requested honest administrators from the sultan.⁴⁶ The protesters apparently prevailed after a ten-day occupation of the telegraph office and unmediated correspondence with Istanbul.⁴⁷ This was soon followed by a rebellion in Erzurum; after local administrators banished tax protesters, the public convened outside the governor’s mansion to demand

⁴⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 106, 15 December 1906, “Matbuat-ı İslamiye,” p. 3.

⁴⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 106, 15 December 1906, “Matbuat-ı İslamiye,” p. 3.

⁴⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 89, 10 March 1906/15 Muharrem 1324, “Mekatib,” p. 4. Although the incident was portrayed as a confrontation with the sultan, other accounts indicated hostility toward the administrators only.

⁴⁷ For a detailed account see Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 29–72. The value of these revolts lay in their symbolic significance, and with the exception of Erzurum, they do not seem to have gone beyond simple tax repeal.

their return. After an armed confrontation that led to the death and injury of a few policemen, the governor was captured. With continued public protest and refusal to open shops, the government finally backed down, recalled the governor, and ordered the return of the banished who were received amid public celebrations.⁴⁸ The event was significant for the CUP; the rebels in Erzurum, previously a major site of ethnic clashes, had avoided confrontation with Christians and had targeted taxes and government injustice alone.⁴⁹ To preempt a probable crackdown, the CUP warned the government not to imitate Russia's brutal methods in dealing with disturbances, since it would only precipitate a nationwide armed rebellion. Such an outcome, they reiterated, was not desirable – but, they were quick to add threateningly, might be the only solution.⁵⁰

If initially the CUP confined its public appeal to tax withholding,⁵¹ before long its calls for a general uprising overshadowed those for peaceful resistance. Even Ahmed Rıza, the CUP's arch positivist leader, celebrated the violent uprisings in Erzurum and Kastamonu. Yet, when in response his compatriots called for a general multiethnic uprising,⁵² he tried to tone down the outbreaks by portraying them as an elite movement.⁵³ However, the CUP had already moved in a more radical direction:

A little while ago, the inhabitants of Kastamonu removed from office a governor who considered injustice and wrongdoing to be a requirement of rule, and they sent a telegram to the Yıldız Palace that said: "We dismissed the governor! Send an honest person in his place!" The inhabitants of Kastamonu are the voice of the masses and the cry of truth . . . The Palace, being compelled to carry out this Sublime Decree [issued] by the public, dismissed the governor immediately. Recently, with a peculiarly unyielding Turkish quest for justice, the inhabitants of Erzurum also forced the return of their banished *muftis* from exile. After removing the governor from his mansion and jailing him in the mosque, they expelled him [and] brought upon the police their [deserved] punishment. This is how justice is gotten. The entire world congratulates the inhabitants of Kastamonu and Erzurum.⁵⁴

Using the familiar device of quoting Turkic newspapers of Russia to air controversial views, the CUP journal cited passages from *İrşad* that congratulated the Muslim public in Erzurum and Kastamonu for selecting the best method of ridding themselves of thirty years of Hamidian injustice and tyranny. The passage ended with a poignant remark that the CUP had as yet refused to

⁴⁸ Regretting the sparseness of such political incidents among the Muslims (read Turkish population) of the empire, the report ended on an optimistic note: a revolutionary group had been established in the region. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 104, 30 November 1906, "Erzurum'da İhtilal," p. 4. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 123, 15 October 1907, "İstanbul 9 Teşrin-i Evvel 1907," p. 4.

⁴⁹ The latest report, however, indicated that the government had returned only a few of the banished. *Şura-yı Ümmet* 108, 30 January 1907, "Tan Gazetesi İstanbul Muhabirinden . . .," pp. 3–4.

⁵⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 89, 10 March 1906/15 Muharrem 1324, "Şuunat," pp. 3–4.

⁵¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 94, 24 May 1906/1 Rebiyülahır 1324, "İslah-ı Ahvale Bir Çare," pp. 1–2.

⁵² See p. 82 for the already discussed article in *Şura-yı Ümmet* 99, 31 August 1906, "Osmanlılar!" p. 1.

⁵³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 99, 31 August 1906, "Ne Yapmalı?" pp. 2–3.

⁵⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 106, 15 December 1906, "Bir Nümune-i İmtisal," p. 1.

make openly: "Blood is the foundation of freedom. Turks should also accept this prescription. Period."⁵⁵

When Bitlis, another region of the heartland (*kalb-i vatan*),⁵⁶ followed suit, it solidified the conclusion that Anatolia had awakened. On 26 June 1907, five thousand Muslim Turks, a report claimed, surrounded the governor's mansion and, after accusing him of stealing public funds over the previous three years, demanded his resignation. The governor managed to escape the agitated crowds, but only after killing a protest leader and suffering injuries himself. The crowds retaliated by publicly executing the chief of police, punishing the governor's more notorious appointees, and occupying the telegraph office for the next twenty-four hours. When the government placed the military in full command of the region, the CUP concluded that their compatriots could no longer submit to oppression of murderous criminals.⁵⁷

If the CUP had only hinted at mass violence, the Turkish uprisings signaled a shift in attitude. After the events in Bitlis, a commentator referred his readers to an earlier article in *Şura-yı Ümmet* at the inception of the Russian upheaval. There they had exhorted the Ottoman clerics, military leaders, and notables to send unarmed delegates to the Palace and to the governor's mansion to request the reinstatement of the constitution. Guns were to be used only if the sultan rejected their request and acted, like the tsar, against the public. Now, they asserted, Anatolian events had demonstrated that the sultan had done precisely that, and now logic and religion prescribed armed confrontation as the only remaining option.⁵⁸

Agency and Organization: Joining the Wave

The CUP's keen commentary on Russia showed its awareness of the centrality of the revolutionary organization. The semiautonomous status of Macedonia after 1903 had increased the possibilities for mobilization, whether of various rebellious ethnic groups fighting for independence or the CUP. Here, the organization of rebellious bands, the Bulgarians and Greeks in particular, were taken as models. The final organizational form of the CUP was a fusion of three different strands: (1) local Muslim bands, Albanian or Turkish, established independently for self-defense in imitation of, and to counter, Christian rivals in the increasingly violent context of Macedonia; (2) Ottoman military officers who witnessed the plight of Muslim villagers and assisted them in their official capacity, extending the protection of the Ottoman military, and also independently, as members of a secretive oppositional organization established for nationalistic purposes; and (3) the CUP that resided outside the empire's borders.

⁵⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 106, 15 December 1906, "Matbuat-ı İslamiye-İrşad," p. 4.

⁵⁶ For the increasing sentimental importance of Anatolia in the late nineteenth century, see Kushner (1977:50-55).

⁵⁷ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 118, 15 July 1907, "Telgraf," p. 1.

⁵⁸ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 118, 15 July 1907, "Telgraf," p. 1.

An emphasis on conscious and strategic action highlights the role of agency in bringing together these various strands to wage a successful revolution, and in this, the revolutionary wave provided an important impetus. I emphasize here that their unity was not a contingent development but a deliberate act on the part of the external CUP and the internal officer's organization. The two were ideologically quite close before unity. Prodded by the global revolutionary wave, their organizational structure was modeled after what was common locally in Macedonia for nationalist feuding, that is, officers (Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian, and Turkish) assisted by and in charge of village bands, and in contact with external revolutionary organizations. The model was also in dialogue with a tradition of heavy reliance on the military for effecting political change with the relatively new guerilla organization and tactics learned from the nationalist Christian bands in Macedonia.

The Russian intervention in 1878 was concluded with San Stefano treaty, a disastrous arrangement for the Ottomans with respect to their European possessions. Although the treaty's harsh terms were moderated by the subsequent Berlin treaty, after the intervention of wary Britain and Austria, which restored Ottoman control over major portions of Macedonia, the Ottomans still experienced losses to Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, Montenegro, and Russia (in the east) – and it was forced to make future promises for reform. Furthermore, Cyprus was placed under British control and Bosnia-Herzegovina under Austrian control.⁵⁹ The Berlin treaty and the memory of San Stefano acted as reminders to all parties that the Ottomans might one day be pushed out of Europe.

The year 1903 brought another major setback with the Ilinden revolt. Staged with the collaboration of the Internal Macedonian Organization (IMRO) working for an independent Macedonia, and by the External Macedonian Organization (EMRO), working for the annexation of Macedonia to Bulgaria, it was harshly put down by the Ottomans. The CUP blamed the uprising on Russian and Bulgarian interference that prompted the revolt of the Bulgarian subjects of the empire.⁶⁰ The incident attracted a good deal of attention in Europe, forcing the government to agree to a set of civil, financial, and gendarme reforms in the area under the guidance and supervision of European governments, namely Britain, France, Russia, Austria, and Italy, known as the Mürzteg program.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 79.

⁶⁰ Niyazi wrote that during the four or five years of assignment, his contacts with the Ottoman Turks, Albanians, and Bulgarians had alarmed him about a bloody revolution under preparation by the Bulgarians. The Russian officers, agents, and missionaries, and Bulgarian officers and priests, had influenced and prepared the Ilinden uprising in 1903, with a revolutionary organization that was put together on that same year centering in Resne. Commenting on the Ottoman uprising that began from the same spot, he contrasted the separatist goals of the former with the unifying aims of the Ottomans. Niyazi *Hatrat-ı Niyazi* pp. 26–27.

⁶¹ For gendarme reforms the French were assigned to Serres, British to Drama, Austrians to Kosovo, Italians to Monastir, and Russians to Salonica. Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim* pp. 15–16.

This led the CUP to lament the Ottoman state's waning influence over its European possessions and its forced retreat back into Asia. In the colorful words of the nationalists, the Ottoman sultans – who had emerged from Transoxania and reached as far as Vienna – were now, under Abdülhamid's leadership, wretched and mourning; a nation that had once protected France against Spain could no longer stand up to a few savage Bulgarians in a couple of provinces. It was now heading back to the dark Asia, the burial place of time, for an inauspicious and terrible end.⁶² Dramatizations of Ottoman decline abounded:

Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Bosnia-Hercegovina, and Crete were lost. Right now the grand [dear] Rumelia is about to be lost and in one or two years Istanbul will be gone as well. The holy Islam and the esteemed Ottomanism will be moved to Kayseri. Kayseri will become our capital, Mersin our port, Armenia and Kurdistan our neighbors, and Muscovites our masters. We will become their slaves. Oh! Is it not shameful for us! How can the Ottomans who once ruled the world become servants to their own shepherds, slaves, and servants?⁶³

The European presence in Macedonia and many of the demanded and implemented reforms were a source of great disappointment for the CUP abroad and a reason for outrage among officers of the Third Army in Macedonia. In their view many of the non-Muslim grievances were legitimate, yet they were grievances shared by Muslims as well. Contrary to European belief, the general discontent had its roots in the maladministration of the Hamidian regime, and was not with Islam or the Turks. The proportional increase of Christians within the civil administration and the Gendarmes, the disproportionate attention to Christian inhabitants' grievances, and the call to appoint Christian governors for Macedonian provinces were wrongheaded policies that failed to deal with the basic underlying problems affecting all. In the officers' view, these policies managed to increase resentment among the Muslims, who felt abandoned by their own government when they compared their lot with that of the Christian inhabitants, not to mention the degree of support the latter received from European powers.⁶⁴

Finally, the officers did not find the officials and officers responsible for implementing reforms to be neutral, especially the Austrians and Russians, who had a greater stake in the conflict. Under European protection, the region enjoyed greater autonomy from the Ottoman government. The Europeans'

⁶² *Şura-yı Ümmet* 41, 20 November 1903/1 Ramadan 1321, "Millet-i Osmaniye," p. 1.

⁶³ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 46, 2 February 1904/15 Zilkade 1321, "Halimiz," 2–3 (quote from p. 2). Repeated reference to Anatolian villagers who had originated from Transoxania to conquer the world and subdue kingdoms left no ambiguity that in this case, as in many other instances, by "Ottoman" they meant Ottoman Turks. This should not be mistaken with disregard for Ottomanism as a doctrine of ethnic unity, but that the lexical range of "Ottoman" was rather wide and should be deciphered from the context.

⁶⁴ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim* pp. 20–21, 33; Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 50–51; Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 26–30.

presence – by some accounts their encouragement – allowed the Greek, Bulgarian, Serb, and Wallachian communities to receive direct help from revolutionary committees, rebellious bands, and even officers who crossed the borders from Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania into Ottoman territories. These new forces created state-like institutions with administrative divisions parallel to the Ottoman government, organized village bands and committees, and even instituted regular taxes. With this came competition, infighting, and attacks by one village and ethnic group upon another. The Bulgarians received particular attention for their success in these years and for the difficulties they created for the Third Army.⁶⁵

The European presence, despite the officers' dislike of it, was of course a double-edged sword. To be sure, it allowed the nationalist, separatist bands a more hospitable environment, but it also created opportunities for mobilization among the Third Army officers and a chance to penetrate Muslim villages. Considering that Hamidian repression had thwarted repeated attempts at creating lasting organization in Anatolia, mobilization in Macedonia seemed incomparably easier and more effective, thanks to the relative autonomy the region enjoyed from government surveillance.

Like their adversaries, Muslim villagers had also formed self-defense units. The Ottoman officers viewed themselves as their defenders – defenders who received little protection in this competitive and hostile environment, forgotten by an inactive government too willing to appease the Europeans. The claim of neglect and inaction was relative only to what the officers perceived as sufficient. In fact, it was the official military measures that had brought officers of the Third Army into intimate contact with all Muslim villages. Heading small battalions of forty to fifty men, the Ottoman officers were commissioned to roam the countryside in pursuit of ethnic nationalist bands, and their memoirs are rife with descriptions of battles with predominantly Bulgarian (less frequently, Greek) bands. The officers' success in attracting many Albanian or Turkish bands in the days of revolution was owed to the reputation for bravery they had garnered in effectively fighting nationalist guerillas in defense of Muslim villages. These contacts were reinforced during the military inspection of reserves that took place in every Muslim village at regular three-month intervals.⁶⁶

This competitive environment not only had a direct organizational impact on the CUP, it also affected its ideological outlook. The brand of nationalism that had taken root in the Balkans – one with strong ethnic overtones, as opposed to the territorial ones that underpinned the notion of Ottomanism – impacted the romantic brand of nationalism that predominated in the CUP ranks. This

⁶⁵ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 21–24; Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 26–29, 34–35.

⁶⁶ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 34, 40–44. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 46–49, 51–57, 113–114. Karabekir's memoir is exemplary in the space it devotes to recounting the encounters with the rebellious bands. Kazim Karabekir, *İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti, 1896–1909* (Istanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1993, 2nd ed.).

emerging ethnic nationalism among Turkish officers owed a great deal to struggles with the nationalists in these territories.

Out of this hostile context, with the initiative of some earlier CUP bureaucrats and military men who had been scattered and lost contact with the organization abroad, the Ottoman Freedom Society (*Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti*) was born in September 1906.⁶⁷ Energized by the organizational skills of Talat, the chief correspondence clerk in Salonica (who had been banished there in 1896 for his association with the early CUP), the organization spread through Macedonia and made critical contacts with the Third Army stationed in Macedonia and with the Second Army in Thrace. Speedy recruitment of Enver, a high-ranking officer of the Third Army stationed in Monastir, was an important step toward this goal. Upon returning to Monastir, Enver began recruiting friends and associates in the civil bureaucracy and the army, primarily in the Third Army, among them Niyazi and Karabekir.⁶⁸

In September 1907, almost exactly one year after the Ottoman Freedom Society's establishment, it united with the CUP abroad and adopted its name. This event has enjoyed watershed status in the historiography of this movement, a pivotal moment that qualitatively transformed it from a rather passive oppositional force to a revolutionary one. Recent research, however, has questioned some of the old assumptions. Tracing the steps towards unity is of direct relevance for assessing the impact of the revolutionary wave and the working of agency, by which I mean planned and strategic action. Many have attributed the change in the CUP's stance – from evolutionary positivism to revolutionary activism – and its acceptance of violent methods to the moment it forged an alliance with the Ottoman Freedom Society. This alliance is considered a unity between the conservative, ideological, positivist, intelligentsia abroad and the pragmatic, nonideological, “action oriented” military officers inside the empire.

Ramsaur, perhaps most responsible for popularizing this notion, wrote that the two groups united only by chance; that although the name change made it seem that the Salonica organization had yielded to Paris, this was only superficially so; the Paris group headed by Ahmed Rıza accepted the revolutionary and violent means advocated by the Salonica organization at the expense of sacrificing its central principles. Ramsaur also wrote that the internal CUP remained the center of action; it made decisions independently of the external branch, and as such, was the de facto leader of the movement, overshadowing the role of the Paris branch and ultimately rendering it insignificant for the movement as whole.⁶⁹ This transformation purportedly violated the principles

⁶⁷ For the list of names of the first ten members and the early activities, see M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 212–213.

⁶⁸ Enver was initiated through his uncle a short time after the society's establishment. *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 57–65 (for names of important recruits and leadership composition see pp. 61–65).

⁶⁹ Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 121–130. In particular, he wrote: “Here it must be emphasized, then, that there was never a real coordination between the groups within and without the empire. Ahmet Rıza, even after the adoption by the Turkish revolutionary group of the name of his organization, had no direct influence on the course of events” (p. 129).

espoused by the ideologues, or the Paris branch, and apparently at heavy cost, because power and decision-making was transferred to the pragmatic, nonideological officers inside the empire who remained the CUP's leaders thereafter.

Four issues may be considered for assessing the influence of wave and the impact of agency:

- 1) When and why did the CUP abroad commit to violence and accept broader public participation?
- 2) When this happened, was there a fundamental ideological compromise between the ideologues in Paris and the pragmatist men of action inside the empire?
- 3) Did the alliance come about by chance or by conscious effort? And
- 4) Which center was dominant after the union? This issue becomes trivial if the two groups held similar views toward action before and after the compromise.

The most compelling evidence for the influence of wave and agency comes from the timing of the changed rhetoric of the CUP abroad. A careful examination of their writings demonstrated that by mid-1905 to August 1906 the CUP was already issuing statements that explicitly advocated a combination of mass mobilization and military action. These were the works of the activist faction, and they came long before forging unity with the Ottoman Freedom Society in September 1907, even before the founding date of the latter (September 1906). These statements were intermixed with the older stance until the activist faction took the upper hand.

Furthermore, prior to the official union, the CUP had collaborated with the Ottoman Freedom Society by publishing its officers' articles, sent from Salonica. A case in point was an article in June 1907 that directly called for violent action by appealing to the Ottoman Army to rise up against the sultan and save the fatherland (*vatan*). The Bulgarians and Greeks were preparing to attack the Ottomans, while the heartland was filled with "bandits" who murdered soldiers and defied their right to rule. If things continued this way, warned the article, the Ottomans would be engulfed in a long, bloody war with an army that was absolutely unprepared, a matter that was no secret to the highest general or the lowliest soldier. Making their most dramatic appeal to the Ottoman army to date, they exhorted lower-ranking officers to use the rank and file in their command as an instrument of progress and resort to arms if needed. The traitor sultan had weakened the army. He had used it for thirty years as a tool to commit murder and prolong his tyrannical rule, and, as a result, he had created a rift between the public and the army. A united army sent shivers down the sultan's spine. The army was assured that the fight for the constitution was a war of religion (*gaza* and *cihad*) for the sake of the community of believers (*ümmet*).⁷⁰

⁷⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet* No. 116, 15 June 1907, "Silah Arkadaşlarım," pp. 1-3. By this time negotiations between the two groups had already begun. The important series of articles that appeared under

On the verge of official unity, an address to the officers held the army responsible for protecting Abdülhamid and upholding his despotic rule. Despite having the means to destroy tyranny, they wrote, the army stood quietly on the sidelines; and its officers, in place of sacrificing their lives on the battleground of freedom, were killed cheaply on the empire's borders alongside ordinary soldiers. Although they fulfilled their patriotic duty, related the CUP journal, officers' deaths in places such as Yemen was nothing but waste. In any event, offering one's life for the sake of freedom was a loftier sacrifice because it was a patriotic duty and a social obligation.⁷¹

Those responsible for forging unity from abroad also attested to the like-mindedness of the two. After the revolution, Bahaeddin Şakir, one of the two instrumental members of the Paris organization recounted that the Ottoman Freedom Society was established in Salonica by disgruntled former CUP members. Not long after the society's founding, his close friend and another future architect of unity, Dr. Nazım, received a telegram from one of the founders in Salonica (probably Talat, an old CUP member) inviting them to unite. From the moment they read this letter, wrote Şakir, he and Nazım decided to prepare the ground for bringing the two under one banner and began communicating with Salonica. A few planned initial meetings between the two did not materialize. Yet Şakir wrote that after continued communications with the society in Salonica, his own repeated personal meetings with an Ottoman Freedom Society representative after travel to Istanbul in March 1907, and a month after two members of the Salonica group fled to join them in Paris (Ömer Naci and later Hüsrev Sami),⁷² they became convinced that the two groups held views *entirely* similar with respect to goals, organization, and ideals and both parties had agreed to the need for and benefit of the union. Subsequently, Dr. Nazım was given broad powers to travel to Salonica (his hometown) in June 1907 to meet with society leaders and to work out the terms of unity.⁷³ Drafted by Nazım and the Ottoman Freedom Society in Salonica on 27 September 1907, the terms of union were soon approved by the center in Paris.⁷⁴

this title, some unsigned, were written by Hüsrev Sami. Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 220. Although at least one of the founders of the Ottoman Freedom Society, Ömer Naci, had already joined the Paris CUP in May, Hüsrev Sami was to join in August and was writing for the CUP from Salonica. Thus, the fleeing of the two members abroad, one in May and the other August, and their joining of the CUP was not a chance development but out of close familiarity with ideological outlook, in addition to personal contact with the CUP abroad.

⁷¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet* Nos. 120–121, 1 September 1907, “Silah Arkadaşlarıma-2,” pp. 1–3.

⁷² Ömer Naci joined the CUP in May 1907, and Hüsrev Sami was to do so in August. Nazım was already on his way to Istanbul in June 1907 to establish unity. Hanioglu, *Preparation*, pp. 213–214. Thus, this should read as one month after Ömer Naci had joined the Committee in Paris.

⁷³ *Bağçe*, 18 (second year), 23 August 1909/10 Ağustos 1326, “Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti – Vesaik-i Tarihiyeden,” pp. 2–3. Hanioglu, *Preparation*, pp. 213–215. Enver, discussing the details of unity, mistakenly dates it in April. *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 66–69.

⁷⁴ *Bağçe*, 18 (second year), 23 August 1909/10 Ağustos 1326, p. 3. The claim about the founders is only partially qualified by Hanioglu in that not all the ten founders of the society, but at least four, belonged to the old CUP, as did many others who joined soon afterwards. The Paris branch approved the document on 16 October 1907. Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 215.

According to the draft resolution, the name CUP was to be adopted by both organizations, and the Committee was to have two centers, one in Paris and another in an appropriate domestic location that, although unspecified, clearly implied Salonica. Both centers would strive to restore the 1876 constitution, but were to have administrative autonomy, as indicated by independent seals, charters, and the authority to specify the duty of branches and individuals under their jurisdiction. Even in cases where an internal branch communicated with the internal headquarters through the Paris center to avoid danger, the branch was to remain under the command of the internal center.⁷⁵ The responsibility of representing the CUP to the European public remained with the external center and the responsibility for all internal undertakings remained with the internal center. Yet, although administratively and financially independent, they were obliged to assist one another in time of need. They could also amend, or moderate (*tadil*), each other's actions, but only as a last resort and with hesitation. The journals of the organization were to be *Mechveret* in French and *Şura-yı Ümmet* in Turkish, both published by the Paris center. With respect to the Turkish publications the center abroad was obliged to consider the proposals of the internal center and the latter in turn shared responsibility for their content.⁷⁶

Şakir was insistent that both branches approved the same methods and goals. Considering this, the source of earlier judgments about the continued conservatism of the external CUP seems to have been rooted in the division that persisted within the Paris center, rather than in disagreements between the majority opinion in the internal and external centers. Let us consider the issue of revolutionary method more closely. As the analysis of the principal revolutionary organ demonstrated, tensions were rife between two factions within the external center, one headed by Ahmed Rıza (and Sezai) who doggedly attempted to interpret all social movements as elite products and to confine revolutionary action to the assassination of the sultan. Then there were those who gradually came to argue for a populist, violent alternative, the group headed by Şakir and Nazım, and it was clear that by the end of 1906, this had become the majority opinion. This was attested by writings on contemporary events, especially on

⁷⁵ This clause (4) may be interpreted in two ways. It may indicate the concern of the internal center that although the branches formed with the efforts of the external branch in far-flung places were to remain in direct contact with the external branch, they should nonetheless submit to the authority of the internal branch when time and occasion arose. On the other hand, it may be interpreted as assurance to branches that because of the dangers of communicating with the internal center, they could communicate with the external center uninterruptedly without violating the terms of the agreement. Hanioglu (personal communication) accepts the second interpretation. As he writes, the Monastir branch, perhaps the most important internal center, in violation of the charters, communicated with the external branch directly without the intermediary of Salonica and acted almost independently of it. Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 216.

⁷⁶ *Bağçe*, 18 (second year), 23 August 1909/10 Ağustos 1326, pp. 3–4. See also Hanioglu, *Preparation*, pp. 215–216. For a slightly different version of this document by Kuran and its English translation see Kuran, *İttihad ve Terakki*, pp. 238–239 and Ramsaur, *Prelude*, pp. 123–124.

events in Russia and Iran. It was interesting that they chose to base their arguments in favor of action by reference to the global revolutionary wave. Skeptics may suggest that the discussions of the revolutionary wave were merely after-the-fact justifications for those who were already convinced of the need for action. This misses the point, however, that even if they were convinced of the need for action for other reasons, they used the wave as their most persuasive argument in convincing others to join in a violent and popular uprising. And because those responsible for forging unity were also the commentators on the global revolutionary upheavals, one is hard pressed to argue against the influence of the wave.

One hardly needs to restate that both centers were constitutionalist, and the internal center's members were at a large remove from the pragmatic-laymen-activist officers, lacking ideology, portrayed in some accounts. Another shared ideological commitment was Turkish nationalism, though still under the Ottoman rubric. The final and perhaps most critical issue was their shared interpretation of constitutionalism. It was the intellectuals (or ideologues) who had localized constitutionalism for internal consumption by translating this abstract global ideal into a notion that spoke to local concerns. On the one hand, the discovery of Islamic roots of constitutionalism and constitutionalism's identification as the source of European progress and a solution to ethno-religious strife, its association with a just taxation system and its powers to radically transform the administration and the military, were not self-evident truths and required expending a good deal of intellectual power. On the other hand, there was everything commonsensical and pragmatic about it insofar as it spoke to the very concrete day-to-day issues of officers, administrators, ethnic minorities, and even Macedonian villagers. This is precisely how both groups understood constitutionalism.

When the two united, wrote Şakir, both had extensive networks,⁷⁷ a claim that was incorrect and partially disingenuous: his friend Nazım, shortly before the union and approximately a year prior to revolution, had personally written to him from Salonica about the deplorable state of the internal organization and its general clumsiness in maintaining secrecy.⁷⁸ Hanioglu is of the opinion that the external CUP played a significant role in organizing the internal CUP by providing them with badly needed propaganda material, which they lacked entirely, and organizational acumen, concluding that "without these revolution could not have been realized for a long time to come."⁷⁹

Enver was in general agreement with the assessment of the weakness of the internal organization, but, unlike Nazım, he was not willing to concede the greater organizational capability of the external center; nor was he willing to concede the role the external organization played in the expansion of the internal organization, or even that the internal organization had succeeded in any major mobilization until the few days prior to revolution when he took to the

⁷⁷ *Bağçe*, 18 (second year), 23 August 1909/10 Ağustos 1326, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 215. ⁷⁹ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 212.

mountains to join others who had done the same.⁸⁰ There are good reasons for considering Enver's claims with skepticism and for according secondary importance to them in comparison with the writings of other heroes of revolution, such as his comrade in arms, Niyazi. As other larger-than-life personalities in decisive historical periods, Enver had a tendency to exaggerate his own role. These included taking a good part of credit for the undeniable centrality of the Monastir branch while belittling the role of all outside influences, be it Salonica or the Paris center.⁸¹

Niyazi was quite appreciative of the external organization and its influence over the movement, especially its journals *Mechveret* and *Şura-yı Ümmet*, which he considered to have played an extraordinarily positive role.⁸² When discussing the CUP after the merger, he refused to make distinctions between the two centers. For example, he wrote that at the time the CUP was analyzing world affairs in the abstract and was concentrating on the army's spirit more than on the public, as a result of which a sacred bond of camaraderie was created between the officers, from the lowest to higher ranks, that was quite different than the old feeling of unity between colleagues and partners.⁸³ This was an accurate representation of *Şura-yı Ümmet* in the closing days of 1907 and early 1908, and a positive acknowledgment of the external center's influence.

The nationalist officers were uniformly impressed by the organization of their Christian adversaries, the Bulgarians in particular. Niyazi, for example, recalled that when he was pursuing bands in Macedonia between 1904 and 1908, he and all other officers thought that the Muslim Turks would be forced to create a similar revolutionary organization (*ihtilal teşkilatı*) one day.⁸⁴ Enver was similarly impressed and was forthcoming about the Bulgarian inspiration of the Ottoman Freedom Society, in particular its Monastir branch, which he personally helped to establish.⁸⁵ Even on this score, though, Hanioglu gives greater

⁸⁰ *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 97–99.

⁸¹ After unity, Enver recalled, although the CUP organizational center remained in Salonica, the Monastir branch, the more prominent location in the revolutionary days, was the major hub for all internal communications with the different administrative levels of the province (*Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 72). Similarly, he discounted the role of the external center. He emphasized the independence of the internal and external branches by highlighting the terms of their agreement: they were to inform one another with respect to important decisions and try to reach an accord, but if agreement was not possible, each center could act independently with its own responsibility. *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 69. Enver's memoir was penned long after, and is replete with many chronological and geographical inaccuracies, not to mention a running debate with the ghost of all that had transpired in this most tumultuous period of history and for an individual who was always at its center. Considering Niyazi's less pressing need to settle accounts, with history or with others, his memoir should be preferred to Enver's for its careful, extensive, and superior level of detail, and its immediate publication only a few months after the revolution.

⁸² Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 30–31, and footnote p. 31.

⁸³ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 35–36. ⁸⁴ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 34.

⁸⁵ Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 57, 61–69, 72. Also, according to Buxton, the CUP “had before them the example of the ‘Internal Organisation’ of the Macedonian Bulgars, from which they drew many hints. They determined, however, to avoid the danger of rival leaderships. They

credit to the External organization for proposing the model, Şakir in particular.⁸⁶

The new CUP resolve to organize after nationalist Christian bands were communicated openly to all branches in its major newspaper. The job of announcing it fell upon Ahmed Rıza. In an awkwardly contradictory article, the arch-positivist leader could not refrain from expressing his distaste for a general uprising out of the fear that it strengthened tyranny by providing a pretext for a clampdown, or opened the way to foreign intervention. He continued to hope for a lone Palace assassin to appear on the scene. Under pressure from his compatriots in the external and internal centers, he made an uncharacteristic appeal to the military officers to organize villagers into rebellious units of ten to fifteen members each. This model, he stated explicitly, was inspired by the Greek and Bulgarian bands that had succeeded in wresting away Ottoman territories. He surmised that if every province had eight or ten such bands under the command of an officer, which protected villages against government intrusion, the loyalty of additional villages could be easily won and the bands could begin liberating territories. He wrote this with a straight face and without admitting any shift in the CUP strategy. In the face of pressure for broader mobilization, it was hard for Ahmed Rıza to remain consistent with the doctrine of limited revolution from above.⁸⁷ Even the emphasis on officers' leadership did not make these bands significantly different from their Christian counterparts.⁸⁸ A compromised stance away from strict military participation was being worked out. Increasingly the army was addressed as the vanguard of the freedom movement, the first to sacrifice, and the public guide to the true (straight) path, and in return, the army was assured of public participation in their armed uprising.⁸⁹

The internal branch eventually emerged as the stronger pole of the coalition, as it logically should have if revolution was to have a chance. Yet, as long as the two held similar views, the internal CUP was to be considered an extension of the one abroad, rather than at odds with it. The revolutionary wave, and agency, of course figured prominently in materializing this coalition.

From Bloodless Revolution to Revolutionary Populism

Over the two days of 27–29 December 1907, during the second congress of Ottoman opposition parties, the CUP officially sanctioned the use of revolutionary, popular methods. The congress convened under the leadership of three principal opposition groups, two of which had previously advocated, to the CUP's dismay, foreign intervention. In the congress, the CUP was represented by Ahmed Rıza, the League of Private Initiative and Decentralization by Price

were enabled to create a revolutionary weapon perhaps unparalleled both in force and quality.”

Charles Roden Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1909), p. 48.

⁸⁶ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 217.

⁸⁷ *Şura-yı Ümmet* 123, 15 October 1907, “Çete Teşkili Lüzumuna Dair Mektub,” pp. 3–4.

⁸⁸ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 217.

⁸⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 126, 1 December 1907, “Silah Arkadaşlarım-4,” pp. 1–2.

Sabahaddin, and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation by K. Maloumian. They agreed on three broad goals: (1) to force Abdülhamid to abdicate the throne; (2) to fundamentally transform the administration; and (3) to establish consultative principles and the constitutional system, with upper and lower chambers.

The declaration stated regretfully but explicitly that nonviolent methods had proven insufficient and that now it was time to resort to revolutionary, violent means. This decision was not reached whimsically, they insisted, but after sound reasoning: the sultan had responded to the petitions and requests of the past thirty years with force, exile, and massacre. A number of violent and passive methods were thus recommended together: armed resistance, inviting the public to a general uprising, strikes, refusing to pay taxes, and propagandizing within the army to win its support and convince it not to take arms against the public and rebellion leaders. The joint declaration ended with an assortment of calls of “long live” that celebrated the unity of various ethnicities, religions, and the entire opposition in general, now hailed as revolutionary forces.⁹⁰

In the joint declaration’s theoretical justification for revolt, one may find echoes of the American Declaration of Independence in its insistence that the decision to break ties with the monarch was not reached lightly but after “a long train of abuses.” The social contract was not broken whimsically, after slight signs of injustice, but with prudence and forethought for the consequences, implying that breaking it outweighed the dangers of anarchy or the state of nature.⁹¹ Interestingly, the joint declaration did not invoke Islam as justification for severing from the monarch. This could have been occasioned by the presence of Armenians in the coalition. But, as we have already seen, Islam had been invoked in this cause before, and there existed plenty of material to transcend Namık Kemal’s hesitations and justify the revolt as a consequence of a dissolved social contract with the tyrannical monarch.

The CUP introduction to the congress’s proceedings made no secret of the intense ethnic conflict between the Turks and other Ottomans, but predictably singled out Abdülhamid and his policies as its major source. “It is not hard to understand the reason for the universally unmatched treacherous destruction and murderous triumphs of the Hamidian rule for the past thirty-one years. The reason is that this destructive government continuously divided and scattered [all] Ottoman nationalities (*akvam-ı Osmaniye*) in sight and to some extent incited in them enmity toward one another. The terror and even astonishment that befell the [Ottoman] nations was of such degree that some are declaring war

⁹⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, “Kongre,” pp. 1–2. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, “Osmanlı Muhalifin Firkaları Tarafından Avrupa’da İnikad eden Kongrenin Beyannamesi,” pp. 2–3.

⁹¹ “The Declaration of Independence,” *The Federalist Papers*, ed. Clinton Rossiter (New York: Mentor, 1999), pp. 496–497. See also John Locke, “The Second Treatise of Government,” in *Political Writings of John Locke*, edited with an introduction by David Wootton (New York: Mentor, 1993), p. 376.

on the Turks, and some are seeking their salvation in foreign protection and interference. Turks who are [caught] in between, found themselves in the fear and dread that if they took action as well, the Sultanate would be lost." Aside from a candid recognition of ethnic tensions, the opening remarks also acknowledged the larger cost particular to the Turkish element, that is, the empire-wide collapse to be expected if the sultanate were lost.⁹² The congress appointed a secret committee drawn from all three groups and gave it the task of establishing unity among various nationalist rebellious bands in Macedonia and other locations to divert their attention from ethnic warfare and direct it toward the violent overthrow of Abdülhamid. Toward this end, it was to disseminate revolutionary literature in Turkish, Arabic, Kurdish, Albanian, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Greek.⁹³

The more conservative old guard was not entirely at ease with the advocacy of an outright violent mass revolution. Ahmed Rıza, in his usual style, attempted to tone down the revolutionary slant of the resolution and bring a greater sense of moderate "realism" to the "youth" in the conference, "intoxicated" with "idealism" and violent revolution.⁹⁴ Another CUP leader who shared Rıza's philosophy, Sezai, spoke of contentious and difficult meetings with other parties, during which they were accused of "not being revolutionary enough," but nonetheless conceded to the CUP's greater commitment to revolutionary violence, an admission that could hardly be denied, given the contents of the signed agreement. His insistence that as children of enlightenment they could not be "too red," was an indirect admission that they were now in fact "red," though of a lighter shade than the Russian opposition.⁹⁵

If the Liberals and Armenians had previously advocated violence and foreign intervention, now they clearly backed away from the European powers' involvement and accepted the longstanding CUP argument about resolving an internal issue among the Ottoman elements themselves. Yet a major divisive issue, the centralized or decentralized federalist structure of the future constitutional government, remained to be resolved. On the one hand, the CUP seemed to have been in a compromising mood when it lamented the Armenian massacres under Abdülhamid, acts that in its view had deservedly earned him various titles such as the "red Sultan," and when it spoke less negatively of, rather condemning outright, the Berlin congress, a topic of importance for minorities and particularly the Armenians. Had the congress's recommendations been implemented, it argued surprisingly, the empire would have been blessed with a new life, and it was because of Abdülhamid's failure on yet another concern that the

⁹² *Şura-yı Ümmet*, Nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, "İlk Adım," p. 1.

⁹³ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, Nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, "Kongrenin Kabul Etdiği Tekalif-i Mütenevvia," p. 3.

⁹⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, 1 February 1908, Nos. 128–129, pp. 3–4.

⁹⁵ This was an obvious reference to revolutionary proclivities of the Armenians headed by Maloumian, as betrayed by Sezai's immediate comment to Maloumian not to take offense at his suggestion. It was also an indirect reference to Russian revolutionaries who had greatly influenced the Armenians. *Şura-yı Ümmet*, nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, pp. 3–5.

adversely affected minorities had justifiably resorted to revolt and foreign powers intervened in the affair.⁹⁶ Major rifts were still to be overcome, as attested by a joint declaration. Even without identifying centralization as the principal source of division,⁹⁷ the declaration was quite forthcoming about the ideological chasm between the three groups. In its own words, the coalition accepted a general, common interpretation of “constitutional principles” without delving into “details” so as not to leave any room for expected difficulties that might prevent unity.⁹⁸ To its credit, the coalition consciously acknowledged the multivocality of constitutionalism, and rightly considered the embrace of ambiguity a necessary ingredient for unity in the fight against a common enemy.

It should also be noted that the resolution repeatedly called for complete transformation of the administration. This is downplayed in the political histories of the Young Turk revolution, or, at best, is equated simply with political transformation. Yet this was a call that went beyond creation of a chamber of deputies, or the separation of powers, and potentially it was very different from demand for a politically liberal regime.

After the congress, the CUP’s main publication continued to appeal to the military for action: “Up to now, no nation has been able to acquire liberty, their natural right, by means of publications. In reality, ideas are a preparatory means for evolution. However, arms speed up this evolution.” After extensive references to Garibaldi and the Young Italian leader’s fiery call to arms in the fight for liberty, the CUP added, “Today we are in dire need of such a Garibaldi. Thirty years of theories is enough already. Today, there are many officers in the Ottoman army willing to dedicate their lives for the sake of fatherland . . . My dear comrades in arms! The nation today expects from you this kind of sacrifice. Not everyone can be a Garibaldi, but there are no obstacles to bequeathing your blood to the fatherland and the dear nation to which it is owed.”⁹⁹

REVOLUTION BEGINS

Two developments are widely believed to have triggered the revolution, but through casual treatment they sometimes have come to acquire causal significance, a tendency that is pronounced in accounts that insist on the spontaneity and unplanned nature of this revolution. Both took place in June. The first was the success of a top military commander in uncovering the Committee, and the

⁹⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, “Osmanlı Muhalifin Fırkaları Tarafından Avrupa’da İnikad eden Kongrenin Beyannamesi,” pp. 2–3.

⁹⁷ Refusal to highlight decentralization did not conceal from any of the interested parties that the group around Sabahaddin and the Armenians advocated a decentralized constitutional state. Ahmed Rıza’s group, on the other hand, had argued that decentralization would lead to cessation of the Empire’s European regions. Temo, *İnkılab-ı Milliye*, pp. 198–200.

⁹⁸ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, Nos. 128–129, 1 February 1908, “Kongre,” p. 1. That the CUP considered the recent Anatolian events to be one of the explicit motives behind the Congress was significant.

⁹⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 130, 15 February 1908, “Silah Arkadaşlarıma-5,” pp. 2–3. (quotes from p. 3).

second was the Reval meeting between Russia and Britain. Combined, these are supposed to have culminated in frenzied activities on the part of the CUP, leading to revolution. Yet, in response to a British proposal for reforms in Macedonia, the external CUP had already suggested a concrete plan for revolutionary action by March 1908. This faced resistance from the internal branch of the CUP, which cautioned against the dangers to its members and suggested another route of action. The plan suggested by the external organization included occupation of post offices by Muslims, rejection of the independent governor, open threats against foreign governments, and stepped-up activities against the bands. The internal organization took issue with these, and in particular with the popular aspect of the movement, which it claimed would endanger the internal organization's members. Instead it suggested a show of resistance in Macedonia through assassinations, open letters to the European powers that challenged the recent British proposal, and stepped-up activities to fight nationalist bands and better organization of Muslim village bands. The internal branch insisted that the more radical and dangerous plans proposed by the external CUP be postponed to a later date, unless the Ottoman government found itself in imminent threat of invasion by the European powers.¹⁰⁰ These findings by Hanioglu certainly speak of the existence of concrete plans and preparations prior to such triggers and the greater enthusiasm of the external branch for action. The two developments at most speeded things up. Niyazi could not agree more: A little while before the revolution there was a sense that the time had finally come for the CUP members to take leave of their posts, create bands, go up to the mountains, roam the villages, and demonstrate justice through their actions. In this context, the Reval conference only triggered the actions that had been in preparation for a long time; it was not the cause.¹⁰¹

After the merger, the internal branch expanded its network dramatically. It mobilized the self-defense units that had been previously established either independently or by the officers' efforts, and, using the model of Christian bands, pursued the creation of village militias more aggressively. According to Niyazi, as its power increased, the CUP made its presence and intentions known to the outside world while managing to retain secrecy; and through a gradual takeover of the state executive power, it made the town and village inhabitants aware of preparations for an armed but peaceful revolution. Around March 1908, in all military positions in Macedonia, there were gatherings, one after another, in which concrete plans were being worked out for a general uprising with the help of military and civil administrators under the CUP command.¹⁰² In Niyazi's words:

The Committee was operating like an organized and secretive government: The record and substance of every government employee was logged in the Committee register and it kept track of all their doings and actions. Finally, the authority and moral influence of the

¹⁰⁰ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, pp. 236–237. ¹⁰¹ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 50–51.

¹⁰² Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 36.

Inspector General, the governors, and the military leaders had dissolved as all their instruments of execution, that is the trusted and authorized individuals under their command, had escaped control. The Committee had won over all the enlightened, all the sincere consciences and all the compassionate. As such, it no longer felt the need to be as secretive as before. In any event, the rapid daily increase of Committee power was also making it difficult for the officer force to maintain secrecy. The government and the administrators who pursued its illegitimate aims and vile interests faced difficulties. They only sensed the presence of a dreadful adversary, but were unable to see it clearly. Command was lost and the cause mystifying.¹⁰³

The CUP used its influence to assign officers to favorable or strategic locations for public mobilization. Furthermore, in addition to the officially sanctioned battalions that routinely pursued rebellious bands, the officers organized small independent ones to defend Muslim villages in the name of the Committee and to bolster its reputation. An example of such CUP planning was the appointment of Niyazi and Sabri close to home, in a geographically familiar setting that allowed easy infiltration of the predominantly Albanian Muslim villages in Resne, Pirsepa, and Ohri. Being Albanians themselves, they transformed the area into one of the most trusted Committee centers. With the CUP's growing reputation among the Albanians, Niyazi recalled, they flocked to Ohri, Resne, and Monastir to join; but given the strict membership rules at the time, not everyone could be accepted, and admission was limited to the band activists as representatives of the group only. This satisfied them, and shored up the CUP's reputation.¹⁰⁴

The public record of the CUP corroborates Niyazi's claims about the Committee's decision to come out in March and make its presence known to the government, as expressed in a mid-March (Julian calendar) issue of *Şura-yı Ümmet*:

O unlucky Muslims of Macedonia. What can we do against this calamity? To expect security from Abdülhamid and ministers, his partners in crime, is as futile as shedding tears over a grave. We are all falling victim to an ignorant, traitor and unprincipled administration. Until now, the administrators of the Hamidian regime had nurtured the following thought in the minds of Macedonian public: "for goodness sake, Muslims, do not say a word for it will lead to foreign intervention of even greater intensity." And for

¹⁰³ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 36–37. Knight's purported interviews with the CUP members after the revolution make very similar points. However true his claim may be, his near-matching account to that of Niyazi weakens claims about actual interviews: "In the meanwhile the Committee was steadily undermining the entire civil as well as military administration of the empire. It acted, as a member of the association put it to me, like a well-ordered but secret government. It kept books in which were inscribed the names of all the higher government officials, with particulars as to their careers and habits – their dossiers, in short. Some of the enlightened and right-minded of these officials had been gained over to the cause; the others were closely watched, and whether they were *valis*, inspectors general, or governors of districts, or what not, their moral influence was destroyed, and their authority was made impotent by the fact that their subordinates, on whom they had to rely for the execution of their wishes, had almost without exception become adherents of the Committee." Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, p. 128.

¹⁰⁴ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 40–41.

eight years they remained quiet in the face of many a bloody scene. Here is the retribution for silence, here is calamity, here is captivity! Our silence denied our sovereignty (*bakimiyetimiz*) and existence there. The Bulgarians, who constitute one fifth of our population there, gained superiority because of the use of arms. The Greeks who witnessed this embraced arms as well. Today in Macedonia the Bulgarian and Greek elements are acknowledged, but the Muslim existence, the majority, is not even discussed. As a result, our ties are being severed with the Ottoman administration, and without care for our future we are being left to an unknown administration that can lead to nothing but enslavement. There is only one thing we can do and that is “to show our existence.” As we are the sovereigns of this land, we are going to amass in one place and make the political administrators of major powers there understand that we will not tolerate either the British or other foreign governments’ interference into the internal Ottoman affairs . . . O miserable Muslims of Macedonia! Can one imagine what will happen to us when the Turkish soldiers withdraw from Macedonia? Today, despite the presence of a 200,000 military force there, your house in the village, and your crops in the field are being burnt still. Your wife, sister and children are murdered. If the soldiers withdraw – just as in Crete – it is absolutely certain that our country will be taken away from us. The Muslims there will be massacred. To where and in whom will we take refuge then? Every passing minute is bringing about a new and frightening calamity. It is finally time to show our existence.¹⁰⁵

In the same issue of the journal, an obscure entry at the bottom of the last page mentioned British plans and the recent arrests suffered by the CUP:

At a time when foreigners negotiated appointing a foreign governor to Rumelia and thus openly dividing our country, the traitor sultan is still concerned about himself. The Ottoman army’s unity and actions in support of the constitution have become commercial goods for the Yıldız insects, and to gain Abdülhamid’s favor, they are slandering the innocent. Recently in Salonica ten young individuals and in Istanbul many more have been taken into custody.¹⁰⁶

“Commercial goods” was in reference to rewards received in return for spying; the entry betrayed the CUP’s frustration with its recent setbacks. At the end of February 1908, Nazım Bey, an aide-de-camp and lieutenant colonel (*kaymakam*) in the military command in Salonica, had written to the Palace about the abuse of immunity accorded to foreign post offices and the collusion of seditious elements, internally and abroad, in sending illegal material through the French post office for distribution among the army and the honest public, especially the Muslims. Adding that some of the seditious elements and soldiers connected to them had already been arrested and placed in court custody, he assured the Palace that he would continue the investigation until the full discovery of all soldiers and others who were part of this group and report the results to the Palace.¹⁰⁷ This was hardly the first time Nazım had reported on the CUP. In

¹⁰⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, 131, 28 March 1908/15 Mart 1908, “İcmal-ı Harici, Makedonya Gidiyor,” pp. 3–4 (quote from p. 4).

¹⁰⁶ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, 131, 28 March 1908/15 Mart 1908, no title, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ Y.EE 15–45, 29 February 1908/16 Kanun-ı Sani 1323/26 Muharrem 1326. For an earlier report on the same month, see Y.EE 15–35, 24 February 1908/11 Kanun-ı Sani 1323/21

September 1907, he had identified an artillery officer as “a member of the seditious committee in Salonica,” who disseminated harmful publications among the Third Army officers after obtaining them from his brother, who was a student in Germany. The report implied that the officer, who had been selected for training and was about to depart for Germany, should be prevented from going abroad, and it did so quite subtly and without making any explicit suggestion. Given the detailed knowledge of the artillery officer’s activities and membership, it was curious that he was not apprehended; the report hesitated even to advise explicitly against his departure. By all indications, “the seditious committee in Salonica” must still not have appeared worthy of urgent action in sensitive Macedonia.¹⁰⁸

By late February – early March, however, the situation had changed. Alarmed by Nazım Bey’s latest reports, the government recalled him to Istanbul in mid-March, broadened the investigation, and placed additional staff under his command when he returned to Salonica shortly after. His success so alarmed the CUP that in early June, when Nazım was urgently recalled to Istanbul, the Committee made plans to assassinate him. The plan was executed on the day before his departure with the help of his brother-in-law who was also a central Committee member, Enver. The bullet fired by a CUP *fedai* managed only to injure him, but the “heroic” act’s significance as the first of its kind was not lost.¹⁰⁹ Subsequent inquiries led to more arrests, which intensified activities within the Third Army and prompted the *fedais* to carry out more assassinations, especially of top officials on missions to combat the CUP.¹¹⁰

It should be noted that from 1906 on there had been small but regular rebellions in the army in many locations over economic issues, especially back

Muharrem 1326. For later reports see Y.EE 15–36, 6 March 1908/22 Şubat 1323/3 Safer 1326; Y.EE 15–37, 31 May 1908/18 Mayıs 1324/1 Cemaziyelevvel 1326; Y.EE 15–38, 8 June 1908/26 Mayıs 1324/9 Cemaziyelevvel 1326; Y.EE 15–39, 11 June 1908/12 Cemaziyelevvel 1326; Y.EE 15–40, 30 June 1908/17 Haziran 1326/1 Cemaziyelahır 1326.

¹⁰⁸ Y.EE 15–44, 25 September 1907/12 Eylül 1323/17 Şaban 1325. Several undated reports warn of the committee activities in various locations. The police in Salonica purportedly did not enforce the ban on seditious newspapers originating from Europe, which, according to eyewitnesses, were openly read in coffeehouses. Y.EE 15–95, n.d.. Another confirmed Young Turk activities in Istanbul and admitted their propaganda was reaching the soldiers and officers, but somewhat dismissed their scope or importance. Y.EE 15–101, n.d. Other reports confirmed the dissemination of propaganda in public places such as mosques in Üsküdar. Y.EE 15–166, n.d.

¹⁰⁹ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 38. Similarly, Enver described him as the first Ottoman to fire a bullet and put his life in danger in the constitutional struggle for the sake of the fatherland. See *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları*, pp. 83–84. The CUP *fedai*, Mustafa Necib was typically lauded in this manner. *Bağçe*, No. 18 (2nd year), 23 August 1910/10 Ağustos 1326, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ As Refik noted, after the assassination attempt, many military leaders and administrators out of fear, or sure knowledge, of association with the committee were recalled from all three provinces. The acting head of the Third Army was among the dismissed, replaced by General İbrahim Pasha. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 34–36. In contrast to documentary evidence and eyewitness reports who point to mid-March, Enver mistakenly gives the end of May as the time at which the government started to become aware of the committee’s extensive presence. For the above and details of the assassination attempt, see *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları* pp. 79–89. Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 37–39. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, pp. 1136–1138.

pay. These events increased in scope and intensity in 1907 and 1908, with officers and soldiers protesting nonrational rules of promotion. Combined with a greater sense of the CUP presence, by late May and June the government had become apprehensive enough about the Third Army to dispatch additional troops there under the pretext of correcting deficiencies.¹¹¹

The second development was the meeting in Reval between Russia and Britain on 9–12 June 1908. Before the meeting, the CUP became quite apprehensive that the two intended to resolve differences and work out a final solution by partitioning Macedonia. As it turned out, the meeting did not produce such a plan.¹¹² But it produced great anxiety and prompted action. As an officer sarcastically remarked, the meeting intended to choke to death the “sick man” before it died on its own.¹¹³ Abdülhamid and the government in general were also quite wary of it.¹¹⁴ The imminent threat, the condition set for drastic action by the internal CUP, had thus been met: it drew up and distributed a long, combative declaration to the European consulates in the three major provincial capitals of Macedonia under its own name.¹¹⁵

The declaration expressed shock at Britain’s purported suggestion of the appointment of an independent governor and Russia’s supposed desire for an international investigative committee. Both solutions, it argued, would end in splitting off Macedonia. It mocked Europe for its Manichean imaginings of Muslims as the executioners, and the Christians or the innocent (the Bulgarians in particular) as putative victims of Muslim terror and prejudice, from which they must be defended. The real reason, it countered, was the unjust administration and its tyrannical ways that extended to all Ottoman domains. Victims they all were, regardless of religion, race, or creed: Macedonia was thus an internal problem that could be solved with cooperation of compatriots. It condemned Europe, Russia in particular, for not desiring peace in Macedonia. Russia’s pan-Slavist ambition was to turn the Balkan peninsula into a Slav province and then to capture Istanbul, to dominate the East. Europe knew that the Macedonian problem was unrelated to Muslims there, and that the rebellions were the work of neighboring countries – that is, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia. Europe also knew well that the so-called revolutionary bands (*ibtılalci denilen çete*) originated from these countries and acted under orders from Sophia, Athens, and Belgrade, and that without such assistance the Macedonian revolutionaries could not have survived. The declaration claimed that after four years of reform the situation had gone from bad to worse: Macedonia found itself in the throes of a general uprising, with inhabitants deviating from the natural

¹¹¹ BEO 248873, 25 May 1908/23 Rebiyülahır 1326. The request for troops from Anatolia acknowledged the problems in Macedonia but did not elaborate. BEO 250300, 18 June 1908/18 Cemaziyevvel 1326.

¹¹² Hanioglu, *Preparation*, pp. 262, 266–67, fn 419 (p. 470). ¹¹³ Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim*, p. 32.

¹¹⁴ Tahsin Paşa *Sultan Abdülhamid*, p. 351.

¹¹⁵ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 51–61. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 32–33. That the letter was initially written in Salonica, printed in Paris, and sent back indicated that it had been in the making for some time. Enver, *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları*, p. 77.

spirit of cooperation and considering themselves no longer the children of the same fatherland. It thus advised the European governments to leave the governor alone and end their interference, to allow the region to recover of its own accord. All Ottomans were brothers, it claimed, and they did not need Europe's help to tear apart the dark curtain of tyranny cast over Macedonia. The declaration ended with a warning to Europe: if it intended to assign a governor general or an international judicial administrative inspectorate, or to limit the Ottoman army's presence in Macedonia, or to take other similar intrusive measures, the CUP would let it be known that its members' patience was at an end and that they preferred honorable death to dishonorable life.¹¹⁶

By late June, the government was inching closer to the Committee. By 30 June, the commander of the Third Army, General İbrahim Pasha, warned the sultan in a report from Salonica about officer disloyalty and suggested relocating such officers from Monastir and Salonica. This served two purposes: one, it broke up the local networks among officers, and two, once isolated, the transfer or banishment of the instigators could take place more smoothly and without noise or resistance. He thus offered a way to make the relocations appear natural.¹¹⁷

Taking to the Mountains

Given the circumstances, on 28 June, Adjutant-Major (*kolağası*) Niyazi easily persuaded two CUP comrades in the town of Resne – the municipal head and the police commissioner – to form a band and take off to nearby mountains. With the certainty that they would be soon joined with other bands, at least from nearby locations,¹¹⁸ they were convinced of their ability to fight the government for months, if not years, from this mountainous, wooded, and predominantly Muslim (Albanian) area of Monastir. At a midnight meeting that same night with forty to fifty CUP associates in Resne, the symbolically significant location was chosen as the starting point for the uprising. If the Bulgarian (İlinden) revolt had originated there, theirs could show the world their love of Christian patriots and prove their aversion toward administrative principles that had turned Ottoman elements into enemies. Its intention was to announce liberty, equality, and fraternity, which amounted to implementing the principles of justice.¹¹⁹

On 3 July, Niyazi, falsely claiming that a Bulgarian band was in the vicinity, sent the military regiment on a futile pursuit. After stealing the regiment's arms,

¹¹⁶ The declaration blamed a large part of the Macedonian problem on the Bulgarians: it was their [1903 İlinden] revolt that had attracted European governments. Had they not resorted to arms, trampling upon Muslim villages and killing those minding their own business, there would not have been any need for European intervention. After claiming that Macedonia was 55 percent Muslim, it asked, where were their bands and terrorist groups for committing crimes? Bulgarians (who according to the CUP constituted only 25 percent of the population) had many such bands at their service. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 51–61.

¹¹⁷ Y.EE 15–58, 29 June 1908/16 Haziran 1324/30 Cemaziyelevvel 1326.

¹¹⁸ They had in mind Pirsepa, Ohri, and Debre. ¹¹⁹ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 63–68.

ammunitions, and funds, Niyazi, the head of Resne's municipality, the tax official, the police commissioner, and a lieutenant, together with about 150 villagers, took to the mountains and declared themselves the National Regiment of Resne. The event was not as spontaneous as it may have appeared. Beforehand, all other cells had been informed and their participation ascertained. Also, the central committee had approved the action. On the same day, they were joined by another officer and his band from Pirsepa. In the next three weeks, officers took to the mountains from various locations with "national regiments" of their own. Most prominent of these was the Albanian Adjutant-Major Eyüp Sabri, Niyazi's close and trusted friend, who took flight from Ohri. Others were the high-ranking commander Salahaddin and his friend Hasan Tosun (from Kirçova and Pirlepe, respectively) who had been exposed as CUP leaders and recalled to Istanbul, just as the head of the Third Army had recommended. The best known military commander to join in so bold a fashion was Enver, whose open defection was a morale boost for everyone. He was one of the highest-ranking CUP officers and had a reputation for valor. Taking flight from Monastir, Enver decided he was more useful in Tikveş and Gevgili in Salonica and concentrated there. The military bands armed the villagers with weapons seized from the barracks on their way out, or by breaking into reservist armories afterwards.¹²⁰

Niyazi began by sending telegrams to the Palace, the military command, and the civilian authorities. A few days later, telegrams also went to the Bulgarian committees. On that first day, Niyazi's telegram to the Palace, the General Inspector of Rumelia, and the governor's office read as follows:

Public Opinion is fixated upon restoration of the constitution. The injustices committed in Erzurum had not intimidated the nation and in fact encouraged and emboldened them. The nation is prepared to serve the sultan and is not asking for accounting of past misdeeds. The purpose is to establish an administration resembling those of the civilized nations from this moment; to defend our sacred fatherland from break up with our blood, a struggle it has continuously grappled with for the last thirty years; to eradicate the disheveled state of mind that has afflicted the nation; to base our future, which at the present looks quite grim and difficult, on a sound foundation. While everyone was quietly, cautiously, and wisely working toward this goal, Salonica was filled with a squad of spies who prepared the ground for disturbing the peace. Naturally, because ignoring their activities meant exposing friend and foe to danger, the nation resorted to necessary action. Of these, one started today from Resne, with two hundred *fedais* armed with Mauser guns. For now, several ethnically mixed detachments have set out under the command of three officers. Our purpose is to punish the seditious spies that work to blemish the army and friends of the nation. In case the four or five spy pashas from Istanbul, together with their partners elected by the special office, are not repelled from Salonica with a special train within three days, upright souls will join our movement

¹²⁰ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 68–81. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 38–42. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, pp. 1136–1141. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 98–99, 110–111, 115. Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 57–58.

from every corner. We demand the implementation of constitution this very day. If the government does not grant it, the nation will take it by force.¹²¹

The telegrams that addressed the local military and civil administrators had a more personal tone, sprinkled with accusations of treachery. “The head of Resne National Regiment” typically ended them with death threats against administrators who harbored doubts about relaying them to superiors. The one that reached the military command in Resne, however, was friendly, subservient, and even apologetic, rationalizing the theft of money and guns because of the just cause they served.¹²²

In response, on that same day (3 July) the Palace sent General (*birinci ferik*) Şemsi Pasha on a punitive mission against Niyazi’s band, to prevent the spread of sedition among Muslim villagers, and investigate the Resne events.¹²³ After two days, the communication between the head of the Third Army and the Palace attested that the officials had not sensed the full extent of organization among the officers or the scale of the rebellion they were about to face. On 5 July, the Third Army commander reported the arrest of some officers in the district of Gostivar (in Kosovo) who were joining the rebellious bands. Yet he was still recommending arresting disloyal officers one by one, or two by two, to avoid attracting undue attention while “cleansing the Imperial Army of individuals harboring seditious and suspicious thoughts.” These were to be sent to Istanbul at a later date without fanfare, and punished if found guilty.¹²⁴ The general also highlighted Resne’s military commander’s report about ordinary soldiers who were joining the rebellion and the band of “despicable Niyazi,” some of whom remained unidentified and their numbers unknown.¹²⁵ A series of intercepted telegrams also traced the whereabouts and organizing activities of Niyazi and his “National Regiment”; yet it is clear that even by 5 July, the military command was far from sensing what was in store.¹²⁶

They were soon to find out. When General Şemsi Pasha arrived in Monastir on 7 July he filed three reports for the Palace that became more substantial as the day progressed, but remained of little substance still, and did not conceal his disappointment at the findings. The early morning report stated that “no one has any information about the whereabouts of the Committee, but as the result of secretive investigations it was found that Enver Bey, a major (*binbaşı*), has set out to join the ‘seditious Committee’ in disguised appearance.” According to trusted friends, the General was to add later, many minds were filled with seditious thoughts, especially in Monastir, where military discipline was at a low point; yet neither the civil nor military administrators had any worthwhile

¹²¹ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 83. Letter dated 3 July 1908/20 Haziran 1324.

¹²² Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 84–88.

¹²³ For the text of the original telegrams, see Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 131–132.

¹²⁴ Y.EE 71–97, 5 July 1908/22 Haziran 1324/6 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹²⁵ Y.EE 71–97, 5 July 1908/22 Haziran 1324/6 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹²⁶ Y.EE 71–97, 5 July 1908/22 Haziran 1324/6 Cemaziyelahir 1326. The intercepted telegrams were dated earlier.

information about the CUP's whereabouts. All that could be known was gleaned from the Committee's open declaration of existence, which littered the roads and city walls, and from an informant's report that the CUP was putting together quite a large organization that included within its ranks some high-ranking personalities. The Albanian general assured the sultan that, despite the unfortunate possibility of officers' and inhabitants' disloyalty, in case of an uprising the Albanian elite from various locations were steadfast about their ability to mobilize thousands in government support. His last report still expressed disappointment at the results of military detachments sent in pursuit of Niyazi's band, but at least contained some concrete information about the band's division into three segments and a precise location for each.¹²⁷

As the general left the post office to set out for Resne, after only ten hours at Monastir, a CUP *fedai* approached and fatally shot him in broad daylight, in full view of twenty trusted Albanian guards as well as of other soldiers and Gendarmes at the scene. The guards' behavior – firing into the air, allowing escape, inability to describe the assailant – added to the mystery. Many took this as proof that the CUP had deeply infiltrated the military,¹²⁸ an interpretation shared by the highest officials.¹²⁹ The CUP *fedais* continued in the same style in many places, to punish spies, or in retaliation for tearing down CUP posters from city walls.¹³⁰

Organizing Villagers

The scope and effectiveness of the CUP-orchestrated uprising in the villages of Macedonia astonished everyone, including the CUP itself. Even Enver, who underplayed a wide-ranging organization among officers, or extensive ties with villages before forming “national regiments,” boasted of their amazing success in the days of revolution. In fact, he was quite impressed with the constitutional leanings of the Third Army officers and the Committee's influence over villages by the time he began organizing. The villagers even flocked to the CUP, he recalled, thanks to its reputation as their defender, which made mobilization a relatively easy task. Enver was so impressed by the villagers' organization in Monastir, a mere three days after Niyazi had set out, that he decided to concentrate instead on the Salonica regions nearby, where he thought he could put the CUP's resources to better use.¹³¹ Niyazi and others were more accurate in attributing their dramatic success in the last two weeks to all the CUP had done prior to taking to the mountains.

¹²⁷ For the content of these telegrams see Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 136, 137, 139.

¹²⁸ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 40–41. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, pp. 1139–1141. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 113–114. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 128–140.

¹²⁹ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 183. For allusions to this point, see also Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 108–109.

¹³⁰ For a few examples, see Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 53–55, 74–75.

¹³¹ Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 102–105, 113–114.

In vivid detail Niyazi described roaming from one village to another to gain the inhabitants' trust and hold mass oath ceremonies. From various accounts, it is apparent that the primary targets were the Muslim Turkish and Albanian villagers. Nights were spent at their villages, and provisions and supplies were expected and received from them. Although non-Muslim villages too were approached and accepted by the CUP in the last hour, the bands they had been fighting just a fortnight ago were accosted conservatively and cautiously.

Regardless of ethnic affiliation, the local elite and influential personalities, including the larger landowners or *ağas*, seemed to have played a disproportionate role in organizing and recruiting. When the CUP entered new villages, they usually sought the elite out for persuasion, whether Muslim or Christian. In villages, officers often witnessed old rivalries, blood disputes, and other divisions, which they seemed to have resolved relatively easily (for the time being at least) by calling a village council and bringing together hostile factions. This was the case in many ethnically homogeneous villages and in almost all the religiously and ethnically mixed settings. When Niyazi's band reached a Muslim, Serbian, and Bulgarian village in the early hours of the morning on 9 July, for example, they were able to resolve many old differences through simple intervention, and they assigned a multiethnic administrative council (to resolve future disputes). Afterward they proceeded with the oath ceremony and reorganization of the village.¹³² The same was done in a few fully Muslim villages. Later that day they entered an entirely Bulgarian village to find that the frightened residents had shut down their businesses and were hiding at home. But once the village administrative council and the priest learned of the band's peaceful mission, the villagers were ready to take an oath on the Bible to cooperate fully.¹³³ The simplicity of dispute resolution in these days heartened the CUP, and it was the rationale behind the Blood Reconciliation Committee that it later actively promoted in Macedonia.

The bands even managed to recruit ordinary, nonpolitical, criminal bandits, including some notorious characters; after being absolved of previous crimes, these were sworn in as official Committee members (only Muslim bandits qualified). This move was rationalized as ridding the honest villagers of a menace and tapping ill-used energies for a good cause.¹³⁴ Perhaps it was not too surprising that robber bandits, citing their friends' good fortune, petitioned the government for pardons after the grant of the constitution.¹³⁵

Recruitment took more than the settling of disputes. The officers provided the villagers with concrete incentives, chief among which was the end of unjust taxes and insecurity of life in Macedonia. One could also see the populist appearance of themes dear to "theoreticians" abroad, such as Ottoman decline and administrative decay and arbitrariness contrasted with the rejuvenated, rational, Islamic, and justice-filled world that awaited all with the grant of a constitution.

¹³² Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 121–123. ¹³³ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 141–143.

¹³⁴ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 109, 112, 115–116.

¹³⁵ TFR.I.SL 19240, 30 July 1908/17 Temmuz 1324; 31 July 1908/18 Temmuz 1324.

In a populist speech to the villagers, for example, Enver invoked the memory of lost Tuna and Bosnia provinces and the unfortunate fate of their Muslim refugees calling it similar to the impending future of Macedonian Muslims. If they did not stop government abuses, the reason behind foreign intervention, insisted Enver, foreign powers would set out to divide up the land with the excuse of Ottoman incompetence. This was why they wanted to set the administration in Istanbul aright, and end, for instance, the multi-thousand-lira salaries of useless Istanbul officials, and stop the appointment of ten-year-old colonels (*miralay*). He asked the villagers where their hard-earned taxes were spent and whether the results could be seen in their roads or schools. He exhorted them to learn from the Bulgarians, who persisted despite large casualties, and to continue the fight to remove the arbitrary administration in Istanbul. The sultan was not more knowing than the Prophet, and the Prophet would not have done a thing without consulting his close companions. But they had deviated from this tradition and dispersed the Chamber of Deputies thirty years earlier. With its restoration, the deputies would ask where their taxes went and the sultan would not be able to do as he pleased without being accountable to the deputies. Wherever there was justice, religion, fatherland, and nation would be safe and sound. Also, he added, the Christians were their brothers, and it was their religious duty to protect their rights, work in unity, and not be deceived by the hypocrites.¹³⁶

After the CUP members conducted public oath ceremonies that turned villagers en masse into committee members, given the relaxed membership rules,¹³⁷ they placed each village under a new village council that reflected its ethnic composition. According to firm guidelines, villagers were then divided into permanent bands or defense militia, and the former into two categories of district and provincial bands. The district bands, of ten to fifteen men, received orders from a lower-ranking officer (*yüzbaşı* (captain) or *mülazım* (lieutenant)), and the provincial bands were under the command of a high-ranking officer. The guidelines went into detail about uniforms and where they could be obtained, equipment, salary, the chain of command between provincial and district bands, and minute organizational and practical details. The arms at the villagers' disposal were supplemented with military rifles and ammunition obtained from the aforementioned sources. The roaming officers' bands were sustained by the local villages, but officers provided an expense receipt to the tax collectors for deductions, as was common in wartime; a note to the tax officials spoke of severe punishment if these were rejected.¹³⁸ By the second week of July, Niyazi

¹³⁶ Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 105–107.

¹³⁷ Non-Muslims used their own holy books when being sworn in. See below.

¹³⁸ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 95–96, 108–109, 111–113, 115–116, 119–123, 141–143, 147–149, 164. A predominantly Muslim area known for its especially intense conflict was the district of İstarova and its 100 or more villages. Here they succeeded in restoring peace and bringing over to their side at least 30,000 inhabitants, the great majority of whom were Albanian (95% according to Niyazi), but including also Turks, Greeks and Bulgarians, among others. Niyazi,

could boast that the Committee had taken over all state executive functions, and although he did not explicitly mention tax collection, others did.¹³⁹ This controversial issue resurfaced in the revolutionary aftermath.

Emphasis on the integrative aspect of the movement was not always uniform; to instigate and mobilize, the officers sometimes resorted to the language of ethnic competition. Enver, for example, could not avoid blaming the government for looking after the Bulgarians while leaving Muslim villagers to their own devices.¹⁴⁰ When Niyazi addressed a group of villagers in Ohri district on 5 July, he spoke of taxes that had been extracted under a variety of names in defense of the fatherland and protection of legitimate rights, which in reality had fallen into the hands of a gang of self-seeking ignoramuses who dishonored the fatherland, coveted their lives and property, and mistreated them as animals. He then added, “You have many enemies: First, the government, second, the foreigners, and third, the Christians and cheats who are emboldened by them.” He ended on the familiar note that the Committee was working to establish a “religiously legitimate and conditional government.”¹⁴¹

The CUP’s approach to Christian villages, Bulgarian villages in particular, may best be characterized as the classic carrot and stick. Initially, the bands were highly cautious about organizing the Christian villagers, and had even received directives against it from the CUP center. Their rapid growth emboldened individual bandleaders to issue appeals. The appeals sought to entice cooperation by highlighting future benefits, but also threatened villages with alarming consequences if cooperation was refused, a style that would not look unfamiliar to rational choice theorists of collective action.¹⁴² The amazing success of this strategy heartened the CUP center to soften its stance and to allow, though still quite guardedly, the organization of Christian militias alongside Muslim ones. Ideologically, of course, this was not hard to justify. The organizational protocols and declarations that bore the CUP stamp had at every opportunity

Hatrat-ı Niyazi, pp. 173–181. For Enver’s activities, see *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları*, pp. 102–107, 110–114, 117–121. Enver reported that in the first location where he applied this guideline – the 150-household village of Timyanik in the vicinity of Tikveş – the village came to have seventy militia members, three *fedais*, and five permanent bands, who were assigned to be on constant watch. Enver, *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları*, p. 113. After organizing in the district of Tikveş, Enver gave to trusted friends the responsibility to organize along the same lines in other districts. These included the districts of Vodina, Karacaova, Kolonya-Fraser, and Yenice, among others. *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları*, pp. 114–115.

¹³⁹ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, p. 161. By 10 July (23 July), wrote Buxton, “A new government has, in fact, already taken the place of the old in Macedonia. The Committee has already begun to assume executive power and to collect taxes. One of the first and happiest results is the disappearance of racial strife. Brigandage, and the war of the bands, suddenly come to an end. This helps to win over the peaceful inhabitants. Monastir is perfectly quiet; the peasants, to a man, are on the side of the Young Turks.” Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 63–64.

¹⁴⁰ Enver, *Enver Paşa’nın Anıları*, p. 106. ¹⁴¹ Niyazi, *Hatrat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 100–101.

¹⁴² Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971); Russell Hardin, *One for All: The Logic of Group Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

repeated the dictum “without consideration for religion or ethnicity.” Yet this was a tall order at that time and place: it amounted to mobilizing hostile ethnic parties on an equal footing for armed confrontations with the government. Yet they succeeded, despite all odds, and it would be hard to dismiss the symbolic importance of winning over the Christian villagers; however limited, this success defied all expectations at the start of the movement.

On the same day (5 July) that Niyazi described Christian villagers as enemies, he issued a long declaration in Bulgarian for distribution among Christian villagers in Monastir. A summary follows:

Ottoman-Christian compatriots, the time has come to put an end to problems in our country once and for all. Do not be fooled by Bulgaria, Serbia, and Greece, who engage in intrigues under the Great Powers’ mask of civilization and cooperation. These small states will not help you – the Macedonians – but bring you under their yoke. They have disseminated the seeds of discord among you, put the idea of mutual hatred in your minds, and turned our fatherland into a sea of blood. They use the bands and propaganda for their own ends, which is to divide up and take their share of the land on which we have lived in together for centuries. Our Bulgarian compatriots, this country is ours and will remain ours and you will regret helping these ends. The main reason for this state of affairs is in fact the Ottoman government’s maladministration and the resulting injustices. Without a doubt, our government was the body responsible for the painful crimes and bloody catastrophes, and the reason behind the Great Powers’ intervention and the covetousness of smaller states. Our Christian compatriots, you are not the only ones unhappy with the present administration, but we are unhappy as well. As we witness the daily increase of tyranny intent on obliterating our compatriots – the Turks, Bulgarians, Wallachians, Greeks, and Albanians – we have set out to establish an administration that grants freedom to everyone. The Turks, who have realized the present system of administration destroys life and happiness, are attempting to unite the Ottoman Empire and the nationalities and ethnicities that comprise it, and for that purpose have established the CUP. The Committee’s main purpose is to defend the life and property of all Ottomans, irrespective of ethnicity and religion, and to provide a comfortable life in a brotherly environment. This can become possible by restoring liberty, announcing equality, strengthening fraternity, and implementing justice. When our 200-strong band set out from Resne, it did not attack anyone, even though it knew, one by one, the disturbers of peace. For us, there are no “others,” we are all Ottomans. The religious issue is a separate matter and does not concern the fatherland. Dismantle your bands and join us, with the knowledge that our band has set out to gain liberty, equality and justice for everyone. Stop providing service to the bad-intentioned small governments such as Bulgaria and strive for the interests of Ottomans who will grant you complete equality and freedom. Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian, Wallachian, and all other nationalities will be protected, and will be able to speak freely in their own language, and their religion and freedoms protected. We warn you of the necessity of joining us with your bands for the sake of swift attainment of freedom. After you have received this declaration, we will roam from town to town and village to village. In places where our instructions are not heeded we will arrest the responsible and destroy their villages. After dissemination of this declaration, if a band enters a village the inhabitants are obliged to inform the nearest Muslim village or soldiers. If you do not act according to this directive, your village heads will be

executed. These are our arrangements and we again warn you to abandon your old thoughts. Those who refuse, be they Muslim or Christian, will be punished severely without exception.¹⁴³

Niyazi's words had an astounding impact on the Bulgarians. It was the voice of an officer who had fought the bands in the past but was now addressing them as compatriots.¹⁴⁴ A British Balkan Committee member, Buxton, was in agreement: "There was at first a panic among the Christian inhabitants, for Niyazi, a rough, soldierly man of gigantic height, had gained a reputation for ferocity in his operations against rebels. But his first proclamation allayed their fears."¹⁴⁵ Niyazi was still willing to concede, even take pride in, in the seeming universal anxiousness of Bulgarian villages, which he attributed to the fully reinvigorated Muslim villagers who had appeared subdued and weak until recently. In his estimation, other ethnicities could be convinced to join in only after Muslims had united, as one needed to deal with friend and foe from a position of strength.¹⁴⁶

The CUP center at Monastir approved the letter the same day, but still asked Niyazi to confine the recruitment for now to Muslim and Wallachian villagers and to accept only token representatives from others. The symbolism allowed the CUP to make "truthful" claims about representing all Ottomans while avoiding instigating a full-fledged antigovernment uprising by non-Muslims.¹⁴⁷ When on July 7, after two days, many Bulgarian villagers expressed their readiness, the Monastir center still cautioned against recruiting Christian and Bulgarian elements by force.¹⁴⁸ It took almost another week (13 July) for the Monastir center openly to call for acceptance of Bulgarians by invoking "without regard to ethnicity and religion."¹⁴⁹

The Bulgarian resolve to cooperate was not the rule everywhere. Military engagement with Bulgarian bands, sometimes ferocious, took place until very late. The same was true of negotiations with Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbians, which continued ongoing to the last minute.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ This is a summary, and not a verbatim translation, of essential points that appeared in this long declaration; an attempt is made to preserve its tone. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 104–108.

¹⁴⁴ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁵ Buxton's reproduction of the announcement was faithful in essential details but curiously left out the threats issued by Niyazi. Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 57–58.

¹⁴⁶ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 109.

¹⁴⁷ The CUP in Monastir also warned Niyazi of the government's counterpropaganda tactic. The officials sent to villages purportedly told Muslim villagers that accepting the constitution entailed their wives' abandoning proper Islamic attire and dressing like Christian women. Niyazi advised extreme care toward the villagers and promised the execution of violators to prevent enemies from exploiting the possible incidents. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 113–115.

¹⁴⁸ Circassians of İstarova related the same news. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 115–116, 127.

¹⁴⁹ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 151.

¹⁵⁰ Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 118–121. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 231.

Popular Revolution from Above

The rebellion in the three main Macedonian provinces was truly popular. On Thursday, 23 July (10 Temmuz) the CUP issued a 48-hour ultimatum. Loosely, this meant the government had until Sunday to announce the constitution, but the CUP, encouraged by the full extent of the uprising, shortened the deadline to that same day. This forced the grant of the constitution in the early hours of the morning of Friday, 24 July (11 Temmuz).

By 13 July the bands that had taken to the mountains were in regular touch with the CUP center for coordination, which in most cases did not mean Salonica, but the Monastir center.¹⁵¹ By 16 July, they were confident enough to intimidate Ottoman officials by revealing exact locations where they had been organizing and where they were heading next in regular telegrams to local or central government.¹⁵² On 17 July the Monastir center ordered Niyazi to head for Ohri to coordinate action with Eyüp Sabri in preparation for the march toward Monastir.¹⁵³ For obvious reasons, this last critical destination they kept hidden from everyone.

By this time the European press was printing detailed reports about the state of the rebellion in Macedonia that the Palace followed, as is attested by surviving translations of clippings from French and Russian newspapers. For example, on 16 July the French *Matin* wrote that in Salonica, a third of the Muslim population were Young Turk supporters; that the sultan, despite being aware of the second Young Turk Congress, had been unable to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas to the army; and then commented on the recent Albanian revolts in Prishtine and the rebellion of Ottoman soldiers in Serres, Nevrapkop, and Resne.¹⁵⁴

In line with the center's plans, on the night of 20 July Adjutant-Major Eyüp Sabri took to the mountains with officers and villagers from the Ohri district in Monastir to join his friend Niyazi and his band. His letter to Ohri's military commander and district governor, delivered by a purportedly "suspicious" villager, claimed that the "first battalion of the National Regiment of Ohri" under his command was composed of ten officers and a thousand *fedai* with nine hundred guns and ammunition snatched from the armory. Eyüp Sabri spoke openly of his next destination. He ordered the officials to relay the long letter to their superiors and warned that the slightest hesitation would mean that "both of you will be condemned to death as traitors to the fatherland, and as an effective example for your like, will be wasted away under the most severe

¹⁵¹ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 149–152.

¹⁵² Toward Yanya, for example. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 169–173.

¹⁵³ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 188–192. On organizing activities of Niyazi and Enver on the days of revolution, see also Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 59–61.

¹⁵⁴ Y.EE 71–45, n.d. There is also a translation of a report from the conservative Russian newspaper *Novoye Vremya*.

tortures.”¹⁵⁵ When complying with orders, the military commander and district governor complained to their superiors that “the force under our command is not sufficient to defend ourselves against the two brigands, let alone to pursue and punish them. These brigands will be able to do whatever they please around here and our lives are in absolute danger. Thus, with utmost passion and urgency, it is humbly requested that necessary and effective arrangements be quickly made to protect the lives of faithful friends and to leave no room for further harmful attacks and transgressions by these brigands in this district.” The letter ended with a desperate plea for directives.¹⁵⁶

The letter demonstrated yet again the attitude of the Ottoman Freedom Society toward the constitution and repeated the themes dear to the CUP journals. Of the five or six most prominent Freedom Society officers, three existing memoirs, those of Niyazi, Enver, and Karabekir, show a remarkable consistency about their concerns with the decline of the empire, its cause, and ways to revive it. These were repeated in a nutshell by another hero of revolution, Eyüp Sabri, on the day he took to the mountains to join Niyazi. The letter boasted of “the noble Ottoman nation [whose] superiority was acknowledged by all nations and peoples (*akvam*).” Yet, he lamented, “the frightfulness of commotions and injuries that have afflicted our fatherland for years is burning the hearts of Ottomans in sadness,” for which reason, he and all public-spirited individuals had sought to find out “which grand vice and intrigue within the last few years had caused the disintegration and disappearance of this noble nation in such meekness.” The answer was predictably found in the arbitrary administration of Abdülhamid, and its antidote in the religiously legitimate constitution. Toward this goal all compatriots had united with the initiation of numerous CUP branches. The constitution resolved ethnoreligious separatism under the victorious Ottoman banner, and Christians and Muslims were cognizant of it and tried to bring it about.¹⁵⁷

On July 21, the inspector general wrote to the sultan about the making of a large rebellion in Salonica, Monastir, and Skopje with an increasing number of officers, soldiers, and gendarmes joining the seditious committee. The number of inhabitants uniting with them was also increasing. Threats and assassination attempts against officials and military personnel who remained loyal were on the rise to the same degree. This was hardly news, acknowledged the inspector. His larger concern was with the ineffective advice and admonition of the Field Marshal (*müşir*) Şükrü and others in the three provinces, prompting him to ask the sultan to personally select a few ministers who would deliver more effective advice to soldiers and inhabitants. The request seemed to be motivated by the inspector’s intuition that the sultan was kept in the dark. As he added off-handedly at the end of his report, the selected ministers may also be able to relate

¹⁵⁵ Y.EE 71-61, 20 July 1908/7 Temmuz 1324. The telegram by the minister of war gave a more detailed account of Eyüp Sabri’s regiment, adding that a few Bulgarian soldiers and gendarmes were in company as well. Y.EE 71-61, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324/23 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹⁵⁶ Y.EE 71-61, 21 July 1908/8 Temmuz 1324. ¹⁵⁷ Y.EE 71-61, 20 July 1908/7 Temmuz 1324.

to the sultan the reactions to their advice, the collected information, and the realities of the situation.¹⁵⁸

On that same day, in an act of desperation, the sultan dismissed Prime Minister Ferid Pasha and assigned in his place the old-timer Said Pasha. Dismissed were also the heads of the navy and the army, and a change of traditional titles from *Serasker* and *Bab-ı Serasker* to minister of war and Ministry of War. The changes failed to elicit the intended effect. This was not a traditional revolt and this brand of rebels would not be pleased with symbolic posturing. As an eyewitness put it, no one paid heed.¹⁵⁹

Reports on 21 and 22 July continued to warn of the growing number of villagers, officers, Gendarmes, and even Bulgarian soldiers who were joining Sabri and Niyazi.¹⁶⁰ In one instance, on 21 July, a captain and thirty soldiers stormed the reservist arms depot of a fortress they guarded in the vicinity of Greece and confiscated 540 rifles and many boxes of ammunition with the help of more than a thousand villagers. The local commander complained that nothing could be done about this because of the insufficient military force at his command – a typical reaction of loyalist military commanders in those days.¹⁶¹

The Last Days in Monastir, Salonica, and Kosovo

The final stage of rebellion began on Thursday, 23 July, when the government was given a 48-hour deadline, after which the officers and the public were to march on the capital. Later in the day, given the astounding success of the rebellion, almost all mention of 48 hours was dropped and instead the constitution was demanded on that very day.¹⁶² Meanwhile, elaborate ceremonies in the provincial and district capitals, and even in smaller towns, announced the arrival of liberty and celebrated the commencement of the constitutional system either in front of the main government building or the military barracks. The earliest of these ceremonies began at 3:00 o'clock, and the rest followed as conditions allowed. The ritual was meant to convey that the area was no longer under government control and was “liberated,” just as Ahmed Rıza had reluctantly advised in late 1907 from Paris. The matching content of the great majority of telegrams, the similar shape of rebellion in disparate localities, the identical

¹⁵⁸ Y.EE 71–79, 21 July 1908/8 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁵⁹ Rıza Pasha with his title of *serasker* was replaced by General Omer Rüşdü Pasha, the new minister of war. Also, General Şakir Pasha was assigned as the new minister of navy. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, p. 75. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3 p. 1146. Rüşdü Pasha was initially reluctant but accepted the job only after he was told that Said Pasha would not accept the post of chief minister if Rıza Pasha was at the helm of the Army. Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 362–363.

¹⁶⁰ Y.EE 71–61, 21 July 1908/8 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71–61, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁶¹ Y.EE 71–82, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324/23 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹⁶² A few remote locations continued to refer to a 48-hour ultimatum, and did so even after the constitution was granted.

ceremonies, and the choice of location and timing, all conveyed a high level of organization and coordination among the insurgents.

Before considering the last two days, an earlier crucial development should be highlighted. When the bands were just beginning to kick into action, an anti-Austrian gathering at the city of Firzovik in the Kosovo province grew to include tens of thousands of Albanians who had congregated to take a pledge of honor (*besa*) against foreign intervention.¹⁶³ This was prompted primarily by rumors of the sale of Albanian villagers' lands for a railway line to be constructed by Austria-Hungary. The upcoming Reval meeting had added to the excitement. The gathering was penetrated by the local CUP at an early stage. When by 6 July the crowds reached fifteen to twenty thousand, the government decided to learn more by sending the head of the Kosovo gendarmes, Colonel Galib, to the city. Unaware of this officer's CUP affiliation, the government unintentionally strengthened the hand of the opposition. Acting on orders from Salonica, upon entering the city Galib increased the number of demonstrators to thirty thousand armed men by enticing various towns of Kosovo province to join. The crowd was won over not only by the Islamic rhetoric of the constitution, the prospect of end to ethnic warfare, or foreign intervention, but also by assurances about the inviolability of the sultan, the restoration of old privileges in taxation, assurances about arms possession, and the opening of Albanian schools (which had been forbidden up to that point).¹⁶⁴ Both the turn to constitutionalism and the formulaic rhetoric of loyalty came through in their demands:

The sacred goal of the present uprising is to remove the tyrants (*zalim*) who have come in between the sultan and the nation and are devouring the treasury of Muslims (*beytülmal*) for themselves, are destroying the fatherland, and every day prepare the graves of hundreds of the public-spirited, and the fatherland's children; [its other purpose is] to rid the nation of tyranny, rescue the fatherland and the state from disintegration and disappearance by restoring the nation's liberty and putting into effect the constitution and establishing the national assembly. Hence, [the uprising's ultimate end] is to establish a constitutional government that is once again under the command of the person of the sultan.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ For two earlier meetings of similar kind among Albanian Muslims in 1899, see Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878–1912* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), pp. 195–197.

¹⁶⁴ In these days, Refik noted, in locations in Kosovo close to Monastir, hundreds of thousands rose up against the government, yelling the common slogan, “liberty or death.” Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 42–45. Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, pp. 342–344. Hanioglu, *Preparation*, pp. 271–273. That the Muslim Albanian tribes were fooled by the Young Turks to demand an “unknown amulet, ‘Constitution,’” was how a skeptic like Durham viewed the affair. Edith Durham, *High Albania* (London: Virago, 1985 [Edward Arnold 1909]), pp. 299–300. Another contemporary foreign observer, Buxton, gave the following more accurate reasons for the appeal of the CUP: “The Young Turk envoys seem to have played upon their disgust with continued bloodshed; their desire for schools, which the Sultan had forbidden; their demand for economic development to relieve their poverty; their hatred of the Austrians . . .” Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 61. For an almost complete ban on Albanian schools, with some minor exceptions prior to 1908, see Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, pp. 129–133.

¹⁶⁵ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 42–43.

The succeeding two weeks showed the government's inability to deal with the escalating movement. The Albanian leaders soon demanded a special train to transport tens of thousands from Firzovik to the pro-constitutional gathering at Skopje. Inspector Hilmi concluded that "it was impossible to prevent by force the gathering in Firzovik from going to Skopje," and "that the officers cannot be trusted to perform their military duties against the Albanians coming to Skopje." The government could give the Firzovik crowd and "the officers who had begun to support the gathering with utmost zeal" only feeble excuses as to why a special train could not be prepared. Even the government's local communications had to be rerouted to Istanbul, for he was "certain that the dangers and difficulties will escalate severalfold" if the telegrams were intercepted. The government could only manage to prolong the preparation.¹⁶⁶ By this time, it had become cognizant of the loyalties of its chief negotiator, Colonel Galib, and tried to replace him.¹⁶⁷

The failure to secure a train right away in Firzovik did not stop other Muslim Albanians from marching toward the provincial capital from locations closer to Skopje, such as the cities, towns, and villages of Prešova, Yakova, Geylan, and Kočanik districts. Alarmed by the development, the panic-stricken government requested Albanian leaders in Firzovik to form a special commission to persuade the crowd to return. This they did. But upon return from Prešova and Yakova on 22 July, the leaders spoke of how hard it had been to convince the extremely agitated crowd to halt its movement toward Skopje. The leaders from Geylan and Kočanik districts, on the other hand, came back with a different message: the crowd would not return home, but if their leaders were allowed to enter the city by Saturday, the crowd would not enter Skopje but would remain in the nearby Albanian villages. Eventually, all marchers agreed with the suggestion and made a pledge (*besa*) to that effect. The acting subprovincial governor, Cemal, urged the government for a speedy answer; the marchers numbered between eight and ten thousand, increasing by the minute, and they could not be confronted with force. It was obvious, he stated, that the leaders were not in control and spoke of large numbers amassing in a village of Geylan.¹⁶⁸

Inspector Hilmi took a more combative stance. Suspicious of claims of lack of control, he thought it was impossible for the crowds to make these demands independently and without direct instruction from leaders. He proposed banning both leaders and crowds from the city, as allowing one without the other was unrealistic. He did not consider the use of overbearing force an option, either outside or inside the city, for the military force at their disposal was not large enough to intimidate such a large group. In the end he could not offer anything but advice by top military and civil officials, something they had been doing all along to no avail.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ Y.EE 71-47, 21 July 1908/8 Temmuz 1324; 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁶⁷ BEONGG 702, p. 92, 19 July 1908/6 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁶⁸ Y.EE 71-81, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324. See the various telegrams by Cemal, the acting governor of Priština, all bearing the same date.

¹⁶⁹ Y.EE 71-81, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324.

Later in the day (22 July) the inspector wrote that the soldiers in Skopje had joined the inhabitants “without exception” and had even assumed leadership in putting forward “the known” demands. He provided an example: When Field Marshal Şükrü admonished the soldiers, a few officers shot back that “we are loyal to His Highness, our benevolent Sultan, and will sacrifice our lives for the sake of the Sultan, but we will not use swords against the legitimate (*meşrua*) demands of the inhabitants.”¹⁷⁰

Much as the inspector had feared, by 10:30 on the morning of 23 July the government succumbed to the conditions set forth by the crowd and allowed the crowd’s leaders into the city. The officials tried hard to underplay the new developments: the leaders expressed absolute loyalty to the sultan, assured that the crowd would be orderly, and demanded only a single item and nothing more. This single item was, of course, the constitution!¹⁷¹ As planned earlier, the leaders in Firzovik convened to choose those who should leave for Skopje but by 1:30 p.m. the government learned that the meeting had adjourned without resolution.¹⁷² On the same day, a telegram arrived from Preşova with a large number of signatures from military commanders, officials, and (symbolically) its 30,000 inhabitants, warning the sultan of the massive force in Kosovo that was approaching Skopje. Its threat was couched in typically muted fashion: because the crowd’s passage beyond Preşova was not permitted by his highness, the sultan should grant their wish before that. In other words, danger loomed beyond that point.¹⁷³

By the afternoon of 23 July, Kosovo, like many other locations, began to symbolically celebrate liberty and the constitution. These ceremonies were good indicators of the extent of CUP involvement in an area, and judging from these, the CUP presence in Kosovo was not as extensive as in Monastir or Salonica. In İştîp, at 4:30, thousands of Muslims, Christians, and Jews, accompanied by soldiers, were reported to have surrounded the government building, declared liberty, and fired cannons to celebrate.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, in the subdistricts of Çarova and Bereketli, all Christians and Muslims had turned out in unison to rejoice in the constitution and declare liberty. In Çarova, a further warning was issued to the district capital (Osmaniye or Bihcova) about a major Committee force that was to enter the city the next day from the Koçana district and to put to death,

¹⁷⁰ Y.EE 71-47, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324. Quote in the original.

¹⁷¹ TFR.I.KV 20493, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1325.

¹⁷² TFR.I.KV 20493, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1325. See also for the planning the day before Y.EE 71-81, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1325. Although the subgovernor in Firzovik was the person in closest contact with the rebellious Albanians, most reports to Istanbul were written by the governor of Kosovo, General Mahmud Şevket, and the Rumelia Inspector, Hilmi Pasha, both of whom were to play important political roles in the future.

¹⁷³ TFR.I.KV 20533, n.d.. The telegram seems to have been dated 23 July 1908 (10 Temmuz 1324). Refik recorded an almost identical telegram from Preşova dated 23 July. The demands on that day had undergone a distinct radicalization when compared to those only 3 days earlier. See Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 87-92.

¹⁷⁴ Y.EE 71-73, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

without bothering with questions and answers, those responsible for prolonging the status quo.¹⁷⁵ To the list of celebrating districts may be added Köprülü, Kratova, Planka, and Koçana, as well as all the previously mentioned Kosovo locations, and certainly many more that are not recorded here.¹⁷⁶

The extent of public participation in the Salonica province approached that of Monastir. In the Gevgili district, the military commander and the district governor sent letters in sympathy with rebellion to the minister of war, the prime minister, and the sultan in the name of the inhabitants and the military in the region.¹⁷⁷ A version of the letter, presented to authorities in Ustrumca, read as follows:

To eradicate the country's present weakness and dire calamity and to raise the national dignity and grandeur, it is commonly believed and decided that there remains no other solution but to convene a National Assembly, and to re-proclaim the religiously legitimate principles of consultation (*meşveret usul-i meşruası*) by means of commandments of the constitution, that is derived from the sublime prophetic tradition, and ratified in 1876 with the Imperial decree. We impatiently await quick acceptance and grant of our requests, requests that evince our loyalty (*sadakat*) to the exalted person of the Sultan, which is based on our good will.

Decline and humiliation, the desire to recover lost glory and grandeur, the constitution and Chamber of Deputies as the means to those ends, the religious roots of the constitution, loyalty to the person of Abdülhamid, were themes familiar enough. Yet the rhetoric abruptly ended with the threat of a violent advance on Istanbul in case their wish was not granted within 48 hours.¹⁷⁸

In some instances, officials did their best to let superiors know they were mere messengers under threat. The Ustrumca authorities, for example, were opposed to the rebels and expressed unhappiness with telegrams that bore their signatures. When the military commander addressed the war minister with the rebels' request, he tersely added that the entire regiment and officers had forced him to do so,¹⁷⁹ while the governor explained his circumstance to the Palace as follows:

¹⁷⁵ The telegram, forwarded to the Inspector General of Rumelia, was signed by the local military commander and the district governor. TFR.1.KV 20489, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. For Bereketli see TFR.1.KV 20490, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Enver mentions his assignment in Koçana district, and his roaming in Çarova, Cum'a, and Osmaniye and confrontation with Bulgarian bands in this border region. Beginning in September 1903 and lasting eight months, this assignment was prior to Enver's joining the Ottoman Freedom Society in September 1906. Nonetheless, the contacts established during this period were surely significant. Immediately afterwards, he was assigned to Skopje, which is also of significance. See *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, 48–49, 49–51.

¹⁷⁶ The copies of telegrams found in Refik's *İnkılab-ı Azim* are quite similar, sometimes identical, to others directed at the state from these locations. We are fortunate to have them in this form, yet they also highlighted the incompleteness of the archival record and the fact that the scope of the uprising was wider than reported here. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 92–96. Enver was a participant in the Köprülü celebrations *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 122.

¹⁷⁷ Y.EE 71–76, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁷⁸ Y.EE 71–60, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁷⁹ Y.EE 71–60, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

Today, in the morning, while declarations in the name of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress were being affixed in the streets, thousands of Muslims and Christian inhabitants who had come to the district center from villages in group after group, together with the entire town's inhabitants who closed their shops and trades, assembled in the meadows adjoining the town. A large number of the officers and soldiers of the Imperial Army, the nobles, and notables, together with Islamic clerics, and priests, entered the government building while carrying banners adorned with the words Equality, Liberty, and Fraternity, and chanting long live the nation and long live liberty. From among these a body came to me, your humble servant, and requested, with threats, the relay of the following telegram.¹⁸⁰

The rebels' wording in the district of Tikveş was not exactly the same, but the general demands, tone, justification, and pattern of action were familiar. Here, about sixty Muslim and Christian villages, with religious leaders at the forefront, had gathered at the district center (Kavadar). Hearing the chants of long live the nation and long live the fatherland, the military commander had intended to disperse the crowd, but stopped when it surrounded the government building. Shortly after, a body of Islamic clerics, nobles, and notable Christians and Muslims went to him to express their desire for a united Ottoman society, liberty and happiness, and the Chamber of Deputies and the constitution. Numbering more than six thousand, with backing from another thousand to fifteen hundred armed "national martyrs" in the adjoining hills, they claimed to be unstoppable and invited him to join them. He went on to relate that "due to application of severe pressure, they forced your humble servant to take an oath and because all officers and soldiers of the Imperial Army and inhabitants are of the same mind, there is nothing that can be done."¹⁸¹

An exceptionally active site was the subprovincial center of Serres in Salonica and its various districts (Zihne, Nevrapop, Petriç and Razlık). In Serres the inhabitants pressed for immediate restoration of the constitution with early-morning telegraphs to the Palace. They saw no need for consultation with ministers as the sultan himself had kindly granted it at the start of his reign.¹⁸² A few hours later, this effort replaced with angry threats of an attack on the reserves' armory if an answer was not received within half an hour. The high officials who reported this added that soldiers and inhabitants were united and there was nothing to prevent such an attack, and they urged the sultan to prevent a catastrophe. The telegraphic clerks, predominantly CUP recruits, also pressed the sultan for a quick response to prevent the looming disaster by disobedient armed reservists and inhabitants, who had closed shops and yelled "answer" in front of the telegraph office. Final communications spoke of an exceptionally wide array of inhabitants and soldiers who had captured the subprovincial

¹⁸⁰ Y.EE 71-72, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. These were circumstances similar to the unhappy district governor in Gevgili. Y.EE 71-76, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁸¹ Y.EE 71-75, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. This was the location where Enver's activities were centered and he celebrated the official announcement of the constitution in Kovadar, the capital of district of Tikveş. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 124.

¹⁸² Y.EE 71-78, n.d.

capital and occupied the government building and the telegraph office. They had forced an oath upon the government functionaries, threatened not to disperse without a positive reply, and threatened the lives of the subgovernor and military commander.¹⁸³

Their final telegram to the sultan, signed in the name of all Serres military units and Muslim and Christian inhabitants, invoked the constitution of 1876 and its Islamic legitimation. It further spoke of the constitution as the means to end the empire's deplorable condition, revive the world of Islam and of the military, and restore the battered glory of the Ottomans. Despite its extremely deferential language, it ended with the threat that the entire nation and army – with specific reference to the Third Army – were prepared to march on Istanbul.¹⁸⁴

The government was in the impossible position of distinguishing genuine loyal officials from CUP adherents. For example, although the subgovernor and the military commander of Serres portrayed themselves quite believably as outsiders to the movement and warned of the impending threat to their lives, post-revolutionary accounts show that the two were among the most active CUP agitators.¹⁸⁵

Similarly, a telegram from the Nevrapok district was a familiar version of what had been circulating throughout the day. It bore the titles and names of forty-seven military and civil administrators, notables, and religious and community leaders, with a municipal council that had signed off in the name of 83,000 inhabitants.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, in Zihne district, the entire civil and military administrators, and its Christian and Muslim inhabitants “from the notables to the lowliest peasant,” were said to have the same wish but expressed their impatience by waiting around the telegraph.¹⁸⁷ The overall message was almost identical in the majority of locations but occasionally some went further in targeting the sultan.¹⁸⁸ Eventually in all Salonica districts, such as Petriç, after the delegates' ceremonial visit to the military barracks and expropriation of the arms depot in the name of the nation, the soldiers and inhabitants finally announced the province and the surroundings to be under constitutional governance.¹⁸⁹ Occasionally such a declaration of liberty (*ilan-ı hürriyet*) was a large-scale celebration accompanied by music, raised flags, and the firing of cannons.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸³ Y.EE 71-78, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁸⁴ Y.EE 71-78, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71-50, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁸⁵ Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 97-104.

¹⁸⁶ Y.EE 71-71, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19178, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁸⁷ TFR.İ.SL 19180, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁸⁸ For example, a telegram from Razlık, indicated the destruction of the sacred fatherland in the past 33 years, which was an unmistakable reference to the Hamidian reign. TFR.İ.SL 19175, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁸⁹ Y.EE 71-77, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. I have not found announcements of this nature earlier than at 3 o'clock, and it is indicative of the decision to divert from the original plan right around that time of the day.

¹⁹⁰ Y.EE 71-70, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. For the events in Salonica, see Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 70-72.

Although Salonica had the reputation of being the CUP center, Monastir certainly had the upper hand. Its superiority was proven again by the number of participants and leaders, among them Niyazi, Enver, and Sabri. Soonest of all, the Committee had decided to “declare liberty” in the city of Monastir on 23 July. For this, it sought to clear the city of its special commander and assigned Niyazi and Sabri to the task.¹⁹¹ On the night of 22 July, a force of 2,000 soldiers and civilians under the two fugitive adjutant-majors entered the city and blockaded military leaders’ residences. Early in the morning, a force of 800 did the same for the residence of Field Marshal Osman Fevzi Pasha, who had been sent to deal with the disturbances. Shortly after the unit assigned for his protection was disarmed, he was arrested and sent toward Ohri-Resne in Niyazi’s custody. This information, except for the commander’s location, the CUP openly shared with the government and the sultan.¹⁹² According to government witnesses, after this incident the entire military force in the city and 3,500 civilians joined the rebellion.¹⁹³ The uncomplicated apprehension of the field marshal was all the more surprising because special security measures for his protection had been in effect.¹⁹⁴

In the early morning of 23 July the CUP’s telegrams from its center in Monastir, including those to the sultan, reported unity between everyone and everything: the civil administration, the military commanders, officers, and soldiers, the inhabitant, the clerics, and the representatives of all religions. They allowed the sultan 48 hours to grant the constitution and warned of the possibility of incidents contrary to the sultan’s approval beyond this deadline.¹⁹⁵ At some point in the day, it increased the pressure on Istanbul by sending warnings to a wide range of officials, including the head of the Third Army, that “liberty” was to be declared on that very day – specifically in ceremonies in Monastir at 3:00 or 4:00 o’clock (actually carried out at 3:00). Officials were ordered to remain at their posts and conduct business as usual, but under CUP

¹⁹¹ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 76–83.

¹⁹² Y.EE 71–53, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71–62, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁹³ Y.EE 71–55, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71–59, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71–62, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.MN 17359, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.MN 17366, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.MN 17357, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi* p. 221. Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim* pp. 76–83. Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 64–65. As an honest commander, the general was given due respect and the CUP went as far as to call him a guest. They also made reference to the unfortunate incidents in Erzurum, which they tried their best to avoid, indicating that it was very much at the forefront of their thoughts. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 196–201.

¹⁹⁴ On July 11, the Commander of the Third Army, General İbrahim Pasha, had warned strongly about additional security measures for Osman Pasha after revisiting Şemsi Pasha’s murder. Niyazi *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 215. It should be noted that Osman Pasha had already been shot once, though Refik seemed to think that it was by mistake. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 55–56. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, p. 183.

¹⁹⁵ Y.EE 71–51, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71–57, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Similar telegrams were sent to military posts in Monastir which were then relayed to Ministry of War in Istanbul. Y.EE 71–69, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

command, which from that point would assume the regions' authority out of necessity (*amir-i mücbir*) and which the personnel were expected to recognize and obey. The messages made specific mention of a few military commanders by name, and expected them to obey and to carry out their normal duties.¹⁹⁶

By this time the inspector general had become aware that the CUP's next step was the occupation of government centers and taking of all affairs into its own hands, and that it planned to break any resistance to this with full force. In his assessment, it was impossible to make any preparations against this plan from the field because it was "finally confirmed, beyond all doubt," that the military as a whole operated jointly with the CUP, an indirect admission that the Committee was in command of the entire army in the three provinces.¹⁹⁷ His later "extremely urgent" telegram to the sultan confirmed earlier concerns: "today in the [Monastir] region, all soldiers and inhabitants, while roaming the streets with banners announcing their common pact, are going directly to official centers in group after group."¹⁹⁸

Action centered around the city of Monastir and Serfiçe subprovince, with the subprovincial centers of Görice and Debre contributing.¹⁹⁹ This was confirmed by Hıfzı, the governor of Monastir, among many others who repeatedly spoke of the familiar crowds who were going to government centers to demand the constitution by Sunday (a 48-hour ultimatum), or who had announced liberty.²⁰⁰ These reports spoke of the surprising uniformity of action regardless of region, but they also showed some obvious confusion over the meaning of announcing liberty on that day and the 48-hour ultimatum.²⁰¹

To gain greater appreciation of the public involvement, it is worth relating the report, albeit exaggerated, of two renegade commanders to the Ministry of War:

Today, at four o'clock, the following crowd convened in the square of the Imperial barracks: the entire army in Monastir composed of the infantry, artillery, cavalry, and all other military units, together with battalions that had come from Ohri and Resne, and

¹⁹⁶ Y.EE 71-52, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71-54, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71-58, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE, 71-64, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71-65, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71-66, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. Y.EE 71-67, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁹⁷ Y.EE 71-62, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁹⁸ Y.EE 71-68, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁹⁹ In Serfiçe, aside from the highly energetic subprovincial city, its districts of Kerebine, Kozana, Kayalar, and Alasonya were quite active. In Monastir, in addition to the capital, two locations under its direct jurisdiction, the district of Florina and the subdistrict of Demirhisar, contributed a good deal.

²⁰⁰ TFR.I.MN 17357, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17358, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. For Kolonya see also TFR.I.MN 17366, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 19200, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

²⁰¹ Given the speed with which events unfolded, it is highly probable that the significance of announcing liberty on that day was lost to many participants and they did not see a contradiction between demanding both at the same time. It was fairly clear from the CUP communications in Monastir that announcing liberty was meant to replace the original Sunday deadline, but in many places it continued to be repeated in conjunction with declarations of liberty.

the seven battalions of soldiers that constitute the reserve brigades (*redif livası*) of Izmir, and students from the Imperial War Academy and Secondary School, and Gendarmes, and police, and inhabitants from both the center and provinces, constituting hundreds of thousands of Ottoman citizens composed of Muslims, Bulgarians, Greeks, Jews, Wallachians, and the governor, Generals and Commandant Pashas, the entirety of the civil administrative and military officials, the *ulama* and religious clerics, influential personalities, and priests; in short the common folk, and the grantees, the small and the great. While the streets were filled, and the banners of Liberty and flags of regiments and battalions were raised, and the leaders and students of various religious communities delivered speeches about Liberty, Justice, and Equality, and recited prayers, with a special ceremony conducted in the name of the CUP, Liberty was announced and celebration commenced. At the end of the ceremony the celebration was completed with the firing of twenty-one cannons.²⁰²

It was only after the above ceremony that signs of cracking could be discerned. The government was concerned about violation of military rules, and it was also apprehensive about harmful misinterpretation by foreign observers and dire consequences of these events for that part of the empire. Along with advising mutinous soldiers to leave off their action for the sake of the national interest, the government let them know that the cabinet was weighing the benefits of seating the Chamber at a moment of political turmoil, and that it knew fully well this was the inhabitants' wish.²⁰³ Yet even at such a late date it could not come up with a firm answer.

In the city of Debre, more than forty thousand were reported to have gathered in front of the government building and the imperial barracks to announce liberty. Speeches and prayers were delivered in Turkish, Arabic, and Bulgarian, the military band played "Selam Havaları," cries of "long live the nation!" were heard, twenty-one cannons were fired, and warnings were issued against any undertaking contrary to the sultan's satisfaction.²⁰⁴ From the Serfiçe subprovincial center and the Kerebine district came telegrams describing large crowds and a bond of unity between the Muslims and Christians that was "stronger than rock and iron," complemented with the warning that if the constitution was not granted by Sunday, incidents against the sultan's satisfaction would take place.²⁰⁵

Given the unreliability of the Second and Third Army Corps in Macedonia, it may be asked why help was not received from the loyal Anatolian regiments. Telegrams signed jointly or individually by two chief military commanders, Special Field Marshal Osman Pasha (before his arrest by the CUP), and

²⁰² From Brigadiers (*Mirliva*) Taqi and Cemal. Y.EE 71-68, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. A CUP telegram from Monastir to the assembled crowd in Serfiçe claimed the numbers to be 100,000. TFR.I.MN 17356, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

²⁰³ Y.EE 71-96, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

²⁰⁴ TFR.I.MN 17371, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

²⁰⁵ TFR.I.MN 17366, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17368, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17370, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. For Serfiçe see TFR.I.MN 17356, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17366, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

İbrahim Pasha, commander of the Third Army, as well as the Inspector General Hilmi, do indeed show that help from Anatolia was requested at least as early as 10 July. Initially, these army units were to be stationed in Monastir and from there they were to set out in pursuit of the assassins of Şemsi Pasha, Niyazi and his band, other officers who had joined or were soon to join, and to prevent them from forcing the villagers into cooperation and rebellion.²⁰⁶ Yet by 18 July the governor of Monastir was already citing secret reports that revealed serious doubt about the loyalty of Anatolian troops and the strong expectation that they would refuse orders to use arms.²⁰⁷ By 22 July, ten battalions had been dispatched from the province of Aydın in Western Anatolia to fight the general rebellion. Of the ten battalions from İzmir and Tire (both in Aydın), seven were stationed in the city of Monastir, one in the Monastir district of Florina, and two in Salonica. As predicted, when given orders to move to Ohri (in Monastir), the battalions refused, citing fatigue and insufficient supplies. Observing the Anatolian troops' recalcitrant mood, the two military commanders in Monastir and Salonica warned against sending any more Anatolian battalions to Rumelia in general, and to Monastir in particular, and cancelled plans to call up two battalions from Konya that were to be sent to the Greek border. The only approved Anatolian battalions were intended for fighting, not the general rebellion, but the nationalist bands that had upstaged their activities.²⁰⁸ It was true that despite serious attempts, the CUP had not been able to penetrate Anatolia, but the Aydın province and its capital of İzmir were exceptions, thanks mostly to the tireless efforts at organizing by Nazım, a central figure responsible for union between external and internal organizations.²⁰⁹ As already mentioned, the celebrations at Monastir on 23 July included the reserves units of İzmir.

Even if the rebels overstated their strength and public support, government reports confirmed that such claims, even if exaggerated, were only mildly so. According to the sultan's first secretary, in the final days of rebellion, the inspector was emphatic that there remained no one in sight who had not joined the Committee (save himself).²¹⁰ As early as 18 July, in response to Istanbul's order to pursue and arrest Niyazi, the Monastir governor, Hıfzı, wrote that the CUP supporters extended far beyond this band and included the entirety of

²⁰⁶ Another interesting aspect of this telegram was its claim to have identified problems with promotion as a main grievance of officers, and requested immediate rectification at such a late date. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 212–213.

²⁰⁷ Copy of the original telegram from Hafız, the governor of Monastir, to the prime minister, dated 18 July 1908/ 5 Temmuz 1324. Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 181–184.

²⁰⁸ The plans for sending six battalions from Anatolia to fight the increasing number of Christian rebellion bands, whose activities were not directly related to the general rebellion, were not cancelled. Y.EE 71–80, 22 July 1908/9 Temmuz 1324/23 Cemaziyelahir 1326. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, p. 72. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 115. Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 61–62.

²⁰⁹ Another important individual was Tahir Bey, and also another exception in Anatolia, though not as critical, was Erzurum. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 33, 66–71. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, p. 76. Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 52.

²¹⁰ Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, p. 361.

officers and like-minded inhabitants. He held that “no one here can even find the courage to promise investigations, let alone set out in pursuit,” adding that the Special Commander Şükrü Pasha and his investigative team, and the group in Ohri that was supposed to roam villages to advise against participation in rebellion, had both been forced to abandon their activities after receiving death threats from the Committee. In view of the fast-growing movement, he advised the government to forgo advice on the use of force and instead make decisions suited to the time and circumstance.²¹¹ He later implored the sultan to reinstitute the constitution according to the CUP demand, which was a universal wish among officials and the Muslim and non-Muslim inhabitants. Its fulfillment would prevent the outbreak of incidents contrary to the sultan’s liking.²¹²

The last words from the governor came after Monastir had fallen to the Committee and when top administrators like him were in its custody.²¹³ But the commander of the Third Army, General İbrahim Pasha, expressed the same opinion in the roundabout language of top officials. On 23 July he wrote to the sultan that Monastir, like Salonica (where he was stationed), was in the throes of a widespread rebellion; and that in his “humble opinion, the time for advice and admonition, or force and compulsion had passed.” Further prolonging was certain to lead to foreign intervention, the greater spread of internal rebellion, and the outbreak of unfortunate incidents in Salonica and other provinces. Even though some associates might prescribe the use of force, stated the general, from what he witnessed in Salonica and judged from the reports from Monastir, such a course of action would only increase the danger confronting the sultanate – even threaten its very survival. He concluded that if “there is any solution to the present condition,” it would be the sultan’s decree.²¹⁴ In Görice, the officials who received a letter from the CUP about the declaration of liberty expressed shock, a hint of loyalty to superiors, but still requested reinstatement of the constitution in their timid way: “In case the wish on the paper is not granted by Sunday and the public mind is not put at rest, we are unable to estimate what more dangerous shape the general situation will take.”²¹⁵

On the night of 23 July 1908, the sultan acceded to demands from Macedonia. The official report of the commission that was set up at his behest to review the state of the rebellion – a report published in part as the sultan’s decree – was surprisingly candid. Although it downplayed the number of telegrams that had been sent, it admitted that the sultan was responding to the popular rebellion and to the mutiny of the Third Army in Monastir, Kosovo, and Salonica, which had requested the reinstatement of the constitution. It was further acknowledged that the rebellion had extended to most locations in the three

²¹¹ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 181–184. ²¹² Y.EE 71–68, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

²¹³ Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, p. 84. ²¹⁴ Y.EE 71–69, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324.

²¹⁵ TFR.İ.MN 17360, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324. The officials’ indirect way of pointing to the constitution without mentioning it by name was a norm in these days, even for the highest-ranking generals at the scene of action. The grant of such a wish was deemed to be the absolute prerogative of the sultan.

provinces; that in most the officers and soldiers had joined in; and that in some, gun and ammunition armories had been attacked and seized, together with military funds. The rebels had threatened their opponents with death, demonstrated in support of the declaration of liberty with speeches and cannon fire, and, the previous night in Monastir, had even arrested Field Marshal Osman Pasha. Thus the Chamber of Deputies was invited to convene; but the decree mentioned that this decision had come despite the fact that the constitution was already in force, and it was only the Chamber of Deputies that had been temporarily disbanded, which now, in order to prevent bloodshed among the public and to avoid an excuse for foreign intervention, was being ordered to reconvene. The imperial decree further indicated that, to bring calm to the country, the election of members with appropriate qualifications according to the existing election laws (1876) would be communicated throughout the sultan's domains. In return, the commission demanded the disbandment of committees.²¹⁶

The imagery and lessons of the revolutionary wave were not lost on the sultan. According to his first secretary, in the midst of internal crisis among government circles, there was widespread recognition that absolutist governments in the world were changing one by one, as attested by the creation of the Duma in Russia and the transformation of the administrative system in Iran. The tsar had used arms against the petitioners – and this had only worsened the situation. Cognizant of these developments, Abdülhamid, under pressure, had confided in a close associate that he had decided “to go with the flow” (*suyun akıntısına gideceğim*).²¹⁷ The Russian and Iranian constitutional movements had earlier prompted the sultan to order the translation of some European constitutions; and according to one source, at some point he had even pondered announcing it voluntarily.²¹⁸

A final word should be made of the Circle of Justice, a notion that I have called a dying trend in the Ottoman context, but which was clearly present still. The CUP emphasized justice equally with liberty, equality, fraternity; there were also declarations that spoke of the sultan's innocence while those around him were

²¹⁶ Although the official announcement mentioned only the cabinet as the group that prepared the report, the commission was larger and included members beyond the ministers. *Düstur*, I, No. 1, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324/24 Cemaziyelahir 1324, pp. 1–2. The quick government approval was partly due to the ambiguities in the nature of constitutionalism, which allowed for great flexibility on the part of government, not only Ottoman, but also Iranian and Russian. The government quickly acceded to the opposition, only to begin a new fight over the powers of government and the parliament's demands after it had regained strength. For a slightly different version of the announcement which reported the number of petitions at 77, see Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 380–381.

²¹⁷ Tahsin Pasha had learned this from Esad Bey. That this assertion found its place in the context of discussion of transformations in Iran and Russia is of course noteworthy. Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 372–373.

²¹⁸ Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, p. 336.

accused of cutting him off from his loyal subjects. In addition, the grand vizier was deposed as a last-ditch effort to appease the public. Even the CUP experienced a rhetorical shift. In a departure from formerly virulent attacks, in the days of revolution it took care not to target the sultan directly; when the Palace was mentioned, anger was focused on the Palace secretariat. This was partly because the CUP was not certain about the Muslim public's disloyalty toward the sultan-caliph.²¹⁹ These rare rhetorical concessions were soon abandoned. The crowds had performed their function; in line with the CUP elitism, the politics of the empire were too important and too sensitive to be left to the masses.

Celebrations in Rumelia and Istanbul

Of course the sultan's decree could not be so candid as to admit that the public – or at least some parts of it – had expressed readiness to pledge allegiance to the heir apparent. Nor did it mention the army's threat to advance with a force of 100,000 from Serres to Istanbul if there were further delays. Even the mention of the constitution had appeared problematic until the very end. The first secretary wrote that by 23 July, no one had dared mention the constitution until the sultan brought it up himself, to everyone's relief. True to this claim, an earlier draft prepared by the cabinet and top officials on that day had failed to mention either the constitution or the Chamber of Deputies.²²⁰ So taboo were these subjects that the next day in Istanbul the press could not work up the courage to explicitly announce the promulgation of the constitution,²²¹ and the public was afraid to celebrate it openly. When the press finally managed the announcement, it still felt obliged to thank the sultan by using the old honorific titles that many found

²¹⁹ Another obvious reason for not targeting the sultan was the fear that it could have given the mistaken impression of dynastic overthrow, which could have been quite destabilizing in the Macedonian context.

²²⁰ Y.EE Kamil 86/32–3165, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324/24 Cemaziyelahir 1324. This memorandum, most probably written by Tahsin Pasha, the sultan's first secretary, certainly deflated the newly appointed Grand Vizier Said Pasha's claims about his central role in the grant of the constitution. Tahsin and Said pashas had a long-running conflict. In his memoirs, Tahsin Pasha speaks of a similar telegram coming from Serres, and also of Said Pasha's lack of judgment and opposition to the grant of constitution until the very last minute. He even claimed that when the sultan blasted the high-ranking opposition to the constitution in his first appearance at the assembly (see below), his object of criticism was Said Pasha. Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 370–371, 374. See also the following for the correct claim that the constitution was issued in reaction to the severe danger in Macedonia, and certainly not out of the sultan's benevolence. Refik, *İnkılab-ı Azim*, p. 105. The sultan's first secretary agreed when he wrote that without doubt the sultan granted the constitution reluctantly and in response to the widespread uprising in Rumelia, including events such as the kidnapping of Osman Pasha, the murder of Şemsi Pasha, and the report of Inspector General Hilmi Pasha that everyone except himself had joined the CUP. He used it to alleviate the immediate dangers to his throne and person, bring clam to Rumelia, and reach an accord with the movement. Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 108–109.

²²¹ For the decree granting permission to officially announce the original decree in published form see *Düstur*, I, No. 2, 23 July 1908/10 Temmuz 1324/24 Cemaziyelahir 1326, pp. 2–3.

pretentious, disingenuous, and unnecessary.²²² The announcement in the official press still took some prodding by the *Şeyhülislam*.²²³

There were good reasons for public reluctance. The government announcement had been rather vague, and beyond Rumelia, few locations had had any hint of disturbance. For those outside this region, the grant of constitution had been a peaceful affair, which made it all the more suspicious. As an astute eyewitness put it, the 24 July announcement in the newspapers and provinces was so superficial and vague that for a few days everyone was in doubt and no one knew how to interpret it. He, and certainly many others, wondered that if after more than thirty years the sultan had so kindly agreed to suddenly put an end to despotic rule, how could it be announced so casually without large official celebrations and cannons going off from every corner? The quiet raised suspicions that this was yet another trick by the Yıldız gang, especially as it was Said Pasha who had announced it. Yet, after days of doubt, the repeated news from Rumelia assured the public of its truth, and with the sudden excitement that it aroused there began demonstrations, speeches, and celebrations.²²⁴

The response in Macedonia could not have been more different. When the constitution was announced in the early morning hours of 24 July, Salonica reported large popular outpourings of various groups who had set aside old hostilities and turned out “without distinction of ethnicity or religion” in the company of their community leaders to celebrate in peace and harmony. In addition to the locations mentioned already, reports of festivities came from many additional places. The reports, even those that made explicit mention of the CUP, went along with the sultan’s claim that the constitution had in fact been granted out of his own volition, and thanked the Shadow of God Upon Earth for his benevolence.²²⁵ In the Karaferye district, the military commander who reported on the extreme joy of the brotherly unity, harmony, and sincerity among the various Ottoman elements, made the unusual remark – rare in this

²²² Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, pp. 1145–1146. The delay also had to do with the newspapers’ doubt, not to mention the highest ranks of government, about the new status of censor regulations. See Tahsin Paşa, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, pp. 381–382.

²²³ YEE, 71–94, 29 July 1908/16 Temmuz 1324/1 Recep 1326.

²²⁴ Cevri [Mehmet Reşid Şahingiray], *İnkılab Niçin ve Nasıl Oldu*, (Egypt (Cairo?): Matbaa-ı İctihad, 1909), pp. 5–6.

²²⁵ The district centers of Karaferye, Kesendire, Menlik, Toyran, Vodina, and Yenice under Salonica supervision, Cum’a-ı bala and Demir Hisar under jurisdiction of Serres, Robcoz under Drama, and the subprovincial center of Taşoz were some of these. Archival evidence for celebrations in all locations that had demanded the constitution are not complete. For example, of places that took active part, we do have reports of celebrations from Gevgili, Ustrumca, Serres, Zihne, Nevrapop, Petriç, and Drama, but not from Tikveş or Razlık directly through the archival sources but through eyewitness accounts. TFR.İ.SL 19191, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19193, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19194, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19195, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19196, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19197, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19198, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19200, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19207, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.İ.SL 19210, 25 July 1908/12 Temmuz 1324.

overly celebratory context – that until recent expressions of mutual friendship the town inhabitants had harbored communal and religious hatred toward one another.²²⁶

In the midst of celebrations, many locations had already begun to make additional demands under CUP tutelage, particularly for general amnesty for those accused of political crimes regardless of religious and ethnic affiliation, whether in prison, in exile, or at large, and for the abolition of the long despised spy system. Some went further and called for the creation of a new cabinet as well, while a few telegrams even dared to lambaste the officials in the capital with specific mention of names and demand for removal.²²⁷

In Monastir, of all its six subprovinces, five capitals and their districts were involved in the revolution in one way or another. The format of announcements followed the routine and demands for amnesty for political prisoners and exiles were issued by many.²²⁸ In the district of Pirlpe, a report again deviated from the standard format and spoke of the coming together of religions that in the past five or six years had become enemies and made each other's lives miserable. Yet it added that now their religious leaders stood behind the podium and delivered speeches in the local languages and visited each other's places of worship to congratulate the announcement of constitution. In the morning a multireligious group from Pirlpe was to join a larger one heading for Monastir, where they were to be received in a special ceremony by the city inhabitants. The nation had united as one, it added, and Christians and Muslims, with their children, stayed in the streets and celebrated until the morning.²²⁹ Another unusual report came from the subdistrict of Kolonya, where the crowd in front of the government mansion, despite the news, dispersed only after assurances from the Monastir CUP, but continued to warn the government of hostile action in case the constitution was not granted by the deadline.²³⁰

²²⁶ TFR.I.SL 19194, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

²²⁷ Such telegrams came in particular from districts of Nevrakop, Petriç, Demir Hisar (under Serres in Salonica), Toyran, Yenice, Vodina (directly under Salonica) and Drama. TFR.I.SL 19199, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.SL 19201, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.SL 19202, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.SL 19203, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.SL 19204, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.SL 19205, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.SL 19206, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

²²⁸ Reports of celebrations, in addition to places discussed already, came from İlbasan subprovince, Kırçova and Ohri districts under direct Monastir jurisdiction, Nasliç district in Serfiçe, Pirlpe district in Pirlpe, and subdistrict of Kolonya in Görice. TFR.I.MN 17366, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17367, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17369, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17372, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17374, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17378, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17373, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17375, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17376, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17377, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17379, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17380, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324. TFR.I.MN 17381, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

²²⁹ TFR.I.MN 17381, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

²³⁰ TFR.I.MN 17366, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

In Kosovo, the celebrations were expectedly most intense in the subprovinces of Priştine and Skopje, where Firzovik and the capital of the province were located.²³¹ When celebrations began in Skopje, the crowds that had congregated in its outskirts were still not allowed in as they were considered armed and dangerous. Instead, they rejoiced with a military band and soldiers sent to them from the city.²³² Other gatherings kept close to the prevailing format and wording, save trivial details.²³³ İştib district, where the CUP had a branch, was a rare location in Kosovo to issue demands for the freedom of political prisoners, the banished, or exiled. In contrast, the district of Kumanova, where the news of the constitution was announced through posters and town criers, was memorable for its indifference. In the city of Priştine, elaborate ceremonies took place and officials assured the inspector general of the close watch they kept on the crowd and leaders at Firzovik to monitor their dispersal.²³⁴ In Mitroviçe district, where the ceremonies were quite elaborate, it was reported that upon the arrival of Yenipazar and the İpek leaders from Firzovik with a special train, celebrations began anew, and only with the help of town criers did gunshots stop and calm restored. Yenipazar, Preşova, and Vulçitrin districts also held celebrations of their own. In the subprovincial center of Prizrin, the governor reported standard mass celebrations followed by peace and tranquility, but also added that the crowds and leaders who had gone to Skopje and Firzovik had not yet returned. Many other locations shared the excitement.²³⁵

If celebrations began at a relatively late date in Istanbul, they came unusually late in the province of İşkodra, on August 2, according to Durham. Her firsthand observations of the public attitude toward the newly announced constitution – of Muslim Turks, Muslim and Christian Albanians, Serbs, of young and old, and of others – was only somewhat positive, and tinged with ambivalence and uncertainty. On the one hand she was witness to the joy with which most Muslims and a surprisingly large number of Christians embraced the new system. Yet she repeatedly qualified her observation with reminders that, first, no one knew exactly what the constitution meant, and second, not all Albanians, and certainly not all Christians, were happy. Some older Christian Albanians, for example, met the happy cries of “We are united! Albania is free!” of their

²³¹ In what follows, all information regarding the celebrations in Kosovo, come from the following file, unless otherwise specified. TFR.1.KV 20503, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

²³² Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim*, p. 112.

²³³ In the subprovince of Skopje, these included the districts of Planka, Osmaniye, Koçana, Redovişte, Köprülü and İştib. Enver, *Enver Paşa'nın Anıları*, pp. 121–122.

²³⁴ This was done through the acting subprovincial governor Cemal who was in Firzovik.

²³⁵ The districts of Gostivar and Kalkandelen reported the usual gatherings, while the latter's governor added that the news had managed to calm the public agitated by incidents in the surrounding regions. Also reported were celebrations in the Brana and Gosina districts in the subprovince of İpek, the Taşlıca subprovincial center and its district of Prepol, and finally, the Seniça subprovincial center and its districts of Akova and Yenivaruş. The only information from Yenivaruş comes from the following file. TFR.1.KV 20505, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324.

younger Christian compatriots with pessimistic retorts: “Thirty years ago we rejoiced for this same constitution . . . and what came of it?” said one. Another warned against going to streets at night: “The massacre will begin. I know it will. This is a Turkish trick to kill us all.”²³⁶ Durham’s initial skepticism about the constitutional administration’s ability to solve the nationality issue certainly turned to serious doubts in the course of the next few months.²³⁷ Not all foreign observers with intimate knowledge of Balkan affairs were as pessimistic as Durham, however. Buxton’s optimism as a member of the Balkan Committee led him to dedicate his book to the CUP, which he thought to have begun in earnest to solve the nationalities issue in the Balkans.²³⁸

In sum, one of the keenest observers of revolution described the ending in this way:

Various elements bearing the honorable title Ottoman, such as the Muslims, Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Jews, Wallachians, and all others, renewed and confirmed their bonds of national brotherhood. These varied ethnicities that were each other’s opponents and had shed so much blood for years made immediate peace and their religious leaders and the famous committee and band leaders embraced and kissed one another. The neighboring countries ordered the return of their bands and cut off their allotments. Entire bands of rebels, these martyrs of liberty and humanity, flocked to the administrative centers from every corner and were received with enthusiasm and great honor. Their arms were turned over. The large cities, and especially Salonica, were transformed into spectacle of bands.²³⁹

CONCLUSION

The Young Turk commentary on revolutions, past and contemporary, was a window into their thinking. It showed how constitutionalism was supposed to solve the empire’s most pressing issues and save it from imminent disintegration. Here, many democratic concerns took a back seat to more urgent state and nation-building interests. Russia in 1905 in particular created a new sense of urgency about the revolution, prompting the activists abroad to advocate forgoing evolutionary passivity and embrace popular participation and violence. Beyond the populism and violence of revolution in Russia, the revolution in Iran, the local tax uprisings in Anatolia, the ongoing band warfare in Macedonia, and the tradition of military mobilization to effect change in politics, all influenced the new model of revolution. The agency of activists in Paris was crucial in laying the intellectual foundation for this transition and for forging ties with discontented officers in the empire. In Macedonia, revolution came to enjoy broad popular support when military officers mobilized villagers in band warfare units. The forceful combination in Macedonia

²³⁶ Durham, *High Albania*, pp. 223–228 (quotes from p. 224).

²³⁷ Durham, *High Albania*, pp. 230–231, 243, 262–263, 299.

²³⁸ The dedication read as follows: “To the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress, a Tribute of admiration.” Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, p. 5.

²³⁹ Refik, *Inkılâb-ı Azim*, p. 110.

of a vast mutiny within the army and broad popular uprising forced the Sultan to grant the constitution with little bloodshed.

One of the most important revelations in the CUP commentary on revolutions was its desire to act as the guardian of revolution and constitution. This was a conclusion it had reached after observing the Young Ottomans, and contemporary Russian and Iranian revolutionaries in withstanding the onslaught of old regimes.

Shortly after the revolution, the CUP commentary on the French, Russian and Iranian revolutions revealed a good deal about reconciling the seemingly contradictory belief in the laws of evolution with advocacy of action and agency. In a lecture to the Ottoman Youth Club (*Osmanlı Genç Kulübü*) a certain Şaib Bey spoke of laws of natural in the same breath as social evolution; while emphasizing gradualism, he raised the possibility of speeding it up with human intervention.²⁴⁰ The lecture's primary emphasis, however, was of greater immediate concern to the CUP – namely, the extremism of the masses and continued fear of them. Here, the students were warned of the French Revolution that had devoured its own children.²⁴¹ The lecture had also promised to explore the steps the CUP was about to take to safeguard the constitution, but hesitated to give details. So it was with *Tanin*. One week later, the CUP's semiofficial organ spoke sadly of the Russian Duma's forced shutdown and the arrest of representatives who had gathered in Vyborg in its defense. Similar was the unhappy news of the Iranian Assembly's fall to the cannon of the Iranian army. Shaming the administrators of tyrannical regimes, *Tanin* remarked on their invaluable lessons but did not elaborate.²⁴² It was not hard for readers acquainted with the CUP to decode the barely concealed message, particularly when it had spoken of it forthrightly when not in power: the constitution needed a permanent and powerful guardian, no matter the monarch's promises at moments of weakness.

²⁴⁰ "Scientific socialism" grappled with a similar dilemma that is all too familiar with observers of revolution.

²⁴¹ *Tanin*, No. 2, 2 August 1908/20 Temmuz 1324/5 Recep 1326, untitled, pp. 2–3.

²⁴² *Tanin*, No. 9, 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/ 12 Recep 1326, "İntihabın Sureti İcrası Hakkında Tahkikat," p. 1.

Constitutional and Extra-constitutional Struggles

In a raw calculus of rational alternatives, the CUP should not have stopped short of a complete takeover of the executive, given its military might. Under the influence of the global master-frame, however, the CUP was content with monarchical constitutionalism even if parliamentary structures could only slow down, or could even threaten, its radical reform agenda. Its commitment to separating the legislative and executive diverted power struggles toward legal structures. Here was ideology at work.

Thus began the struggles between an infant Chamber of Deputies and a government resistant to constitutional conduct. Fights over the rights and responsibilities of the Chamber, the cabinet, the prime minister, and the monarch, or over setting procedures for changing or amending the constitution and standards for interpreting it, exemplified some of these. In practice, these led to the interpellation of ministers and the fall of cabinets, the clash of opposition parties, maneuvering and coalition-building within the Chamber, and exploitation of differences by rivals. This period also witnessed the emergence of a genuine public sphere in the press¹ and associations attuned to working out the meaning and functions of a constitutional administration in the making.²

The Palace was soon to give way to the Sublime Porte, the executive that had been sidelined during the reign of Abdülhamid. Yet this was not to be an overnight transformation to legalism. Although constitutionalism was the ideological, and now the institutional, frame under which the actors operated, for the CUP this was only a means toward the empire's survival. This elitist vanguard of enlightenment was in no mood to allow the old regime (which it distrusted), a newly revived Sublime Porte, a liberal-minded opposition party with what it

¹ Ahmed Emin, *The Development of Modern Turkey as Measured by Its Press* (New York: AMS Press, 1968 [1914]); Palmira Brummet, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2000).

² For the rise of the public sphere and the frustrated expectations of various ethnic communities in this period, see Bedross Der Matossian, “Ethnic Politics in Post-Revolutionary Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Arabs, and Jews during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1909)” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 2008).

considered a dubious commitment to saving the empire, a moderate Chamber of Deputies, or the ignorant and gullible masses, to stand in the way of reform. It was thus unwilling to give up politicking behind the scenes or scaling back the organizational structure in the face of harsh criticism. In fact, given the new legal context, it set out to extend its organizational reach deeply and widely, resulting in an extensive and cohesive network of CUP branches, clubs, and societies around the empire.

The CUP was at once an open political party and a clandestine network. The influence it wielded through well-placed members in the military and civil administration allowed it to dismiss grand viziers and administrators, to interpret the constitution beyond the letter with binding effect, and to implement its desired reforms even before there was legislative backing in the Chamber. It was thus accused of being a “government within the government,” a charge it could only half-deny.

When it came to defending core liberal values, such as the freedom of the press, association and assembly, freedom of speech, or minority rights, the CUP was willing to dispense with them in the interest of institutional reform, greater centralization, or the necessity of retaining power. It was committed to formal structures of constitutional politics, and yet illiberal.

The CUP’s organizational structure was in fact the reason for the success of reforms. This was an irony of the constitutional revolutions. Left without this extra-legal, unconstitutional backing, it knew the Chamber of Deputies could have suffered the same fate as the Russian Duma, which had been left without real power because of legal maneuverings. Or it could have fared as had the Iranian Assembly, caught in a debilitating power struggle with the monarchy that ended in the assembly’s bombardment by the military. Nor had the memory of the Young Ottoman movement faded. In pre-revolutionary days they had settled on what needed to be done for future survival.

The “Days of Freedom,” if we may borrow a term from 1905 Russia, were also days of anarchy. Prisoners, political and ordinary, were freed everywhere, many times mistakenly. Citing liberty, peasants refused to pay taxes; the boaters, porters, and peddlers reclaimed their lost rights; and the emerging industrial working class around the empire dared to strike for the first time. Although the CUP bore the brunt of the blame, the chaos was not its doing and it did its best to restore order. While doing so, it seized the opportunity to increase its clout and influence in the capital and throughout the nation.

DAYS OF FREEDOM

In the early hours of revolution, the CUP did not waste time in airing its newest demands. Thus came calls for general amnesty for political prisoners and the exiled, and for the abolition of the spy network. Salonica was especially active in pressing for these. The government agreed immediately to an amnesty for political prisoners, but in the haste and confusion of the early hours, freeing them became a bungled and embarrassing affair. Amnesty for political exiles (or the accused at large) was not any less complicated. Both issues plagued the constitutional administration in the following year and deserve treatment here.

The abolition of the spy network was taken up by the cabinet in one of its first meetings, on 29 July. Convening under the newly appointed Grand Vizier Said Pasha, the cabinet proceedings implied that the constitution, elections, and general amnesty were favors granted by the sultan of his own accord. It also took credit for favorable internal and external repercussions in the three Rumelian provinces: peace and tranquility were returning – the rebellious bands (*çeteler*) were giving up arms to local governments and settling down one after another. The proceedings showed that to demand the abolition of the spy network, the CUP had used the *Şeyhülislam* to communicate it to the cabinet, which he did by citing the “misunderstandings” it created between the sultanate and the nation. The cabinet agreed and obtained the sultan’s signature by the next day, at surprising speed. A professional and legitimate information-gathering system analogous to those in Europe was promised instead. This was to be a body that did not violate the honor of individuals and prohibited intervention or mediation by persons or offices not empowered by the law.³ Yet the memory of the notorious system could not be put to rest with a decree, and the politics surrounding the identification of spies and ways to avenge them dragged on for well over a year.

The claim that the constitution was owed to the sultan was ominous. The original decree, in spite of a candid admission of an uprising, had cautiously suggested it. It soon became commonplace for the cabinet to assert “it is due to the Sultan’s benevolence that the Chamber of Deputies is summoned.”⁴ This was widely understood to be a face-saving device, but it also served – to borrow a phrase from Goffman⁵ – to impose the sultan’s own definition on the situation: if he had granted it, he could modify or abrogate it as he pleased. At least in the initial euphoria, the claim went unchallenged.

Matters came to a head shortly after, with the imperial decree of 1 August. Starting with the familiar claim that the Chamber of Deputies was summoned as soon as the sultan sensed the public readiness for it, the decree explicitly set out to clarify ambiguities, defects, and shortcomings in the constitution. It did so by rephrasing, expanding, and modifying some of the constitution’s articles,⁶ and thus launched the fight over interpretation.

³ Y.EE 71–93, 29 July 1908/16 Temmuz 1324/1 Recep 1326. *Düstur*, I, No. 7, 30 July 1908/17 Temmuz 1324/2 Recep 1326, “Hafiyelik İlgası Hakkında İrade-i Seniye,” pp. 9–10. See also BEO 252249, 31 July 1908/18 Temmuz 1324/2 Recep 1326. During short reign of Said Pasha the cabinet meetings, in place of *Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları* (MV), may be found in scattered form under Y.EE or BEO (Dahiliye Gelen), or more comprehensively in the opening pages of *Düstur*, I, 1324–1325/1908–1909.

⁴ For a few examples among many, see BEO 252089, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324/25 Cemaziyelahir. BEO 252528, 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahir 1326. See also Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 13, and Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 97.

⁵ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

⁶ *Düstur*, I, No. 8, 1 August 1908/19 Temmuz 1324/4 Recep 1326, “Kanun-ı Esasinin Mer’iyeti Hakkında Sadır Olup Bab-ı Ali’de Kıraat Edilen Hatt-ı Hümayun,” pp. 11–14. *Tanin*, 2, 2 August 1908/20 Temmuz 1324/5 Recep 1326, “Hatt-ı Hümayun,” p. 3.

Some of the introduced changes were surprisingly positive. For example, the 1876 constitution had simply spoken of freedom of press within the bounds of law (article 12), but clause 7 of the new imperial decree added that the press was not to be subjected to government pre-publication censors, that personal letters and periodicals were not to be confiscated from the mail, and that only the ordinary (as opposed to criminal) courts presided over accusations by the press.⁷ But another modification did not sit too well. Although the right to appoint the grand vizier and the *Şeyhülislam* explicitly belonged to the sultan, the constitution had stated that the rest of the ministers were to be inducted into office by the sultan's decree (article 22). Another constitutional article had considered the right to appoint or dismiss the ministers to be among the sultan's sacred rights (article 7). Together, these could be read as implying that the ministers were to be chosen by the grand vizier, but their appointments were to be made official by the sultan, who could approve or reject them. The same clause also considered the sultan's sacred right to be the commander of the army and navy (article 7). The sultan exploited this indeterminacy and interpreted the formal title of commander of army and navy to mean his constitutional prerogative to appoint these two ministers. Still, the rest of the ministers were to be appointed by the prime minister after receiving the sultan's approval; the power to make appointments to key positions, such as ambassador and governor, was relegated to appropriate ministries and the prime minister (clause 10).⁸ These were minor modifications. One could imagine the sultan claiming the right to appoint all ministers; yet, given the recent events, the Palace was not in a position to risk that.

However restrained, these changes were unacceptable to the triumphant CUP. The latter was now coming to terms with the 1876 constitution that it had uncritically and defensively exalted from afar. The 1876 constitution was in fact a conservative document. Nowhere had it conferred sovereignty upon the nation, and it had only moderately qualified the sultan's unconditional rights.⁹ Unwilling to admit this, the main CUP organ, *Tanin*, in its third day of publication argued that the sultan had no rights beyond appointing the chief minister and the *Şeyhülislam* and approving the ministers. It also offered an interpretation of the fifth clause, which had stated the sultan to be sacred (*mukaddes*) and without responsibility (*gayr-ı mesul*). Together, these could imply unaccountability and a status above the law. In the CUP's hands, they came to mean that the sultan was without any responsibilities whatsoever and should stay away from politics altogether. This was made possible through creative interpretation of the word unaccountable (*gayr-ı mesul*). If the ministers

⁷ *Düstur*, I, No. 8, 1 August 1908/19 Temmuz 1324/4 Recep 1326, p. 12.

⁸ *Düstur*, I, No. 8, 1 August 1908/19 Temmuz 1324/4 Recep 1326, p. 13.

⁹ On the forced changes that made the 1876 constitution considerably more conservative than the original ones drafted by the liberal faction (especially its principal author Midhat), including creation of a premiership (in place of the grand vizierate), ministerial responsibility, greater rights for minorities and their spoken languages, and curbed powers of the sultan, see the excellent analysis by Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 34–59.

of navy and army committed wrongdoing, it suggested, their responsibility to the nation lay with the person who appointed them, which would be the sultan; but this amounted to a blatant violation of the constitution, because the sultan had no responsibilities. Accordingly, it asked the sultan to unburden himself of this heavy responsibility. When it came to the appointment of the more critical chief minister by the sultan, *Tanin* challenged it by alluding to the dominant party's right to select the chief minister. Given the explicit clauses of the 1876 constitution, however, the only appeal could be to the spirit, rather than the letter, of the constitution.¹⁰ The most principled criticism overall was the objection to the sultan's tampering. But even here, changing the constitution was not up to the Chamber of Deputies, as *Tanin* pretended. Other bodies such as the Council of Notables, or even the cabinet, could make suggestions; and these still needed approval from both legislative houses and ratification by the sultan (article 116).¹¹

A day after the announced changes, the sultan introduced the new cabinet with his handpicked ministers of war (army) and navy. The CUP described the cabinet as containing well-known characters of the old regime, trained in its womb and accustomed to the arbitrary principles of the absolutist administration (*idare-i istibdat*); individuals who had moved up through corruption, owing their lives, advancement, and fortune to begging and *jurnalcilik*; people who were simply impervious to moral reform (*islah-ı ahlak*). This had shown, the editorial added, that the Sublime Porte could not depart from old thinking because it had searched for ministers only among high-ranking, old bureaucrats, refusing to recognize that high ranks and worth did not correspond because such officials were trained not for service but for spying. It warned that this government, which did not have the public trust and was not heeded by foreign powers, might yet again fall into the hands of "Palace creatures," a euphemism that stopped short of implicating the sultan outright.¹² As Hüseyin Cahid, the editor of *Tanin*, later recalled, this issue of the newspaper stirred a good deal of excitement, especially given the new chief minister's complacency about the terms imposed. The new cabinet had failed to include anyone from the CUP and this appeared odd to a party that viewed the new system as being in its debt.¹³ The CUP journal continued to lambaste the government and even raised the stakes by invoking Darwin (and hence evolutionary inevitability) to prove

¹⁰ *Tanin*, 3, 3 August 1908/21 Temmuz 1324/6 Recep 1326, "Siyasiyat – Dahili," p. 1. According to article five, *zat-ı hazret-i padişahın nefs-i hümayunları mukaddes ve gayr-ı mesuldür*.

¹¹ *Tanin*, 3, 3 August 1908/ 21 Temmuz 1324/6 Recep 1326, "Kanun-ı Esasi ve Yeni Hatt-ı Hümayun," p. 1. *Tanin*, 4, 4 August 1908/22 Temmuz 1324/7 Recep 1326, "Kanun-ı Esasi ve Yeni Hatt-ı Hümayun Meselesi," pp. 1–2 (esp. p. 1). Ahmad, *Young Turks*, p. 19.

¹² Particularly disliked was the minister of navy. The only one favored was Hakkı Bey (the Minister of Education). *Tanin*, 3, 3 August 1908/21 Temmuz 1324/6 Recep 1326, "Yeni Heyet-i Vükela," pp. 1–2.

¹³ *Fikir Hareketleri*, No. 76, 4 April 1935, "Meşrutiyet Hatıraları," pp. 374–375. The articles appearing under this heading are the memoirs of Hüseyin Cahid, the editor of *Tanin*, the semi-official organ of the CUP. Subsequent references will be to the journal title alone.

the superiority of republican governments (e.g., France and the United States) over constitutional monarchies.¹⁴ A few weeks later they elaborated on this threat by invoking the theory of natural rights and the legitimacy of revolt against a ruler who violated the social contract. This meant there would be an internal state of war until the public prevailed against the monarch, as the French constitutions of 1791 and 1793 had allowed, and was a right shared by the Ottomans. Citing the notion of the unaccountability of the monarch, they again interpreted it as a constitutional monarch's lack of responsibilities, and encouraged the sultan to stay away from politics if he planned to preserve his throne.¹⁵

Said Pasha's cabinet was forced to resign on 6 August, only four days after introduction of the new changes and two weeks in power. His old rival, Kamil Pasha, became his replacement. The indication that the ministers of the army and navy, like the rest of the cabinet, were to be appointed by the new chief minister brought immediate calm.¹⁶ He was greeted warmly by the CUP, which spoke of him as an enlightened man, an Oxford graduate, and a supporter of the constitution, and in spite of some reservations toward his cabinet, everyone was urged to cooperate with the new government.¹⁷

Kamil Pasha was not so submissive. For him, this was a fresh opportunity to revamp the Sublime Porte and regain the ground lost to the Palace in the previous thirty years. According to an eyewitness, when (in their first meeting) the sultan had insisted on his constitutional right to appoint the two ministers, Kamil Pasha had alluded to the illegality of this while pointing out that the constitution was not altogether clear on this point. Kamil Pasha supported his own candidate, Recep Pasha, for the position of minister of war. He had professed an inability to interpret the constitution and considered the matter better left to the Chamber of Deputies and the Council of Notables, forcing the sultan to yield despite his distrust of the candidate.¹⁸

Rapport with the CUP lasted a mere two weeks, until the new cabinet introduced its program. The program lacked administrative, financial, and

¹⁴ *Tanin*, No. 4, 4 August/22 Temmuz 1324/7 Recep 1326, "Bir Hükümet-i Meşrutenin Ahlakı," pp. 2-3, and "Şikayetlerimiz," p. 3. *Tanin*, No. 5, 5 August 1908/23 Temmuz 1324/8 Recep 1326, "Şikayetlerimiz," p. 3, and "Heyet-i Vükelaya Dair," pp. 3-4.

¹⁵ *Tanin*, No. 23, 23 August 1908/10 Ağustos 1324/26 Recep 1326, "Hak-ı İhtilal," pp. 1-2. For strategic reasons, when the threat of breakup became more real, the CUP turned into a vocal advocate of the sultanate, but the religious opposition insisted they continued to be Republicans, as they had repeatedly claimed. *Volkan* disapproved and considered Republicanism dangerous where the caliph of 300 million Muslims resided, and condemned their irreligion. *Volkan*, No. 61, 1 Mart 1909/10 Sefer 1327/17 Şubat 1324, "Hakikat Nasıl Anlaşılacak?," p. 1.

¹⁶ *Fikir Hareketleri*, 24 August 1935, No. 96, p. 277. *Tanin*, 7, 7 August/25 Temmuz 1324/10 Recep 1326, "Yeni Heyet-i Vükela," p. 1. Ahmad, *Young Turks*, p. 20.

¹⁷ The Oxford credential of Kamil Pasha was dubious yet its significance for the CUP was interesting. *Tanin*, No. 15, 15 August 1908/2 Ağustos 1324/18 Recep 1326, "Vezaif-i Hükümete Müdahale," p. 1. For statements of support appearing in the newspaper *Sabah* see Ahmad, *Young Turks*, p. 21.

¹⁸ The discussion was recorded by the sultan's new first secretary, Ali Cevat. See Ali Cevat Bey, *İkinci Meşrutiyetin İlanı ve Otuz Bir Mart Hadisesi*, edited by Faik Reşit Unat (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, (1908-1909) 1960), pp. 8-9.

educational initiatives, and did not ask for abrogation of capitulations. The CUP asked in frustration if the cabinet was up to the task of rescuing the empire. The single favorable item was the plan for mandatory military service for all ethnic and religious groups, an important step toward the construction of Ottoman equality. Yet they found even its tone and language, filled with hesitations and formalities (*tereddüd ve resmîyet*), to smack of the old regime.¹⁹

Until the opening of the Chamber of Deputies in mid-December, the CUP adopted an increasingly critical stance toward ministerial power and accountability, the slow pace of reforms, the confused logic of administration, and the age of ministers. Waking up to the conservatism of the 1876 constitution, the newly announced CUP program included a guideline for doing away with ambiguities, increasing the accountability of the cabinet and ministers toward the “nation” (i.e., the Chamber of Deputies as opposed to the sultan), and making the chief minister an elected official of the dominant party.²⁰ The CUP lamented the entrustment of the government to old-regime administrators;²¹ it did admit to having some role in the government, but certainly not as much as it liked. It bemoaned the administrative confusion where neither the Young Turks nor the absolutist regime was in charge, creating a strange hybrid that was neither the prior absolutist regime nor a national one, but something in the middle, an irrational impossibility: “The constitutional administration cannot be built by establishers of tyranny, the traitors to the fatherland, and the old material of demolished buildings (*enkaz*). If one desired to build it as such, it would become a creature that defied logic like the present day administration.”²² In early December, Maniyasizade Refik Bey, a CUP central committee member, and Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha, the General Inspector of Rumelia, were assigned to head the ministries of justice and interior respectively. Maniyasizade was already holding the post of minister of police since the early weeks of revolution;²³ the new assignment gave him a significantly improved portfolio. Unsatisfied, the CUP dismissed the changes as insignificant repairs and demanded that the entire government be placed in the Young Turks’ hands. “New times [demanded] new

¹⁹ The following was telling about their views on education: “It was not the generals who won Japan’s last war, but the elementary school teachers (*ibtidai hocalar*).” *Tanin*, 17, 17 August 1908/4 Ağustos 1324/20 Recep 1326, “Hükümetin Programı Hakkında Mütalaat,” p. 1. Halide Edib, a regular contributor, was a member of the “New” literary movement connected with *Tanin*, and provides an account of its different style and great influence. Edib, *Memoirs*, pp. 214–219.

²⁰ *Tanin*, No. 55, 24 September 1908/11 Eylül 1324/28 Şaban 1326, “Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin Siyasi Programı,” p. 1.

²¹ *Tanin*, No. 79, 18 October 1908/5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/22 Ramazan 1326, “Memleketin Ahval-i Umumiyesi,” p. 1.

²² *Tanin*, 108, 18 November 1908/5 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/24 Shawwal 1326, Hükümetde Mantık,” p. 1. Interview with the Minister of Finance showed little activity by way of reforms. See *Tanin*, 66, 5 October 1908/22 Eylül 1324/9 Ramazan 1326, “Nazırlarımız Ne Yapıyor?,” pp. 1–2. *Tanin*, 79, 18 October 1908/5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/22 Ramazan 1326, “Memleketin Ahval-i Umumiyesi,” p. 1.

²³ BEO 252740, 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/12 Recep 1326.

people. This was a general law.”²⁴ Discussion of the ages of the top administrators and the demand for replacement with the young and energetic were common themes, with the former sometimes colorfully ridiculed as a soiled worn out fez on the head of a nation dressed in the new clothes of liberty.²⁵ On the eve of the opening of the Chamber of Deputies they hoped the cabinet would be either dismissed by the Chamber or would voluntarily resign on its own, given its non-national character. The Chamber was to act as a court of law, with the press as public prosecutor, and as such the CUP provided a list of crimes for the trial.²⁶

Although Kamil Pasha was certainly far from the tyrant portrayed by the CUP, there was some reason for skepticism. In his correspondence can be found a letter from a British high official that was telling about both his and the British attitude:

Sir William Whittall is quite at one with our idea of strengthening the position of Turkey by urging the Committee of Union and Progress to reconcile itself to the plain duty before its eyes of seeking the counsel and submitting to the judgment of your Highness. The Eastern Question Association has pressed Sir Edward Grey to take active steps in this direction. We have no illusions on the subject, and two letters of mine to Nessib Bey at Salonica have, quite plainly, set this before them as the wisest, and indeed only sensible, programme for them to follow . . . The reasons mentioned by your Highness are conclusive. European methods are not suitable for Asia Minor.²⁷

THE OTTOMAN CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

The opening ceremonies for the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies and Council of Notables (upper house, *meclis-i ayan*) were held on 17 December 1908. The sultan, the heir apparent Burhaneddin, and Prime Minister Kamil Pasha arrived

²⁴ *Tanin*, 121, 1 December 1908/18 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/7 Zilkade 1326, “Tebeddül-i Vükela,” p. 1.

²⁵ *Tanin*, 121, 1 December 1908/18 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/7 Zilkade 1326, “Tebeddül-i Vükela,” p. 1. *Tanin*, 128, 8 December 1908/25 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/14 Zilkade 1326, “Kamil Paşa Kabinesi,” pp. 1–2. *Tanin*, 129, 9 December 1908/26 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/15 Zilkade 1326, “Kamil Paşa Kabinesi – 2,” pp. 1–2.

²⁶ *Tanin*, 128, 8 December 1908/25 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/14 Zilkade 1326, “Kamil Paşa Kabinesi,” pp. 1–2.

²⁷ Y.EE.Kamil 86/34–3301, 5 December 1908/11 Zilkade 1326. On the Chamber’s opening day on 17 December 1908, *Echo de Paris* made several factual remarks and predictions. The facts were not altogether balanced but the predictions were prophetic. With the appointment of Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha and Maniyasizade Refik Bey to ministerial positions, the newspaper reported, the CUP and the government had united their strengths. Hence, the consent of Salonica and Istanbul during negotiations was no longer necessary because they were now one and the same. It further claimed that the CUP approved completely Hilmi Pasha, who had a very cordial relationship with Maniyasizade, a CUP minister with central-committee credentials. This implied that Hilmi, the previous inspector general, was now a Central Committee representative. These were exaggerated. Yet, it foresaw in the near future a cabinet crisis of a far larger magnitude than the recent shuffling of ministers, which was sure to lead to election of Hilmi as prime minister and Refik as the minister of interior. Y.EE.Kamil 86/33–3270, 17 January 1908/4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1908. If its predictions about the crisis and Hilmi were accurate, Maniyasizade became the minister of justice in the new cabinet, and died shortly after.

at the Chamber of Deputies in a royal carriage that passed through a city lined with crowds cheering the monarch. Aside from members of both legislative houses, the ministers, the princes, and the sons-in-law of the royal family were also present. The session opened with a speech from the throne delivered by the newly appointed First Secretary Cevat Bey: "When I assumed the throne, the constitution I had laid down faced difficulties during implementation and thus as a result of the necessities intimated by high-ranking statesmen, the Chamber of Deputies was temporarily closed. It was recommended that the implementation of the said law should be postponed until further advances in education and until the inhabitants had reached the desired level of capability in My imperial domains." Now that both goals have been met, the speech added, and now that he had been assured that the granting of this wish was beneficial for the state and country, "in spite of the opposition of some individuals, I have announced the constitution anew without hesitation, and according to its stipulations, I have ordered new elections and summoned the Chamber of Deputies."²⁸ He then went on to express sorrow at the declaration of independence by the province of Eastern Bulgaria and the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary, both of which had happened during the transition to the constitutional system.²⁹ The speech ended by stating: "I am fortunate to meet the deputies of My nation; my decision about administering the country based on the constitution is absolute and not subject to change."³⁰ Significant here was the claim that the constitution had originated with him and had been reinstated by the sultan's free will, and that all Ottomans remained his subjects, the deputies were representatives of his nation, and the Ottoman territories continued to be his imperial domain. Although it was far from treating the nation as a sovereign entity, the speech was nonetheless met with the enthusiastic applause of the deputies.

It was left to *Tanin* the next day to take issue with the speech.³¹ Hüseyin Cahid, its influential young chief editor, and now also a deputy from Istanbul, claimed that the chief minister should have signed the sultan's speech because constitutionally the sultan was without responsibility. More specifically, it asked

²⁸ The speech appeared the next day in *Takvim-i Vekayi* 68, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/24 Zilkade 1326, "Meclis-i Umuminin Resm-i İftitahı," (session 1, 17 December 1908/4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), p. 1. It is interesting to note that the CUP saw the history of the constitutional movement in linear progression from the abolition of Janissaries, to the Tanzimat, and the 1876 (1293) constitution, culminating finally in the opening of the present Chamber. *Tanin*, 137, 17 December 1908/23 Zilkade 1326/4 Kanun-ı Evvel, "Meclis-i Mebusanın İnikadı," p. 1. See Halide Edib for an identical chronology beginning with Selim III. Edib, *Memoirs*, pp. 191–205.

²⁹ *Takvim-i Vekayi* 68, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/24 Zilkade 1326, "Meclis-i Umuminin Resm-i İftitahı," (session 1), pp. 1–2.

³⁰ *Takvim-i Vekayi* 68, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/24 Zilkade 1326, "Meclis-i Umuminin Resm-i İftitahı," (session 1), p. 2. A rough draft of the final speech may be found in Y.EE.Kamil 86/33–3269, 17 December 1908/4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1153–1155.

³¹ This was despite their explicit claim that their criticisms were not directed toward the person of the sultan, but the prime minister alone.

in response to which difficulties had high officials felt it necessary to temporarily disband the original constitution? Furthermore, it enquired about the names of individuals who opposed its recent restoration.³² The sultan must have felt relieved that he had replaced the references to “self-seeking elite (*rical-ı menfaatperest*) whose actions deserved condemnation,” in an earlier draft with the vague “some individuals” in the final version of speech.³³

The response to the speech by the Council of Notables that came on 26 December forcefully defended the constitutional sanctity and unaccountability (*mesuliyetden masun*) of the sultanate, using a variation of the language in the text of the constitution to clear up any doubts.³⁴ This was an obvious challenge to the interpretation being offered by the CUP.³⁵ The more thoughtful constitutionalists, who had warned of the authoritarian tendencies of the 1876 constitution, held this article to be among the three most dangerous and beseeched the Chamber to change them.³⁶

³² *Tanin*, 138, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/24 Zilkade 1326, “Nutk-ı İftitahi,” p. 1. For a later ridicule of the Speech From the Throne immediately after the Sultan’s removal, see Yunus Nadi, *İhtilal ve İnkılab-ı Osmani* (Istanbul: Matbaa-ı Cihan, 1325/1909), p. 15.

³³ Three different draft versions of the Sultan’s speech may be found in Y.EE 71–85, n.d.

³⁴ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 77, 27 December 1908/14 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/3 Zilhicce 1326 (session 5, 26 December 1908/13 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 1–2.

³⁵ This was also a response to the CUP’s earlier attack on the Council of Notables, a body whose members were to be chosen by the sultan and were not to exceed a third of the Chamber of Deputies. This body was to have inordinate power and could reject the Chamber’s bills. The CUP branded its members as bearers of old and seditious thoughts without the nation exercising any power over them, and called for its transformation along the French model, or other countries’ mix of elected and selected deputies. It doubted the existence of sixty top civil officials with sufficient qualifications. *Tanin*, No. 55, 24 September 1908/11 Eylül 1324/28 Şaban 1326, “Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin Siyasi Programı,” p. 1.

³⁶ For one example, see Süleyman Şükri Karçinzade, *Yine Aldanmıyalım, Temel Çürükdür (Yadigar-ı Hürriyet, İntibah-ı Millet, No. 3)* (Istanbul: Mehmed Kemal, 1908/1324). Karçinzade, in a spirited attack, argued that unless articles in the constitution that granted inordinate powers to the sultan were changed, that is, 5, 7 and 35, they would experience a return to the old absolutist system. The pamphlet, published two days before the opening of the Chamber of Deputies on 15 December 1908, exhorted it to change these clauses. By that time, the CUP’s heated confrontation with Said Pasha over articles 5 and 7 had led to his downfall. The criticisms went well beyond ministerial appointments and questioned the sultan’s extensive powers. The author argued article 5 was fine so long as it made the sultan the symbolic head of the army in the war front and as long he did not interfere in military affairs; but granting him the right to summon, dismiss, and even to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies was antilibertarian (pp. 12–13). He also took issue with the sultan’s status as sacred (*mukaddes*) and unaccountable (*gayr-ı mesul*) because unaccountability contradicted Qur’an and Islam, the proof of which was the summoning of the fourth Caliph Ali to the court in his own defense. Thus, the constitution’s authors could not grant these rights to the sultan and by doing so change the holy commandments; after all, it was such meddling that had caused the recent miseries. The sultan was to act according to *şeriat*, was in need of consultation, and bound by law. The Muslims considered sacred only the creator and honored the sultans with titles such as “just ruler,” or a “wise emperor,” which were exalted but only human qualities (pp. 9–12). Article 35 stated that in case of repeated disagreements between the Chamber and the cabinet, the sultan had the exclusive right either to change the cabinet or dissolve the Chamber (*fesh*) and order new elections within the assigned legal period. The author

If the unelected Council of Notables' reaction was to be expected, the response of the elected Chamber of Deputies on 28 December came as something of a surprise. The Chamber went out of its way to blame all past misdeeds, including the disbanding of the Chamber, on high-ranking officials who led the sultan astray. Yet, rather than unqualified acceptance of claims about the sultan's initiative, the public was celebrated for having expressed its wishes to the sultan. Furthermore, although the sultan was praised for not being fooled this time, he was off-handedly criticized for having being led astray initially, which had led to ruin. In language that was almost sterile, the Chamber emphasized economic, educational, and martial progress, and the unity and equality of all the empire's ethnic communities and religions that the constitution was to bring about.³⁷ This was a sign that although the majority formally claimed CUP membership, the Chamber was to be a more moderate force than the CUP or the CUP's journalistic mouthpieces.

The Chamber would not be so kind to Kamil Pasha, and the CUP became even more outspoken in questioning his loyalties. That his speech to the parliament and his pledge of loyalty to the constitution were conveyed through a messenger rather than in person; that he had failed to change his title from grand vizier (*sadrızam*) to prime minister (*baş vekil* or *reis-i vükela*); and other trivialities became cause for bickering. Cahid likened the chief minister's office to an old fortress, with a tyrannical commander, that symbolized the last refuge of despotism that strove to block the nation's quest for liberty. This was a fortress ready for destruction, declared *Tanin*, which renewed its call for divesting the chief minister of his powers: "Words like constitution, liberty, and justice, are nothing but a joke, a hypocrisy, because the power of *Sadaret* is above the Chamber, because *Sadaret* is not subject to the Chamber's right of inspection, and because *Sadaret* is not an authority that derives its power from the nation."³⁸

In its 8th session, on 31 December 1908, at the initiation of Hüseyin Cahid, the Chamber began deliberations on whether Prime Minister Kamil Pasha and Minister of Interior Hilmi should be interpellated over their domestic and foreign policies, especially with respect to the recent developments in Crete. Some deputies were in vehement disagreement, not over the Chamber's right to inquire, but over the inquiry's specific content. The Independent Greek deputy from Monastir (Serfiçe)

called for replacement of "dissolve" with milder words such as "dismiss" or "release from duties," and additional emphasis on replacement with new deputies and a new Chamber (pp. 14–15). Serious modification of the constitutional articles along these lines had to await the defeat of counterrevolution (see chapter 5).

³⁷ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 79, 29 December 1908/16 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/5 Zilhicce 1326, (session 6, 28 December 1908/15 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324) pp. 3–4. The Chamber elected fifteen deputies (three from each of the five divisions of the Chamber) to draft a response which was then circulated among all deputies for further suggestions and final discussion on the floor. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 75, 25 December 1908/12 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/1 Zilhicce 1326, (session 4, 23 December 1908/10 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324) p. 10. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1155–1159. For an interpretation of the "Answer to the Throne" that portrays the Chamber as more critical, see Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 208–209.

³⁸ *Tanin*, No. 145, 25 December 1908/1 Zilhicce 1326/ 12 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Sadaret-Baş Vekalet," p. 1. See also *Tanin*, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 150, 151.

Boussios Efendi, ridiculed Cahid for thinking patriotism was his personal monopoly, accused him of forwarding baseless accusations and of insincerity, and of confusing journalism with the virtuous duty of representation. When other deputies asked for further elaboration, amid the chastisement of the head of the Chamber against personal attacks and the haggling of other deputies, he left the podium in mid-speech in anger and frustration.³⁹ In contrast, when Kozmidi (Cosmidis) Efendi, the Liberal Greek deputy from Istanbul, rose to defend holding foreign policy discussions with the prime minister, he was greeted with intense applause.⁴⁰ Another Liberal Albanian deputy from Kosovo, Said Efendi, also agreed with a memorandum of Cahid's that had cited "inexplicable violations" in a constitutional administration and called the recent short-lived arrests, including that of the publisher of the satirical pictorial *Kalem*, "blows brought on the constitution."⁴¹ The CUP deputy, Rıza Pasha from Hüdavendigar, on the other hand, took up the call of Boussios Efendi by pointing out the memorandum's failure to explicitly detail the domestic and international issues, or the constitutional violations, that should be discussed. He thus advised against wasting the chief minister's precious time, but also offered a compromise: the ministers could instead be questioned about matters within their responsibility. During the speech, he was repeatedly interrupted by calls of "spare us from lessons."⁴² Not surprisingly, Cahid's proposal was approved easily with a voice call.⁴³

With interpellation approved, the deputies moved to spell out the exact reasons. A main issue was a recent break-in at the residence of the heir apparent, which indicated a broader concern for the general security of Istanbul; they intended to question the prime minister and the minister of interior about it. These certainly sounded like trivial grounds for interpellation, as some deputies pointed out, but the majority, including Ahmed Rıza and Hüseyin Cahid, were adamant about the Chamber's right, especially when European cabinet members were questioned over smaller matters.⁴⁴ After a break the deputies came up with something more convincing: disorder in the provinces, Anatolia in particular.⁴⁵ When a deputy somewhat rhetorically asked whether the Chamber was going to question Kamil

³⁹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 82, 1 January 1909/19 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/8 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), 31 December 1908/18 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 2–3.

⁴⁰ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 82, 1 January 1909/19 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/8 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), pp. 3–4.

⁴¹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 83, 2 January 1909/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/9 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), p. 1.

⁴² *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 83, 2 January 1909/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/9 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), p. 2.

⁴³ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 83, 2 January 1909/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/9 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), p. 2.

⁴⁴ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 83, 2 January 1909/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/9 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), pp. 2–5.

⁴⁵ The disorders were partly blamed on the recently released prisoners. Hence, requests were aired for necessary reforms and reorganization of the Gendarmes to put an end to such illegal anti-governmental activities by people who had not understood the true meaning of freedom. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 84, 3 January 1909/10 Zilhicce 1326, (session 8), pp. 2–7.

Pasha about his past deeds under the old regime, or the inevitable disorders following all revolutions, or the political and social developments of the present, the answer to his query and his request that interpellation proceedings should specify this beforehand were ignored.⁴⁶

Although on the Chamber's floor Cahid had given the appearance of neutrality by claiming to base his conclusions on future interpellations,⁴⁷ in his newspaper he was already calling for resignation on the grounds that Kamil Pasha had been chosen by the sultan and not the nation. Added reasons were interference in ministerial duties, such as appointment of governors, and conduct of foreign policy, both of which smacked of old-regime practices. He dared Kamil to show his belief in the spirit of the constitution, if not its word, and tender his and the old-style cabinet's resignation.⁴⁸

In fairness to Kamil, an unsolicited note he gave the sultan less than a week after the revolution revealed a good deal about his attitude toward the new circumstances. In a begrudging and defensive tone, as a previous chief minister and a current cabinet member, Kamil advised the sultan on how to avoid a future confrontation with CUP. He lectured the sultan on the meaning of constitutional administration as public participation in government, the Chamber's right to interfere in government on the basis of public demand, instituting or changing laws and the budget. Constitutional rulers had an obligation to act in accordance with public opinion. He thus advised the sultan to act in a preemptive fashion and reform the administration prior to the Chamber's opening. He was further advised to promote qualified individuals, and to base compensation on merit, revealing the government's full awareness of the centrality of this grievance at that early date. The quick implementation of these measures would bring calm, but their neglect, warned Kamil, would bring its opposite. Urgency was needed because the popular revolutionary uprising (*kiyam-ı ahali ve ihtilal*) in Rumelia was spreading to the similarly disposed Istanbul inhabitants; various ranks of inhabitants had already resorted to a range of demonstrations, declared liberty, and made demands, a delicate situation that was worsening day by day. Thus, implementing constitutional reform, especially before the uprising leaders had demanded it, was a safeguard that could assure safe passage through troubled times. Although the present expressions of joy and declarations of liberty were annoying, Kamil admitted, the real danger was in the impending return of the uprising's leaders – that is, of the Young Turks from Egypt, Europe, and other locations – to Istanbul, and their publications, agitations, and societies. But to be able to reject their unlawful demands and protect the sultan from future

⁴⁶ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 84, 3 January 1909/21 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/10 Zilhicce 1326, (session 8), p. 7.

⁴⁷ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 83, 2 January 1909/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/9 Zilhicce 1326 (session 8), p. 4.

⁴⁸ *Tanin*, No. 160, 11 January 1909/29 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/18 Zilhicce 1326, "Kamil Paşa ve Meşrutiyet," p. 1.

troubles, advised Kamil, the constitutional administrative reforms were to be carried out by the Sublime Porte, with the sultan's permission.⁴⁹

Furthermore, a reform edict almost immediately after Kamil's appointment had spelled out how a constitutional cabinet was expected to break from the practices of the old regime. These included bestowing greater responsibility on individual ministries and empowering them to establish contacts amongst themselves for resolving issues such as the extent of their jurisdiction. This was in contrast to the traditional practice of the grand vizier, who acted as the mediator between ministries, deciding the extent of their rights and responsibilities, and thus was the ultimate arbitrator, with disproportionate power. Communication with the prime minister was now recommended only when ministries could not reach an agreement amongst themselves, or when a task clearly lay outside a ministry's responsibilities. In such cases, and again in departure from the old practice, the ministries were obliged to go beyond mere reporting and were expected to express their opinion and recommendations.⁵⁰ These provisions clearly marked Kamil Pasha's differences from the old-style grand viziers, which, ironically, had been acknowledged about both Kamil and Said Pashas by the CUP while it was still a clandestine group.⁵¹

Kamil Pasha made a much-anticipated visit to the Chamber on 13 January to deliver a long address on domestic and foreign affairs. Present were also seven cabinet members, including the interior and foreign ministers. After first taking a stab at his long-time rival Said Pasha⁵² and attributing his fall to public dissatisfaction, he went on to make seven critical points. These were for the most part directed at the CUP, though not always explicitly, and not always fairly. Yet more than any single document, the speech was a concise summary of what had gone on since the revolution and it accurately anticipated nearly all the major issues that were to surface in the near future. These are worth considering here as most of what follows will be in dialogue with these points and will serve as a rough outline for most of our discussion on the Young Turks. They may be summarized as follows:

1. After the revolution, the Ottoman provinces were agitated and government business came to a sudden standstill everywhere;
2. The CUP societies, originally formed in the European provinces with the limited goal of bringing about the constitution, were soon imitated and established in most other provinces – but now, he added disapprovingly, they were in opposition to the patriotic principles of the former;

⁴⁹ Y.EE 86–71, 28 July 1908/29 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

⁵⁰ BEO 252977, 12 August 1908/14 Recep 1326.

⁵¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 115, 1 June 1907, "Hamidilik," p. 1.

⁵² Kamil and Said Pasha, the most Porte-oriented grand viziers of the Hamidian regime, had occupied this position longer than all others. Before their latest appointments, Said Pasha had served for seven times, and Kamil Pasha twice, but for a longer period than his rival. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 2, pp. 597–598, 609–610.

3. These societies had misinterpreted liberty and had freed from jail not only political prisoners but also lawfully convicted ordinary criminals;
4. These societies had also forced out and fired any government employee, administrative council member, or court official of whom they disapproved;
5. The public, witnessing such self-righteousness, concluded in turn that liberty meant freedom from paying taxes, with the result that tax collection came to a halt, forcing the central treasury to sustain the provincial administration and military;
6. In some locations, self-interested individuals agitated the public against accepting the constitution, and in some others, they treacherously inflamed the public to restore the old regime; and, finally,
7. The latter conspiracies had both been quelled through admonition and force.

Kamil, in a tone resembling the deputies and the CUP, referred to the constitution as the nation's savior. After thanking the sultan for this gift, he launched into a detailed explanation of the actions of each ministry (including the successful resolution of the first strikes ever to appear in the Ottoman domains) and of the complicated foreign policy, in particular the issues pertaining to Bulgarian and Crete independence and the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Austro-Hungary.⁵³ Kamil cleverly refrained from attacking the CUP, directing his criticism instead at "false" imitators working in opposition to the true CUP principles. There were, to be sure, a few unconnected and suspicious CUP societies here and there that had been established to settle old local rivalries under the CUP's prestigious name, much to the CUP's disapproval. But it was not hard to guess his real target. Nonetheless, the speech was met with loud, enthusiastic applause; a hostile interpellation had turned into an amicable approval of the chief minister and his cabinet. Notably, Hüseyin Cahid, the initiator of interpellation, withdrew when he was given the floor immediately afterwards, claiming to have no questions.⁵⁴

⁵³ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 92, 15 January 1909/2 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/22 Zilhicce 1326, (session 12, 13 January 1909/31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 1–4. The speech also spoke of the public's trouble with the transgressions of the old administration. With the constitution, the public had "suddenly awakened," filled the streets of Istanbul and provinces in thousands upon thousands, and raised the cry of "long live the sultan!" together with the cries of "liberty, justice, fraternity, and equality!" to heaven. They then dragged out the agents of tyranny from their homes and threw them in jail. This transformation (*inkılab*) resembles a revolution (*ihtilal*), but because blood was not shed, the peaceful revolution captivated the entire world with surprise and admiration, which were owed to the sultan. The Committee of Union was established in the multiethnic empire to reinforce the bond of solidarity among diverse ethnic groups. Imitating the committee in Rumelia, Anatolia and Arab lands also witnessed the formation of committees in most cities and towns. For the original text of the speech, see Y.EE.Kamil 86/33–3284, n.d.

⁵⁴ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 93, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/23 Zilhicce 1326, (session 12), pp. 7–14. *Volkan*, No. 20, 14 January 1909/1 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Zilhicce 1326, "Sadrazam Kamil Paşa Hazretlerinin Muzafferiyet-i Harikuladesi," p. 1.

The next day, however, *Tanin* carried a rebuttal, particularly against the charge that false CUP societies around the empire were responsible for disorders and for freeing ordinary criminals. The extent of those committees' involvement in freeing political prisoners in the provinces was not clear, Cahid responded, but at least they knew who was responsible in Istanbul: it was the cabinet, and the signature of Kamil Pasha and *Şeyhülislam*, that appeared in the first order that opened the prison doors in Istanbul. Cahid also expressed anger at the Chamber's long applause and considered it to have belittled itself. He attributed his hesitation to speak to avoiding the appearance of a personal vendetta.⁵⁵

In the next session, Minister of Interior Hilmi Pasha presented convincing explanations of the recent break-in and of the security of Istanbul in general and food security in the provinces. The insecurity of Istanbul was blamed partly on the recently released ordinary criminals in Istanbul and provinces – the latter, with the lax restrictions of recent months, had settled in Istanbul and numbered five to six thousand – and to press exaggerations. With regard to internal security, the biggest concerns were the disorders in Aydın and İzmir provinces, banditry in particular. Upon hearing the recent initiatives, and upon reform of Gendarmes, the deputies requested firm governmental action and removal of incapable administrators.⁵⁶

If the latest performances had gone flawlessly, the interpellation of the minister of finance in the next session provided ammunition enough to blast the ministry and go beyond. The ministry's failure to prepare a full budget on time, as stipulated in the constitution, provided the pretext and the minister's pleas for more time fell on deaf ears. Under Cahid's leadership the deputies cited this delay as a violation of the constitution and questioned the competence of ministers, held all of them responsible, and cast doubt on the entire cabinet, especially on the prime minister.⁵⁷ Some insisted that the minister of finance should commit to a schedule, the breach of which would constitute grounds for resignation. Others, such as the Greek CUP deputy from Aydın, Aristidi Pasha, came to the minister's defense, arguing that the incompetence of other ministers could not be blamed on him, even if that meant a delayed budget.⁵⁸ The Liberal Kurdish deputy from Mamuret ül-Aziz, Ömer Lütfi Bey, proposed that it was meaningless to question the ministers one by one after interrogating the minister of

⁵⁵ *Tanin*, 163, 14 January 1909/1 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Zilhicce 1326, "Sadr-ı Azam Paşa'nın İzahatı," p. 1. *Tanin*, 164, 15 January 1909/2 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/22 Zilhicce 1326, "Sadr-ı Azamın Beyanatı ve Gazeteler," p. 1.

⁵⁶ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 94, 17 January 1909/4 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/24 Zilhicce 1326, (session 13, 14 January 1909/1 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 4–9. *Takvim-i Vekayi* No. 95, 18 January 1909/5 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/25 Zilhicce 1326, (session 13), pp. 1–5.

⁵⁷ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 96, 19 January 1909/6 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/26 Zilhicce 1326 (the second session 13, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 2–8. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 97, 20 January 1909/7 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/27 Zilhicce 1326 (the second session 13, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 2–3.

⁵⁸ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 97, 20 January 1909/7 Kanun-ı Sani/27 Zilhicce 1326 (the second session 13, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 3–4.

finance, and that they should consider the cabinet accountable as a whole and question its chief, the prime minister.⁵⁹

Even more contentious was some deputies' desire to put on trial many high officials of the old regime, going far beyond the few who awaited this fate. "Making a decision about simply the few individuals who were the despotism's blatant (*meşhude*) tools, and who are now under arrest, may not lead one to conclude the Chamber has fulfilled its duty ... to bring to trial despotism's criminal executive branch in its entirety – without being confined to well known individuals – is a principal duty entrusted to us," argued Vartkes Serengülian Efendi, the socialist Armenian deputy from Erzurum. He thus suggested an extraordinary court staffed by the deputies and legally empowered by the Chamber of Deputies for the task.⁶⁰

The suggestion did not sit too well with the majority, who thought such extraordinary undertakings smacked of tactics of tyranny, or went beyond the powers of the legislature. They did unanimously agree that many high-level old-regime statesmen, former ministers in particular, were upholders of tyranny, guilty of the most heinous crimes, and responsible for inordinate embezzlements, and that a far larger number deserved punishment than those arrested.⁶¹ A more legally feasible suggestion came from the CUP deputy from Aydın, Halil Bey. He pointed to the historical experience of revolutions, such as the French Revolution, and suggested creation of an investigative committee that would prepare the ground for trials (e.g., identifying crimes, presenting evidence), as had been done by the National Convention.⁶² In the next few days, the Chamber did succeed in forming a commission to investigate the papers of arrested high-ranking bureaucrats, who were held on an island, and demanded investigative cooperation from the administration.⁶³ Also agreed was a special investigative commission to look into the financial dealings of the Hijaz railway, after its minister had been questioned about large embezzlements.⁶⁴ Rather

⁵⁹ *Takvim-i Vekayi* No. 97, 20 January 1909/7 Kanun-ı Sani/27 Zilhicce 1326 (the second session 13, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), p. 4.

⁶⁰ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 99, 22 January 1909/9 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/29 Zilhicce 1326 (session 14, 18 January 1909/5 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 3–4.

⁶¹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 97, 20 January 1909/7 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/27 Zilhicce 1326 (the second session 13, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 5–13. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 98, 21 January 1909/8 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/28 Zilhicce 1326 (the second session 13, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 1–4. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 98, 21 January 1909/8 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/28 Zilhicce 1326 (session 14, 18 January 1909/5 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 5–6. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 99, 22 January 1909/9 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/29 Zilhicce 1326 (session 14), pp. 2–12. As Nafi Pasha put it, "we all agree that these have insulted the fatherland, and betrayed the nation." *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 99, 22 January 1909/9 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/29 Zilhicce 1326 (session 14), p. 8.

⁶² *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 99, 22 January 1909/9 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/29 Zilhicce 1326 (session 14), pp. 6–7.

⁶³ Y.EE.Kamil 86/34–3358, 2 February 1909/11 Muharrem 1327.

⁶⁴ Initially the Chamber used this occasion to question the prime minister formally because it did not recognize as minister the head of the Hijaz railway. When Minister Zihni Pasha appeared instead, the Chamber was forced to deal with him directly. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 99, 22 January 1909/9 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/29 Zilhicce 1326 (session 14), pp. 9–10. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 102, 25 January 1909/12 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/2 Muharrem 1327 (session 16, 21 January 1909/8 Kanun-ı Sani 1324),

than questioning the prime minister, however, the Chamber finally settled on interrogating individual ministers for their failure to turn in their budgets or to reform. Thus, the minister of religious endowments was questioned about budgetary delay, the sad state of the endowments, and his undertakings for their improvement.⁶⁵

When on 10 February Kamil Pasha suddenly decided to replace two reputedly pro-CUP ministers, Minister of War Rıza Pasha and Minister of Navy Hüsnü Pasha, the Chamber gave him two days to appear for questioning. The deputies wrote a number of letters directly to Kamil Pasha under the name of various cliques in the Chamber to urge him to appear in person. The more angry deputies expressed surprise at the sudden nature of the changes, which they had found out through the newspapers, and called his independent action a constitutional violation that threatened his cabinet.⁶⁶

Cahid saw the appointment of two ministers from the Liberal faction as part of a conspiracy to weaken the CUP. He blamed his Chamber colleagues, whose complaisance had provided Kamil with the leverage to act tyrannically.⁶⁷ Cahid and the CUP also tried to create another issue with the decision to remove from Istanbul the infantry battalions (*avcı taburlar*) that had been brought in to protect against a possible counterrevolutionary backlash in Istanbul. Although the removal was averted, *Tanin* saw in this an ominous sign.⁶⁸ Ironically, these became the principal participants in a broad anti-CUP counter-revolution that is the topic of Chapter 5.

Kamil Pasha angered the Chamber by responding in writing, not attending in person. The Chamber urged him to appear physically before the Chamber immediately to put an end to the instabilities created by the resignations of his cabinet

pp. 1–7. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 103, 26 January 1909/13 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/3 Muharrem 1327 (session 16), p. 3.

⁶⁵ The deputies sensed some reluctance on part of the minister to allow decisions about the Islamic endowments to be made by the religiously mixed Chamber. Several deputies thus argued that improving endowments benefited all Ottomans and assured the minister that each deputy had the interest of all Ottomans at heart and represented Ottomans as a whole, rather than particular ethnic communities. These remarks met with applause. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 105, 28 January 1909/15 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/5 Muharrem 1327, (session 17, 23 January 1909/10 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 5, 7. The minister pointed to serious problems that could not be rectified in a short time, not even in five years, and certainly not by the solutions offered by the Chamber, such as cadre reorganization.

⁶⁶ Some others questioned the Sublime Porte's reluctance to approve the reform proposals. Y.EE. Kamil 86/34–3365, 11 February 1909/29 Kanun-ı Sani/19 Muharrem 1327; 12 February 1909/20 Muharrem 1327.

⁶⁷ *Tanin*, No. 193, 13 February 1909/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Muharrem 1327, “Sadr-ı Azam ve Meşrutiyet,” p. 1.

⁶⁸ *Tanin*, No. 192, 12 February 1909/30 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/20 Muharrem 1327, “Tebeddül-i Vükela,” p. 1. *Tanin*, No. 193, 13 February 1909/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Muharrem 1327, “Sadr-ı Azam ve Meşrutiyet,” p. 1. Against the CUP journals, *Volkan*, defended the right of the Chief Minister to dismiss the ministers, especially the Minister of War. Kamil had wanted to move the *avcı taburlar* to Yanya against the objections of the minister. The disobedience of the minister of war constituted sufficient ground for dismissal. *Volkan*, No. 44, 13 February 1909/22 Muharrem 1327/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, “Şura-yı Ümmet,” pp. 1–2.

ministers and the circulating rumors about the dismissals.⁶⁹ Kamil Pasha dismissed the rumors and promised to appear in person in a few days.⁷⁰ The Chamber rejected the delay and held a vote of confidence. On 13 February 1909, the Chamber voted to unseat Kamil Pasha and his cabinet by the broad margin of 198 to 8 and promptly informed the press.⁷¹

The constitutional battles continued after Kamil Pasha's time in office, but in a more subdued tone; a more docile chief minister⁷² and a cabinet with greater CUP representation came into place. But this was only one side of the struggle. Another battle was being fought on the sidelines: an organized semi-secretive party was attempting to establish a firmer foothold within the civil officialdom and the military. As it turned out, Kamil Pasha was not dismissed through constitutional procedures alone. The Chamber needed backing from outside for its words to have bite.

CUP AS A GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT

The CUP did not confine itself to legitimate channels; like other constitutional revolutionary parties, it employed legal and extra-legal means at the same time. But why operate within a constitutional framework at all? Having locked itself into constitutional trajectory, the CUP found it impossible to cast constitution-ism aside, especially when there were no other successful global alternatives. Given its self-imposed legal constraints, building up strength on the margins of legality was the surest way for the CUP to force reform. Secondarily, extra-legal means offered a safeguard against anti-constitutional tendencies, official and popular. Such justifications may appear easy to dismiss and in fact their Liberal colleagues did just that. Placed in a comparative context with 1905 Russia, or 1906 Iran, however, the CUP was not engaged in an unusual undertaking, and fared better than both in safe-guarding the constitution for it. Nonetheless, the consequences for liberalism were grave.

The "constitutional" battle unfolding on the sidelines was just as crucial as the developments within the Chamber. Constitutional revolutionaries gradually wake up to the ironic realization that extra-legal meddling empowers infant assemblies. Such tactics leave important illiberal, undemocratic residues in their wake, to be sure, but they also ensure greater legislative success and increase the very survival chances of the legislature.

⁶⁹ Y.EE.Kamil 86/34-3365, 13 February 1909/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Muharrem 1327.

⁷⁰ Y.EE.Kamil 86/34-3365, 13 February 1909/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Muharrem 1327.

⁷¹ Y.EE.Kamil 86/34-3365, 13 February 1909/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Muharrem 1327. *Tanin*, No. 194, 14 February 1909/1 Şubat 1324/22 Muharrem 1327, "Heyet-i Vükelanın Sukutu," p. 1.

⁷² The opposition viewed this as an ominous sign for the future and blamed Kamil Pasha's fate on the propaganda of *Tanin* and *Şura-yı Ümmet*. *Volkan*, No. 46, 15 February 1909/2 Şubat 1324/24 Muharrem 1327, "Buhran-ı Vükela," pp. 1-2.

Extra-constitutional Struggles

As mentioned, the CUP used its personal channels to make two demands on the cabinet of Said Pasha early on. To press for the abolition of the spy network, it used *Şeyhülislam* to relay its message. To arrange a meeting between the cabinet and some opposition leaders, the CUP employed the good offices of the Rumelia Inspector Hilmi. The cabinet warranted receiving four or five delegates on the grounds of a positive effect on security, and pretended the request and the meeting were routine!⁷³

Yet no meeting materialized during the two stormy weeks of Said Pasha's tenure, or at least we do not know of any. The closest encounter with the CUP came during a visit paid by a commission of naval officers to two top navy commanders to demand the resignation of Minister of Navy Hasan Rami Pasha: "when justice is being rendered everywhere," the officers had asked, "why is a corrupt (*mürtekeb*) Minister of Navy still at his job?" Later in the day, the public heckled the minister at the Sublime Porte, most probably at the CUP's instigation.⁷⁴ Shortly afterwards the sultan hand-picked new ministers of the navy and army, which led to the first constitutional crisis of the new regime and brought the fall of Said Pasha and the rise of Kamil Pasha.

Less than two weeks later, in early August, when the CUP was still enthusiastic about the recently appointed Kamil Pasha, two CUP delegates conveyed to the acting minister of interior the news that the Committee approved of the cabinet and was confident of its appropriate conduct in the future. Their only complaint was Palace visits by some individuals who "dared" to disturb its peace in search of favors. To bring an end to such "disapproved conduct and begging," the CUP offered inclusion of its own cadre in the Istanbul police force. This amounted to a CUP request to police the Palace, a sure indication of the changed circumstances from three weeks earlier. The cabinet turned down the request in a tortured response; it sidestepped the explosive issue of Palace visits by agreeing to prevent the "disapproved conduct," but pretended that this was a reference to recent disturbances in Istanbul alone. As for security concerns, the cabinet decided to bring the military to assist the police, and thus ignored the Committee's expressed offer of help.⁷⁵

Unpersuaded, the CUP in Salonica, which already boasted a central Committee member as the Minister of Police in Kamil Pasha's cabinet, asked the general inspector of Rumelia to send twenty police officers from the three provinces after citing Istanbul's extreme need.⁷⁶ In light of the above, the request

⁷³ Y.EE 71-93, 29 July 1908/16 Temmuz 1324/1 Recep 1326. *Düstur*, I, No. 7, 30 July 1908/2 Recep 1326/17 Temmuz 1324, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁴ *Tanin*, No. 2, 2 August 1908/20 Temmuz 1324/5 Recep 1326, "Bahriye Nazırı." p. 4. The same issue of *Tanin* ("Bahriye Nazırı'nın İhtilasları," p. 4) ran an article listing the reasons for accusations of corruption and a demand for the minister's resignation. The minister of interior resigned on that day.

⁷⁵ MV 119: 102. 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/12 Recep 1326.

⁷⁶ TFR.1.SL, 19469, 5 September 1908/23 Ağustos 1324.

was meant to go beyond the general security concerns of the capital; twenty officers could not have done much to improve it. The real intent was to keep an eye on the Palace, which the CUP had openly declared to be its business. As their later objections revealed, the visitors were part of a broader problem. Officials in the far-flung empire were accustomed to treating the Palace, and not the Sublime Porte, as the center of authority and the CUP wanted to put an end to their communication. Also worth noting is the CUP's domineering posture toward Rumelia's General Inspector Hilmi Pasha – he was all but ordered to look after the matter. The general inspector thus dutifully asked the interior ministry to follow up on his earlier inquiry – also CUP-prompted – about such a possibility. When Istanbul failed to answer, he provisionally settled on the number fifteen, but decided still to delay the decision by citing technicalities to await the center's response. He reported these to the CUP as though it were an official governing body. Nor did he conceal from the Interior Ministry the source of pressure against which he, the highest-ranking administrator in Rumelia and soon-to-be prime minister, could resort only to delaying tactics.⁷⁷

On the eve of the announcement of Kamil Pasha's second cabinet in late November, when relations had already turned quite sour, two CUP messengers, Major Hakkı, and a representative from Salonica, Rahmi, met with the sultan at the Palace. They asked him to postpone the announcement of the cabinet changes until he had met with new Minister of Interior Hilmi Pasha, who was on his way to the capital from Salonica. Obviously, Hilmi Pasha was to communicate the CUP's plans for the cabinet, and to prod the sultan to ignore Kamil Pasha's. When the sultan contacted Kamil Pasha about the matter, Kamil emphatically wrote back that the Committee had no right to interfere in affairs of the state, and in any event the changes were announced already.⁷⁸ By this time, Kamil Pasha had become quite adept at ignoring Salonica's terse directives.⁷⁹

Hilmi Pasha may appear to be a willing collaborator, but the surviving evidence suggests otherwise. When invited by Kamil Pasha to assume the position of minister of interior in late October 1908, he had officially declined with various administrative and job-related excuses. His secretive telegram to the prime minister on that same day, however, spoke of the real reason: the most influential of the CUP centers, the Monastir branch, had adopted a particularly hostile posture toward him for his refusal to abide by their recommendations for firing and hiring, and other unprincipled suggestions. Even the CUP central

⁷⁷ TFR.1.SL, 19469, 5 September 1908/23 Ağustos 1324.

⁷⁸ Y.EE 86–73, 30 November 1908/17 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/6 Zilkade 1326.

⁷⁹ See, for example, a telegram from the CUP center in Salonica that addressed the prime minister on 30 October 1908. Unusually, it avoided the high language of bureaucratic communication when addressing the prime minister; after a simple reference to His Highness, tersely added was “we avidly await the implementation of our communiqué dated 25 October 1908.” 30 October 1908/17 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324. Y.EE.Kamil 86/33–3256, 31 October 1908/18 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324. Although there was no mention of ministerial appointments, by this time Kamil Pasha had begun to put together a new cabinet, and in all probability the CUP was reacting to this plan.

committee in Salonica, complained Hilmi, had not succeeded in curtailing the extremism of Monastir. His intimate knowledge of the Committee's power and influence assured him that he would become the target of additional difficulties if he accepted the position; and he suggested the postponement of his appointment until the Chamber's opening, wishfully thinking that that would mean a return to normalcy. Upon Kamil Pasha's insistence not to pay heed to such pressures, Hilmi finally gave in on 13 November 1908, promising to set out for Istanbul in two weeks' time.⁸⁰

A few days after Kamil Pasha announced the new cabinet, the CUP made a second Palace visit to request his dismissal. Kamil Pasha himself was finally able to speak about it openly in a detailed "declaration" (*izahname*) a few weeks after being dismissed. According to the former prime minister, he abided by the requests made by a string of CUP visitors to the extent that he could. Two weeks before the Chamber began operations, two CUP delegates, Rahmi and Major Hakkı, had come to his residence to let him know that members of the Balkan Committee – CUP guests in Istanbul for the past few days – were invited to the prime minister's house for dinner. Kamil Pasha had questioned the credibility of the Balkan Committee, especially as the British embassy or the Ottoman embassy in London had not informed him of it. Privately, he was also offended that guests have been invited to his house unbeknownst to him. His request for a meeting with the Balkan Committee to judge the appropriateness of a dinner invitation, at a time fitting his schedule, was apparently outrageous enough for the two to leave his house in fury and head for the Palace to wake up the sultan at four hours past midnight to demand the prime minister's dismissal. They backed their demand with a threat: if the sultan failed to recall the prime minister's seal immediately, they would use the army the next day to force Kamil Pasha out of the Sublime Porte. The pair let the sultan know that in any event Kamil Pasha was to be dismissed at the Chamber's first session, an issue that had already been decided. The sultan, according to Kamil Pasha, rather than making a decision that night, asked them to return the next day. The following day, the sultan, who had asked Kamil Pasha to be present, rejected the request after invoking the constitution in the presence of an additional CUP officer.⁸¹

Although Kamil Pasha provided valuable new details of the ordeal, the most critical revelations were hardly news. The local press and the Liberal faction had already protested the CUP Palace visit for the prime minister's dismissal.⁸² Even

⁸⁰ Y.EE.Kamil 86/33–3261, 27 October 1908/14 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 28 October 1908/15 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 28 October 1908/15 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 12 November 1908/30 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 13 November 1908/31 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 25 November 1908/12 Teşrin-i Sani 1324; 26 November 1908/13 Teşrin-i Sani 1324.

⁸¹ *İkdam*, No. 5336, 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325/12 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Sadır-ı Sabık Kamil Paşa'nın İzahnamesi," pp. 1–2.

⁸² *Volkan*, which received this news from *İkdam*, questioned a deputy and CUP member from Salonica, Rahmi Bey, about his blatant violation of the constitution (he had gone to the Palace and asked for Kamil Pasha's dismissal). Even if the Chamber and the chief minister disagreed, held

the European press was surprisingly well informed about the details.⁸³ Yet, more than a quarter-century later, Cahid, contrary to the common belief, wrote that the sultan had succumbed to the CUP and consented to dismiss Kamil, but that the CUP had decided to wait until the Chamber's opening to give the appearance of legality and avoid a crisis. For Cahid this was a clear demonstration of CUP power at the time.⁸⁴

When immediately afterwards the local press questioned the CUP about Kamil Pasha and the Palace secretariat, Cahid could not deny the charges outright; but in his typically self-righteous style, he accused the opponents of misplaced concerns. The exchange raised a more fundamental issue: the rationale for the CUP's continued existence, a topic that had also been raised in the Chamber of Deputies. Cahid's response was that they were still far from establishing national sovereignty or "parliamentarian" principles, and had a weak Chamber. These justified the presence of a force to counter injustice and tyranny. For him, those who attempted to disperse the Committee halfway spoke in the name of various legal principles to appear equitable, but they could not shut their eyes to truth for the sake of theories.⁸⁵

This was the reason they had taken action against the prime minister who had wanted to disband the Committee. This was a party to which the revolution was owed, and one that was capable of a complete takeover from the very beginning. Instead it had confined itself to a supervisory role from afar for the sake of general interests, and it was still in this role when it asked a whimsical, dictatorial prime minister to resign. The Committee had not destroyed tyranny to transfer it from one despot to another. For Cahid, disbanding the CUP amounted to dissolving the nation's unwavering determination to fight tyranny, and doing

Volkan, the chief minister's dismissal was entirely up to the sultan. *Volkan*, No. 8, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "İttihad Cemiyeti Azasından Selanik Mebusu Rahmi Bey'e," p. 4. For *Tanin's* acknowledgement of protests in the local press, see *Tanin*, No. 140, 20 December 1908/26 Zilkade 1326/7 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Cemiyet," p. 1. For one among many protests by Liberals, see *İkdam* 5326, 24 March 1909/11 Mart 1324/2 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Cemiyet'in Sukut-ı Manevisi," p. 1.

⁸³ On 10 December, a week before the Chamber's opening, a Viennese newspaper wrote that the recent events seemed to have borne out the rumors that Kamil Pasha was to be dismissed. The CUP had requested this from the sultan but he had refused to make such a sensitive decision when the Chamber was to open soon. According to reports, the Committee was angry at Kamil Pasha's independence and his refusal to follow directives blindly. His courage, however, had attracted the admiration of the diplomatic community. It was expected that the Young Turks would renew attacks and meddle in affairs, if only for the sake of proving their power, and Kamil Pasha was ready to step down. Y.EE.Kamil 86/33-3280, 10 December 1908. See also the *Times of London* (9 December 1908) which wrote that the agitation for dismissing Kamil Pasha had flared up. *Şuray-ı Ümmet*, the CUP mouthpiece, had severely criticized Kamil over his foreign and domestic policies and the slow pace of reforms. The Young Turks pressured to replace Kamil with Hilmi Pasha, but the latter did not seem to be involved in such maneuvering. Among the Young Turks, there was no one with sufficient experience to assume this position. Y.EE.Kamil 86/33-3280, 9 December 1908. Similarly, see *Le Temps (Tan)* of Paris Y.EE.Kamil 86/33-3280, 13 December 1908. See also Abbott *Turkey in Transition*, p. 135.

⁸⁴ *Fikir Hareketleri*, No. 100, 21 September 1935, p. 343.

⁸⁵ *Tanin*, No. 140, 20 December 1908/7 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/26 Zilkade 1326, "Cemiyet," p. 1.

so made it suffer splits, as if it were an army left without a commander. Tyranny retreated only in the face of force. The Committee was to evolve into dissolution when true parliamentarianism, liberty, and the constitution came to be based on firm laws. To destroy it from the foundation when it was most urgently needed, argued Cahid, would be an unforgivable act in the eyes of the nation.⁸⁶ After such a description, who could doubt that the CUP was the nation's vanguard?

Now unburdened by obligations of an official post, Kamil Pasha's "declaration" provided a novel explanation of why the Chamber had dismissed him, and why it had done so with such a wide margin. On 13 February, he recalled, the atmosphere in the Chamber had been so tense that seventy deputies had simply slipped away. The previous day, special agents had been sent to agitate the Second Army and Third Army with the rumor that the government intended to restore the old regime's absolutism. In response, the military officers had expressed their readiness to fight and declared their refusal to recognize any authority but the Chamber. Their telegraphed pledges were read out loud in the Chamber, giving the impression of a state of chaos in the entire country.⁸⁷ The prominent Liberal Deputy Ismail Kemal claimed that military men "armed with revolvers and other weapons, swarmed in the lobbies and threatened the deputies to force them to vote against Kiamil Pasha. At the same time other chiefs of the Committee in Parliament used all manner of threats against their colleagues."⁸⁸ Other sources agreed with the impression of a very serious crisis. *Independence Belge* reported that the CUP claimed the ministerial changes were a move against the Committee, and that the navy regiments had refused to recognize the new minister of navy, with commanders of Bosphorus ships sending letters of protest.⁸⁹ These were the very ships that had trained their guns on the Palace for some time with no one daring to stop them, vindicating the sultan, who had suffered ridicule throughout his reign for fear of them. These impressions were also confirmed by telegrams from the Beyoğlu quarters of Istanbul, which told of rumors of a CUP plan to dethrone the sultan in favor of Yusuf İzzeddin Efendi, his nephew. The telegrams provided by the Ministry of Post to the prime minister had also claimed that the deposed minister of war was aware of this plan and thus implied his involvement.⁹⁰

Prudence, claimed Kamil Pasha, had kept him from exposing these circumstances. Despite any constitutional obligation to appear before the Chamber,⁹¹

⁸⁶ *Tanin*, No. 140, 20 December 1908/7 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/26 Zilkade 1326, "Cemiyet," p. 1.

⁸⁷ *İkdam*, No. 5336, 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325/12 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Sadır-ı Sabık Kamil Paşa'nın İzahnamesi," pp. 1-2 (see esp. p. 1).

⁸⁸ Ismail Kemal, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, ed. Sommerville Story (London: Constable and Company, 1920), pp. 324-325.

⁸⁹ From *Independence Belge*, Y.EE.Kamil 86/34-3368, 14 February 1909. As Ismail Kemal put it, "The naval officers on the vessels in the harbour also sent a telegram of protest to the Chamber threatening to fire on the city." Ismail Kemal, *Memoirs*, p. 325.

⁹⁰ Y.EE.Kamil 86/34-3362, 10 February 1909/10 Şubat 1909.

⁹¹ The constitution had spoken only of the Chamber's right to interrogate individual ministers, and not the cabinet as a whole or the prime minister. The chief minister and *Şeyhülislam* were directly appointed by the sultan and were responsible to him.

argued Kamil, he had done so before and intended to appear in the future. In addition, the constitution had explicitly stipulated that when called in by the Chamber, the ministers, let alone the prime minister, had the right to postpone an appearance if they saw fit (article 38). As such, not only had he gone beyond the call of duty and the text of the constitution by appearing before the Chamber, but his request for delay was well within his rights. This point was not lost on the anti-CUP opposition.⁹² The constitutional violations did not end there, related Kamil. Before he had the chance to submit his resignation, the head of the Chamber and some deputies had gone to the sultan. The sultan in response had issued an imperial decree that spoke of “dismissal of Kamil Pasha due to necessities” without any mention of resignation, and had announced a previously hand-picked replacement by the Committee, namely Hüseyin Hilmi. This was a language and style that smacked of rivalries and intrigues under the old regime, related Kamil.

He then turned to his controversial reshuffling of the cabinet, which had brought about the crisis. Starting out with a rather unconvincing explanation for the three changes,⁹³ when he elaborated on the appointment of minister of war, it became clear why the CUP was so incensed. Kamil justified dismissing the upright Rıza Pasha on the grounds of inadequate response to the breakdown of discipline in the army and to officers’ interference in matters beyond their responsibility. Rıza Pasha’s words, explained Kamil, did not carry sufficient weight with the officers who delivered political speeches in concerts and meetings and staged unbecoming performances in theaters. Nazım Pasha, on the other hand, was an individual with demonstrated ability to restore discipline, as attested by his performance in the Second Army in a short few months.⁹⁴

Indeed, Nazım Pasha’s letter to the sultan on the eve of appointment as the new minister certainly showed why the CUP would have had concerns. The letter’s unmistakable anti-CUP slant boasted of his rapid accomplishments in the Second Army, two in particular: he had cleansed the barracks of posters bearing long articles with the title “Liberty,” and had banned soldiers from staging plays. He expressed surprise at how they had been allowed in the military to begin with, a clear jibe at his predecessor.⁹⁵ No wonder that immediately after

⁹² As *Volkan* had written earlier in defense of Kamil Pasha, the Chamber, in its haste, had violated article 38 of the constitution; *Volkan* correctly pointed out that the ministers, let alone the prime minister, had the right to delay appearing in the Chamber. *Volkan*, No. 51, 20 February 1909/7 Şubat 1324/29 Muharrem 1327, “Acele Şeytan’dan, Te’eni Rahman’dandır,” pp. 1–2.

⁹³ He argued that the ministers of education (Ziya Pasha) and navy (Hüsni Pasha) were appointed to open or recently vacated posts, and Minister of War Rıza Pasha had recently been appointed to another sensitive post, for which reason his position as minister of war was given to Nazım Pasha.

⁹⁴ *İkdam*, No. 5336, 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325/12 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Sadr-ı Sabık Kamil Paşa’nın İzahnamesi,” pp. 1–2. (see esp. p. 1).

⁹⁵ Y.EE 15–175, n.d.

his election, the soldiers' club from the Second Army in Edirne had protested the anti-constitutional leanings of the new minister.⁹⁶

From Kamil Pasha's stance, ministerial appointments were within his rights, provided that the sultan was informed, which he was. Furthermore, similar ministerial changes in the past such as Internal Affairs, Education, Justice, among others, had not caused any protests. The main source of contention, concluded Kamil correctly and publicly, was the appointment of Nazım Pasha. On the very night of the appointment (10 February), a CUP representative (Nazım Bey) had gone to his house in an agitated mood to express the Committee's shock and dismay, asking how ministerial changes could be made without informing the Committee, a question Kamil had dismissed.

The next three days witnessed the resignation of two ministers (Hilmi, Maniyasizade Refik) and the head of the State Council in protest of the new appointments. For Kamil, the close timing of resignations indicated they were not the result of deliberation between the ministers, but encounters with "invisible dignitaries." Although more than a few had succumbed to the pressure and remained silent, others, such as the minister of Foreign Affairs, had refused openly. Furthermore, that the resignations had come individually and in sequence, not during a cabinet session, indicated a broader conspiracy to create the impression of a crisis to the public and prepare the ground for agitation in the Chamber. If the only possible legitimate issue was the qualification of the new minister of war, asked Kamil, why had it not been raised in an earlier cabinet session? He concluded that the ministerial protests were an afterthought that had originated elsewhere.⁹⁷

In his typically point-by-point retort the next day, Cahid adamantly denied use of coercion against the deputies; the margin had been so wide as to make the accusation baseless. As for Ahmed Rıza and deputies going to the Palace, Cahid conceded its accuracy, but added that they had carried out the will of the nation, and in any event it was Kamil Pasha's fault for putting off his resignation until the next day. Furthermore, it was a matter of course to settle on a replacement beforehand, which happened to be Hilmi Pasha. This meant the prime ministers were no longer to be appointed according to the whim of the Palace secretariat – a euphemism that avoided naming the sultan – but by the will of the nation and their representatives. To add insult to injury, he thanked Kamil Pasha for providing an occasion to air these issues. Kamil Pasha was purportedly upset because an end to Palace appointments also spelled an end to the era of his prime

⁹⁶ *Volkan*, No. 47, "Harbiye Nazır-ı Sabık Nazım Paşa," No. p. 3. According to McCullagh, who turned out to be wrong about the new minister's immunity from possible criticism, "Nazım had suffered under the old regime for his Liberal opinions, so that nobody could accuse him of being a tool of reaction, but at the same time he is only a soldier, with all a soldier's hatred for politics in the Army, and while in command of the Second Corps at Adrianople he had distinguished himself by his stern repression of all political associations among his officers." Francis McCullagh, *The Fall of Abd-ul-Hamid* (London: Methuen & Co., 1910), p. 33.

⁹⁷ *İkdam*, No. 5336, 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325/12 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Sadr-ı Sabık Kamil Paşa'nın İzahnamesi," pp. 1–2 (see esp. p. 1).

ministry.⁹⁸ What he failed to mention were two constitutional violations. The chief minister was dismissed for a delayed response although he was under no obligation even to appear before the Chamber. Furthermore, although the new chief minister was elected by the Chamber's majority, it was the sultan alone who constitutionally could appoint him.

The CUP as an Organization

The CUP justified its bigger role by claiming that destroying despotism was not enough; the "nation" needed assistance to institute a just administration. After trivializing the changes of the previous three months, it openly declared that it had taken it upon itself to establish justice, equality, fraternity, and liberty, a responsibility it had left to others out of fear of being accused of self-interestedness. The public did expect the Committee to rectify matters when transgressions or injustices happened in Istanbul or the provinces. Thus, willingly or unwillingly, the CUP was held accountable before public opinion while it lacked a role in government. This situation it found unjust and imprudent; it was unrealistic to expect the old-regime officials and ministers to change their ways. Proclaiming their dislike for a cabinet crisis at a dire time, they nonetheless saw that the fatherland's future hung on solving this problem. This was an unambiguous rationale for a bigger role in managing the empire.⁹⁹

Looking back at Kamil Pasha's memorable speech at the Chamber, we are ready now to deal with his second and fourth points. The CUP societies, originally established in the European provinces with the limited goal of instituting the constitution, were soon copied in most other provinces but were now in opposition to the patriotic principles of the former; and that these societies forced out and fired any government employee, administrative council member, or court official they did not approve.

For the most part, the CUP was careful about flaunting its ambitions. But like all actors caught in momentous transformations, its language was unstable. It did claim to be the central actor in politics, but, fully aware that not all its doings fit under the constitutional rubric, it resorted to obfuscation or denial. With the Chamber's opening, this attitude took a turn for the worse. The small but vocal Liberal opposition in the Chamber in its unofficial mouthpiece *İkdam* charged the CUP with repeated violations and activities behind the scene. These the CUP denied ever more forcefully.

It took the CUP less than two weeks from the day of revolution to issue stern warnings to the public, the government, and the Palace in a palpably new tone. Those among the public who pursued personal interests against "national Ottoman interests," presuming that only the Committee alone knew them, were "traitors to the fatherland" and were promised harsh treatment.

⁹⁸ *Tanin*, No. 243, 4 April 1909/13 Rebiyülevvel 1327/22 Mart 1325, "Kamil Paşa'nın İzahnamesi," pp. 1-3.

⁹⁹ *Tanin*, No. 79, 18 October 1908/5 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/22 Ramazan 1326, "Memleketin Ahval-i Umumiyesi," p. 1.

Officials' visits to the Palace secretariat and continued requests for favors were particular occasions for such calls. When the CUP called on public officials to respect the constitution, it itself openly warned them to perform their legal duties, prevent the public from wrongdoing, or to report all difficulties to the Committee, as if it was an official body.¹⁰⁰

As early as August the CUP was fully aware of abuse of its name for private benefit, settling old accounts, or gaining advantage against rivals. In its words, "ignoramus" who were claiming to be CUP representatives or even leaders, without the CUP's permission or indeed any connection to it, exploited government weakness in the provinces to turn them into autonomous regions and abuse the inhabitants. This forced İsmail Hakkı to "openly declare to public in provinces that the Committee has never claimed to be the executive branch," adding that they were cognizant of the dangers of having a "government within the government" (*hükümet içinde hükümet*); serious disorders resulted if such a body interfered with the executive. The public was thus repeatedly assured that the Committee had allowed the government to remain entirely autonomous and refrained even from administering advice. He urged everyone to support and pay heed to officials, and know their obligations toward the state, including paying taxes.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile the CUP expanded its branches, clubs, and publications throughout the empire, openly and with energy, for which purpose it collected donations and sent delegates to every corner. The delegates' purported goal was simply to investigate the country's needs, raise public knowledge about the constitutional administration, and a number of other deeds to improve national education and public good.¹⁰² The topic of donations was one that came up repeatedly, when the government and the opposition accused the CUP of actually instituting and collecting taxes. The CUP defended the collections as membership dues, yet these seem to have converged with tax collection at least in some locations. In Monastir, for example, the Turkish population (but significantly not all Muslims in general) was obliged to pay a tax of 2 percent to the CUP, a quarter of which was for the Committee and the rest set aside for general use.¹⁰³ Although the CUP attempted to dismiss these as organizational fees, they sounded more like compulsory membership for all, which in a sense is indeed a tax. On the other hand, its imposition on the Turkish population alone sent a message about the group that the CUP considered to be its primary constituency.

¹⁰⁰ *Tanin*, No. 5, 8 Recep 1326/23 Temmuz 1324, "Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Varid Olan Beyanname Suretidir," p. 4. On this issue, see for example *Tanin*, No. 7, 8 July 1908/25 Temmuz 1324/10 Recep 1326, "Ali Kemal Bey'e Açık Bir Mektub," p. 2.

¹⁰¹ *Tanin*, No. 27, 27 August 1908/14 Ağustos 1324/30 Recep 1326, "Ahali ve Memurin," p. 2.

¹⁰² *Tanin*, No. 36, 5 September 1908/23 Ağustos 1324/9 Şaban 1326, "Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti İstanbul Merkezi'nden," p. 4.

¹⁰³ Witnessing this, an Albanian leader "Selaheddin proposed that the same tax be levied on the Albanians for the benefit of the Bashkimi club, one-fourth of it to be paid to the Young Turk committee, and three-fourths to be spent on the Albanian schools." Skendi, *Albanian National Awakening*, pp. 351–352.

Nor did these emerging clubs and societies shy away from going beyond the public and applying for state financial support.¹⁰⁴ The government rejected all such solicitations. Their full extent is not known; there is some indication that the solicitations were routine, with government encouraging the clubs to find local solutions for their fundraising. And yet, the solutions seemed to have been equally unsatisfactory to the government.

Although some trouble-making false committees and clubs did exist, the real source of concern for the administration was the success the CUP was having in expanding its organization around the empire. The genuine affiliates were readily discernible from their rhetoric and concerns. A glimpse of their reach and scope could be had on the occasion of the Chamber's opening. On that day, a large number of congratulatory telegrams poured in from foreign parliaments and dignitaries, societies and groups active abroad or within the empire, and from provinces, and Ottoman administrators. Notable among these were the telegrams from provinces that spoke of jubilant gatherings of thousands and highlighted military and civil officials with clear CUP affiliation. Reminiscent of and modeled after the early days of revolution, these jublations now had a scope far beyond Rumelia. Rumelian celebrations and the glimpses of ethnic unity they afforded, however, were already becoming a shadow of what they were.¹⁰⁵ The coordinated telegrams that poured in in one sweep from 106 locations that self-identified as CUP centers, thus implying the existence of many more branches under their jurisdiction, were impressive.¹⁰⁶ The numbers are even larger if we include CUP-affiliated clubs with titles inspired either by its name and slogans (e.g., Söğüd Terakki ve Teavün Cemiyeti, Karaman Osmanlı İttihad Kulübü, Edirne Osmanlı İttihad Kulübü, Biga İttihad Kulübü, Balıkesir Hürriyet Kulübü), or scores of regional soldiers' clubs (e.g., Monastir, Serres, Samsun Askeri Kulübü).¹⁰⁷ A few telegrams were from clubs with ethnic affiliation, some

¹⁰⁴ For example, the board of the important CUP club in Serres requested rent money from the Porte for a clubhouse on behalf of 500 officers. BEO 255820, 6 October 1908/10 Ramazan 1326. See also the similar request of the CUP club in Antalya. BEO 255806, 6 October 1908/10 Ramazan 1326. Or the appeal of the Partisans of Progress Ottoman Youth Club from Kırkkilise (in Edirne). BEO 255481, 27 September 1908/30 Şaban 1326.

¹⁰⁵ Later celebrations were certainly not as extensive, and clearly indicated that the fragile unity of the early days was beginning to shatter. The large celebrations in the subprovincial center of Görice showed once again the centrality of the CUP and the newly created Albanian Unity educational clubs that (for the moment) cooperated with it. Yet the celebrations in Resne had not gone without incident. When a teacher in the Greek club fired his pistol in the air, it caused panic among the Bulgarians celebrating nearby, who were convinced the shots were intended for them. TFR.1.MN 18178, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324. TFR.1.MN 18198, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324. The Bulgarian version of the incident differed significantly from the Greek. See TFR.1.MN 18269, 13 January 1909/31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324.

¹⁰⁶ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 73, 23 December 1908/10 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/29 Zilkade 1324, (session 3, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324) p. 7.

¹⁰⁷ For many of these, see *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 71, 21 December 1908/8 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/27 Zilkade 1326, pp. 2–4. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 72, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/28 Zilkade 1326, pp. 2–3. See especially *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 73, 23 December 1908/10 Kanun-ı

of which were co-signed with the local CUP branch. The Daşnak club in Adapazarı was one, and received a special round of applause in the Chamber for it.

Liberal and Religious Opposition

In the broad view of revolutions, dismissing Kamil Pasha through extra-legal tactics could hardly be seen as extraordinary. In the opponent's language this was a conspiracy, an attempt to subdue the administration through a semi-secretive political party with extensive ties to the state.

The Liberals, former allies, opposed this at the Chamber pulpit or in the press. Their altercation with the CUP gave a glimpse into the inner workings of the CUP and brought to light its hardening stance. Liberal ideals, but not constitutionalism itself, began to be sacrificed in favor of an authoritarian stance that was geared toward saving the empire.

The exchanges between the Liberals and the CUP became particularly heated after the dismissal of Kamil Pasha in mid-February 1909. In the absence of other powerful allies, and without anyone who could stand up to the Committee, the Liberals rallied around Kamil Pasha and used the dismissal as an occasion to expose the Committee. They even went as far as to defend his past constitutional credentials, for which he was purportedly banished under the old regime!¹⁰⁸

The religious opposition similarly rallied around Kamil and in time drew closer to the Liberals despite strong reservations about the latter's decentralization program¹⁰⁹ and their essentially different conceptions of equality with religious minorities.¹¹⁰ With these exceptions, their criticism of the CUP's violation of liberal constitutionalism mirrored closely the sophisticated Liberal critique, but was expressed in a rather crude, personal, and populist tone. The main tendency within the religious opposition operated under the leadership of Dervish Vahdeti, his journal *Volkan* (*Volcano*), and his subsequently established

Evvel 1324/29 Zilkade 1324, (session 3, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324) pp. 2–8. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 74, 24 December 1908/11 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/30 Zilkade 1324, (session 3, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324) pp. 2–4. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 75, 25 December 1908/12 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/1 Zilhicce 1324, (session 4, 23 December 1908/10 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324) pp. 1–3, 11. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 84, 3 January 1909/21 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/10 Zilhicce 1326, (session 8, 31 December 1908/18 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 2–3. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 89, 12 January 1909/30 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/19 Zilhicce 1326, (session 9, 11 January 1909/29 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 2–5.

¹⁰⁸ *İkdam*, No. 5328, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1325/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Sadır-ı Müstakbel,” p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ While fighting against the CUP, they also strongly opposed the Liberal decentralization program. *Volkan*, No. 16, 27 December 1908/14 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Fırka-ı Ahrar Yahud Ali Kemal! Ali Kemal! Nidaları” pp. 1–2. In some instances, they even explicitly defended the CUP centralization program.

¹¹⁰ For further discussion of this point, see Chapter 5. It should be noted that they did pay lip service to the Liberals' minority program, but when it came to detailed discussion of non-Muslims, their differences became quite apparent. *Volkan*, No. 30, 30 January 1909/17 Kanun-ı Sani 1323/8 Muharrem 1327, “Telif-i Muvaffakiyetler Yahud Beşaret-i Uzma,” pp. 1–2.

party, the Society of Muhammad (İttihad-ı Muhammedi).¹¹¹ A populist cleric from Cyprus who as a former employee of the immigrants' commission had suffered banishment under Abdülhamid, Vahdeti had returned to Istanbul after the amnesty and begun opposition activities. The forceful defense of constitutionalism by this group was surprising, especially given the unequivocally anti-constitutional image it has harbored for almost a century. Its first issue stated that although the publication of *Volkan* was to be delayed until the Chamber's opening, it began its explosion sooner, on election day, to rectify the deceits and political instabilities of that day. Only later did it blame these squarely on the CUP and its elitism.¹¹²

One of the first undertakings of the government of Hilmi Pasha in February was a regulation (it was not yet a law) on meetings and public gatherings that required a police permit 24 hours beforehand. The CUP congratulated the government for it, and for not confusing freedom with anarchy.¹¹³ The Liberals, on the other hand, called it a violation of the constitution, argued that a simple notification of time and place should suffice, and alluded to the new pro-CUP government and the Chamber's role in making freedom of association and press mere empty words. They took this as an ominous sign for the press and other freedoms in the near future.¹¹⁴

The Liberals now expanded on Kamil Pasha's earlier points, throwing its cautious tone to the wind. In a scathing criticism, the prominent Liberal deputy Dr. Rıza Nur (Sinop), posed five questions, mostly rhetorical:

- 1) Is the Committee a government within the government?
- 2) Does it interfere in governmental business?
- 3) Does it have other faults?
- 4) What is its duty?
- 5) Is there a need for its existence?

The Committee was no ordinary society, claimed Rıza Nur. It had various divisions, such as finance, correspondence, information, and other bureaus in Istanbul, and its extensive structure extended to provinces and down to sub-provincial, district, and subdistrict levels. It had its own governors,

¹¹¹ To the extent possible, I have relied on the original issues of *Volkan*, and when that was not possible, I have consulted the transliterated copies in *Volkan Gazetesi*, ed. E. Düzdağ (Istanbul: İz, 1992). The dates in the original are marred by inaccuracies and corrections in the transliterated version are not always accurate. To the extent possible I have not corrected the dates in either document, especially when that has not been pertinent.

¹¹² *Volkan*, No. 1, 11 December 1908/28 Teşrin-i Sani 1324, "Bismillah al-rahman al-rahim," p. 1. Cahid, the editor of *Tanin*, was attacked for his warnings about trickery and deceit in Istanbul elections. *Volkan* asked how he could have accused Istanbul's public of having corrupt morals. It also expressed unhappiness about the prospect of having children like him – yesterday's school graduates – as deputies. *Volkan*, No. 1, 11 December 1908/28 Teşrin-i Sani 1324, "Hüseyin Cahid Bey'e," pp. 2–3.

¹¹³ *Tanin*, No. 207, 26 February 1909/13 Şubat 1324/5 Sefer 1327, "İctimalar," p. 1.

¹¹⁴ *İkdam*, No. 5301, 27 February 1909/14 Şubat 1324/6 Sefer 1327, "Mitingleler Hakkında," p. 1. *İkdam*, No. 5302, 28 February 1909/15 Şubat 1324/7 Sefer 1327, "Ufuk-ı Siyasi," p. 1.

subgovernors, and lower-level administrators, a solid organizational structure that resembled the government. These he considered cause for the disarray in the provincial administration. What made the situation worse was the inflow of many scoundrels into the Committee who were accepted without background checks. This was the reason for anarchy in the first days of revolution, with feckless Committee members corrupting the villagers' minds, an allusion to its role in encouraging them against paying taxes. At present, he further elaborated, there was no shortage of daily interferences by the CUP's branches, leaving the real government employees helpless at the Committee's disposal. Furthermore, the Committee received donations from everywhere, and even instituted taxes on some groups of the population; and regardless of its leaders' claims about their disinterest in the government takeover out of respect for the constitution, it was clear that self interest was their motive. The Committee had decided to control the government from some distance simply because it was deemed more advantageous and avoided complete breakdown of trust.

The Liberal deputy claimed there were countless constitutional violations in Istanbul and the provinces, in the civil administration and the military, and provided concrete evidence to back it up. Furthermore, Liberals claimed the Committee had interfered in elections to force candidates on the public, and had appointed or advanced supporters, together with relatives and associates of those in its high ranks. Although the Committee claimed to have provided strict orders to all branches, it was obvious that no one was listening. He thought the Committee should either accept responsibility or use more effective means of communication.

If the CUP denied that it was a government within the government, added the deputy, it should officially announce the dismantling of its organization in Anatolia for which there was no need, just as it was not necessary to fight tyranny in the days of revolution. If it were abolished, many swindlers would disappear with it. The same applied to the Istanbul center and clubs. So long as they existed, they continued to interfere with government and brought the Chamber under their sway. Furthermore, although the deputies had announced a Union and Progress party purportedly to declare independence from the Committee, practice proved otherwise. After all, keeping the same party name spoke volumes about their ties. He thus advised the CUP to leave the deputies alone to establish political parties without fear of being labeled treacherous and reactionary, especially as it was impossible to have a constitutional administration without opposition parties.

Although Rıza Nur stopped short of calling for the complete disbandment of the Committee, he openly regretted the central Committee's move to Istanbul and demanded that the center and branches retreat to Salonica and Monastir, from where the CUP could act as the constitution's guardian, as it claimed to be, but nothing more. The nation did not need a guardian, argued Rıza Nur, and nor was there need for a paternalistic administration. Although he conceded the Committee's continued need as an observer from afar, he was adamant that it should neither trouble the public nor dictate public opinion. *Volkan* republished

the article for broader dissemination after citing the excitement it had generated.¹¹⁵

The Committee did not acknowledge the religious opposition, but felt obliged to respond to the Liberals. Under a title that was a play on the original, Hüseyin Cahid admitted the details of organizational structure: CUP had numerous branches and was organized down to the *nahiye* level. But this was natural, he claimed, and it was incumbent upon every party to do the same; it proved nothing about the CUP being a government within the government. Against claims of interference with provincial administrations, collection of donations, and even imposing taxes in some locations, Cahid reminded him of Kamil Pasha's statement, an individual whose praise the Liberals sang, to the effect that many "imitated" (*takliden*) the Committee at the beginning. Such illegal acts, claimed Cahid, had now been banned and vowed punishment for those who used its good name to interfere in governmental affairs. As for donations, added Cahid, everyone was free to make donations, but that could not be labeled interference; and as far as taxes, the CUP collected a membership fee, which was not illegal but a common practice of all organizations, which Rıza Nur, a former CUP member, must have known well. If the CUP acquired any other money, this should be proved. In short, Cahid acknowledged interference initially, but strongly denied it after the Chamber's opening, claiming that the Committee had retreated from politics for the sake of the Chamber's majority.¹¹⁶ As we saw above, in some locations at least, there was strong justification in considering membership dues as a form of compulsory taxation.

As for Liberal's demand for a complete withdrawal from politics, the CUP openly objected. First, *Tanin* accused the opponents for using Committee interference as an unprincipled pretext to manipulate public opinion and work toward its abolishment. That the Committee was for a long time the only real power in politics was not to be denied, even celebrated with pride, but after the opening of the Chamber its activities had stopped. Furthermore, it had been some time since the Committee had made known that the representatives could act freely and independently of the Committee, as the CUP was not a political party. Yet, upon explaining the relation between the deputies and the CUP it ran into difficulties: the Committee met with them and tried to steer the government through the deputies in the direction it saw fit, but without ordering them to vote in a certain way. Only had it done so, the argument went, could Committee interference be substantiated! Furthermore, the new Prime Minister Hilmi was cited for his contesting all anti-CUP charges. These sufficed as proof for withdrawal from politics and reporters were thus invited to grow silent. As Ahmed Rıza, the head of the Chamber, had stated in a contentious speech a few days earlier, the Committee was to continue to act as the constitution's protector, and

¹¹⁵ *İkdam*, No. 5314, 12 March 1909/27 Şubat 1324/19 Sefer 1327, "Görüyoruz ki İş Fena Gidiyor," p. 1. *Volkan*, No. 74, 15 March 1909/23 Sefer 1327/2 Mart 1324, "Biz de Görüyoruz ki İş Fena Gidiyor!," pp. 1-4.

¹¹⁶ *Tanin*, No. 225, 16 March 1909/3 Mart 1325/23 Sefer 1327, "İş Fena mı Gidiyor?," p. 1.

those who favored its disbandment supported the dismissal of all deputies connected to it, which meant the majority in the Chamber. That, with much hyperbole, was taken to mean advocating drastic anti-constitutional measures.¹¹⁷

These were his words as a keynote speaker at a CUP dinner party honoring military leaders in the Pera Palas hotel, organized after a similar gathering by Liberals in honor of Kamil Pasha a few weeks earlier.¹¹⁸ This amounted to branding the entire opposition as treasonous, argued the Liberal Ali Kemal, adding that Ahmed Rıza had warned of traitors who wanted to restore the old regime by intimating that liberty had no bounds or limits, and who additionally sought to create discord between the Committee on the one hand and the Muslims and non-Muslim elements on the other. He expressed surprise that a speech of this kind had come from the head of the Chamber and wondered whether many deputies were now considered traitors.¹¹⁹

Volkan added its voice by asking Ahmed Rıza to justify existence of a force above the deputies who represented thirty million Ottomans in the national, religiously legitimate Chamber. The genuine pro-constitution newspapers were brimming with legitimate public complaints against the CUP, added *Volkan*, and the Chamber head's unawareness was inexplicable. In its typically militant style, the paper urged the deputies to counter this force and not leave the nation exposed to the fist of a second despotism. They were assured of the Muslim nation's support in this fight.¹²⁰

Not surprisingly, Cahid challenged these comments by revisiting the topic of betrayal, yet added that by traitor they meant only five or ten old-regime characters; there was no reason for the Liberals to be wary. However, Cahid could not contain himself and went on to condemn the Liberal policy of appeasement toward minorities, especially the Greeks, ending on the note that "Ottomanism can never be sacrificed to ensure the interests of a single Ottoman party (*fırka*)."¹²¹

The Liberal critique exposed the CUP's paternalism. Ali Kemal spoke of a strange philosophy that had taken root among the CUP. It acted as if the public

¹¹⁷ *Tanin*, No. 223, 14 March 1909/1 Mart 1325/21 Sefer 1327, "Ziyafet Münasebetiyle," p. 1.

¹¹⁸ For a laudatory description of the Liberal-organized dinner at Pera Palas, see *Volkan*, No. 30, 30 January 1909/17 Kanun-ı Sani 1323/8 Muharrem 1327, "Telif-i Muvaffakiyetler Yahud Beşaret-i Uzma," pp. 1–2. For this event, and the organizational weakness of Liberals as a political party, see Francis McCullagh, *The Fall*, p. 43.

¹¹⁹ *İkdam*, No. 5317, 15 March 1909/2 Mart 1325/22 Sefer 1327, "İhtilaf – İtilaf," p. 1. McCullagh, *The Fall*, p. 65.

¹²⁰ *Volkan*, No. 82, 23 March 1909/1 Rebiyülevvel 1327/10 Mart 1324, "İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyet-i Celilesine," pp. 2–3.

¹²¹ See his condemnation of the opposition as the beneficiaries of the old tyrannical regime, those unhappy with the revolution and regime of liberty, and those who attempted to alienate the religious establishment (*ilmiye*) and the non-Muslims from the Committee to create discord among Ottoman elements. *Tanin*, No. 236, 27 March 1909/5 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyet ve Ahrar Firkası," p. 1.

and public opinion, after being crushed under tyranny for centuries, had not yet matured and needed to be reared as if it were a child so as not to fall into bad hands or hear inappropriate words. This rejected philosophy did not accept public sovereignty, argued the prominent Liberal, and even if its claims were true, the choice of teachers was the public's.¹²² Others expressed frustration at the Committee's refusal to transform itself into a legitimate, open political party at the expense of national sovereignty and the nation's standing in the international arena.¹²³ Also criticized was the CUP's aversion to opposition political parties, which it had argued to be redundant when all parties professed the same goals. In a clear nod to religious groups whose activities were gaining momentum, the Liberals invoked the language of religion to argue that true consultation was not possible among the community of believers without political parties, that the executive would not be inspected and criticized sufficiently, and that the government would turn to tyranny. Fundamental differences in fact existed between the two parties, argued the Liberals, which was apparent from their views on public gatherings, the press, and the importance attached to the unity of various ethnicities (*ittihad-ı anasır*),¹²⁴ while the CUP discouraged minorities from Ottomanism and unity.¹²⁵

The deputy from Priştine, Hasan, blamed the raging unruliness on the Committee, and argued that stronger laws were needed to transform it from a government within the government; issuing appeals to its centers was ineffective.¹²⁶ Similarly strong views came from the Liberal general secretary, Nurreddin Ferah, who reproved the CUP for enforcing its will on the government, managing individuals all around the country, and forcing the loved and honored army to threaten the government and even the Chamber.¹²⁷ As proof, *İkdam* published a CUP internal memorandum regarding the fall of Kamil Pasha (originally published in a newspaper of the religious opposition, *Serbesti*). When the CUP could not refute its authenticity, the Liberals took this as admission of guilt.¹²⁸

The CUP was thus accused of employing tactics that smacked of the old regime. It used spies and fear-instilling tactics, and even found coveted appointments for the corrupt old-regime members who helped it with *jurnalcilik*. How did the Committee know, asked the Liberals, about secret communications

¹²² *İkdam*, No. 5320, 18 March 1909/5 Mart 1325/25 Sefer 1327, "Amme Efkar-ı Amme," p. 1.

¹²³ *İkdam*, 5326, 24 March 1909/11 Mart 1324/2 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Cemiyet'in Sukut-ı Manevisi," p. 1.

¹²⁴ *İkdam*, No. 5322, 20 March 1909/7 Mart 1325/27 Sefer 1327, "İttihad'dan Ahrar'a ve Ahrar'dan İttihad'a," p. 1.

¹²⁵ *İkdam*, No. 5328, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1325/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Ahmed Rıza Bey'e," p. 3.

¹²⁶ *İkdam*, No. 5324, 22 March 1909/9 Mart 1325/29 Sefer 1327, "Hasbıhal," p. 1.

¹²⁷ *İkdam*, No. 5328, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1325/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Ahmed Rıza Bey'e," p. 3.

¹²⁸ *İkdam*, No. 5333, 31 March 1909/18 Mart 1325/9 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Beyannamesi Hakkında Mütalaat," pp. 4-5 (esp. p. 4).

between their leader Sabahaddin and a military commander? Why did it label as betrayal contacts among the opposition or closing of ranks? What was the difference between the fear instilled by Yıldız and the fear instilled by the Committee?¹²⁹ Also added was a critique of general nepotism and of advancing associates.¹³⁰ They even cast doubt on the CUP's desire for peace and order; it removed the pretext for interference, and prevented the cabinet and the Chamber from becoming a plaything that served their ends.¹³¹

Volkan was in agreement with the old-regime analogy, the unconstitutional interferences, and failure to act as an open political party.¹³² The CUP was in control of everything including the Chamber and cabinet; it appointed and dismissed bureaucrats at will; and it granted positions to supporters from the lowest to the highest of ranks at everyone's expense.¹³³ When the opposition likened the CUP to the Jacobins of the French Revolution, *Volkan* added its voice by calling them twin brothers and encouraged *Tanin* to become an honest newspaper instead of repudiating the label as a misplaced association.¹³⁴

The stealthy CUP leaders and refusal to surrender power were portrayed as the biggest threat to the Chamber, the door to all manner of abuse, and more destructive than absolutism of the throne. How did the CUP expect ministerial accountability, asked *Volkan*, when the ministers were more responsible toward an illegitimate force than they were toward the Sublime Porte? It thus invited the Committee to abstain from using illegitimate means when it held the majority in the Chamber, and not to destroy with one hand what it had created with the other.¹³⁵

Volkan called Kamil Pasha's fall a clear victory for the CUP. In principle, the Chamber's ability to change the chief minister demonstrated the strength of the constitution, yet, it added, this was no occasion for celebration. At no time and in no form did constitutional politics allow their Chambers to be influenced,

¹²⁹ *İkdam*, No. 5333, 31 March 1909/18 Mart 1325/9 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Beyannamesi Hakkında Mütalaat," pp. 4–5 (esp. p. 4). *İkdam*, No. 5328, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1325/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Ahmed Rıza Bey'e," p. 3.

¹³⁰ In addition to above, see also *İkdam*, No. 5314, p. 1; No. 5317, p. 1; No. 5320 p. 1; and No. 5322, p. 1.

¹³¹ *İkdam*, No. 5333, 31 March 1909/18 Mart 1325/9 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti'nin Beyannamesi Hakkında Mütalaat," pp. 4–5 (esp. p. 4). *İkdam*, No. 5328, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1325/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Ahmed Rıza Bey'e," p. 3.

¹³² *Volkan*, No. 5, 15 December 1908/2 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "İkdam Refikimize," pp. 2–3. *Volkan*, No. 7, 17 December 1908/4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Hakikat, Hakikatdır," pp. 3–4. *Volkan*, No. 58, 27 February 1909/6 Sefer 1327/14 Şubat 1324, "Serbestî'den: Menafi-i Milliye Namına Bir Davet," pp. 1–2. *Volkan*, No. 81, 22 March 1909/30 Sefer 1327/9 Mart 1325, "Millet, Asker," pp. 2–3.

¹³³ *Volkan*, No. 58, 27 February 1909/6 Sefer 1327/14 Şubat 1324, "Tanin'i Hakka Davet," pp. 2–3. *Volkan*, No. 102, 12 April 1909/30 March /21 Rebiyülevvel 1325, "Teskin-i Helecan Emr-i Muhal," pp. 1–2.

¹³⁴ Tanin had done so in its issue No. 205. *Volkan* used the *Times of London* as inspiration for its legal remarks. *Volkan*, No. 58, 27 February 1909/6 Sefer 1327/14 Şubat 1324, "Tanin'i Hakka Davet," pp. 2–3.

¹³⁵ *Volkan*, No. 12, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Tehlikenin En Büyüğü," p. 4.

let alone ordered around by, a secretive political committee that had come into being of its own accord. The existence of such secretive committee ruined constitutional principles and prevented the growth of public opinion that could serve as a guide to constitutional administration. Contrary to the notion that this was a victory for the constitution, it was an indication that in today's Istanbul a dreadful and irrational force had taken hold in violation of such principles. Defending Rıza Pasha's dismissal as the minister of war, *Volkan* argued that he had become a Committee fixture, which Kamil had found to be both in violation of the constitution and the country's interest. Kamil had refused to submit to a secretive society that strove to monopolize both the executive and legislative in itself with nothing in mind other than fulfilling self-interest. The only victory here was the dictatorial one of the CUP. The ascendance of Hilmi Pasha had also shown that he now had the full trust of the Committee; it was an ominous sign of the falling of the cabinet and the Chamber as a plaything into its greedy hands. It thus hoped that the progressive and patriotic members of the Committee would return the powers they had now monopolized back to its real owner, the Chamber of Deputies. Otherwise, it advised, the Committee would always be regarded with suspicion no matter what it claimed.¹³⁶

Equally vociferous were its protests against new restrictive laws and regulations the Chamber was planning to put into effect against the freedom of press, public gatherings, and, interestingly enough, vagrancy. These prompted them to question yet again the CUP's differences with the absolutist government and to invite the public to protest the "laws that are written to serve the ends of the Committee . . . [laws] that will prohibit, break, dispose of, or destroy you." The press that "with the exception of a few deceitful newspapers" had already strongly protested these "signs of dictatorship," but "to no effect," was called to a meeting to forge unity and remove the obstacles against their freedom.¹³⁷

Volkan was particularly incensed because of recent moves by the CUP to limit or even ban opposition newspapers in Rumelia. It reported cancellations from a distributor, bookstore, and private individuals in Monastir and Salonica, citing a boycott that had gone into effect in those locations. These had come after a recent speech by Dr. Nazım against newspapers such as *İkdam*, *Yeni Gazete*, *Serbести*, *Hukuk-ı Umumiye*, and *Volkan* which, although not calling for an outright ban, had appealed to the public not to buy or read them, not in public places at least. Calling this an illegitimate boycott that could only lead to war, it added, "our truth-telling *Volkan* is considered mischievous by the Salonica and Monastir governments! If the former publications in Europe and Egypt that opposed the despotic Ottoman government were unjustifiable, then we should

¹³⁶ This Times-inspired article was also distributed as a pamphlet (*Volkan*, No. 56, 25 February 1909/4 Safer 1327/12 Şubat 1324, "Times Ne Diyor?" pp. 2-3).

¹³⁷ *Volkan*, No. 59, 28 February 1909/8 Safer 1327/15 Şubat 1324, "Ey Osmanlılar!!! Hürriyet-i Şahsiyyenize Tecavüz Olunuyor!!," p. 4. *Volkan*, No. 71, 7 March 1909/20 Safer 1327/27 Şubat 1324, "İşimiz Hep Oyuncak," pp. 2-3.

accept the claim that our *Volkan* and similar publications are also engaged in wrongdoing.”¹³⁸

The CUP also did its best to stem the growth of competing societies. When the Society of Muhammad ordered new seals for distribution among its rapidly proliferating provincial branches, the seal-makers' guild warden had asked for a letter of approval from the Committee. In recent months, the warden had related, whenever he had applied for permission to prepare a seal to the Ministry of Interior, he was referred to the municipality. There he was warned in strong terms that seal authorization for any society required first a letter of consent from the Committee, which was to be contacted directly by the applicants. Dervish Vahdeti was naturally outraged and wondered how long the Minister of Interior was willing to tolerate this situation. The Society of Muhammad vowed not to remain silent against the “government within the government” and the undermining of government authority that it entailed.¹³⁹

Kamil Pasha no longer felt the need to speak in euphemisms and blame opportunistic imitators. When criticizing the provincial CUPs, he exhorted the young bureaucrats, officers, and local notables to come to their senses¹⁴⁰ and stop subscribing to CUP's dangerous viewpoint that the government needed supervision to prevent restoration of old-regime absolutism, or until firm establishment of constitutional administration. There were absolutely no grounds for placing the government under control, he argued, when all Ottoman elements had accepted the present administration wholeheartedly, with no desire to return to absolutism, and especially when the entire army had sworn loyalty to the constitution.

Interferences continued under the Committee's name in every corner of the Ottoman lands, when they were clearly not needed, violated administrative strength, interrupted seriously the government's undertakings and dealings, weakened the executive, and broke discipline, argued the former prime minister. In addition, the officers and commanders of the First, Second, and Third Army Corps had been divided into two: those who belonged to the Committee and those who didn't. These disagreements had cost the army its discipline and led to its weakening; soldiers were to remain out of politics, and to abide by rank according to the law. These were his avowed motivations for appointing Nazım Pasha as the new minister of war.¹⁴¹

By now, Kamil Pasha had begun organizing discontented high officials; he himself had become a symbol and rallying point for the Committee's victims.

¹³⁸ *Volkan*, No. 72, 13 March 1909/21 Sefer 1327/28 Şubat 1324, “*Volkan*,” p. 2, and in the same issue, “Doktor Nazım Bey' in Konferansları,” p. 1.

¹³⁹ Added was that the CUP headquarters in Istanbul was in direct telephone contact with the government, implying that the latter received orders from the Committee. *Volkan*, No. 88, 29 March 1909/16 Mart 1325/7 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Hükümet İçinde Hükümet,” pp. 1–2.

¹⁴⁰ His target was not the original CUP, which he found impossible to convince, but the new members.

¹⁴¹ *İkdam*, No. 5336, 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325/12 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Sadr-ı Sabık Kamil Paşa'nın İzahnamesi,” pp. 1–2.

That his more combative stance was gaining ground may be sensed from a sympathizer's letter, a former high official of the Superior Court of Appeals in Salonica. In it, the author declared his disgust at the Committee's varied interferences, which were leading the broken ship of state, caught in a storm, further away from the shores of safety. Their misdeeds had only compounded with the treatment extended to Kamil Pasha; he thus offered his full support, on behalf of Ottomans, to Kamil Pasha who had set about to set matters aright.¹⁴²

The CUP responded in several ways. On the one hand it accused opponents of misleading the nation, for having closed their eyes to facts and dreaming in theories, and for making the fatal mistake of wishing that the Committee would disband when parliamentarianism had not yet taken root. More powerful was the argument that the CUP had refrained from taking over the state at the very beginning despite the ability to do so with ease. The reason was its adherence to constitutional norms and concern for the general good. Its commitment remained the same as it grew stronger and became even more capable of a takeover. This claim, credible and quite telling for our analytical purposes, gave the CUP critical ammunition. It repeatedly reminded opponents that they owed their newly won rights to the CUP and invited them to temper their criticisms or appear to be ingrates who used the liberal atmosphere prepared by the CUP to attack it. In any event, it promised to remain true to the constitution and not make instrumental use of deputies despite its command of an overwhelming majority in the Chamber. But even here, it reserved the right to ask the deputies not to deviate from the published program of the CUP for the sake of the public good!¹⁴³

Finally, it argued that interference had occurred only during the early months of the revolution¹⁴⁴ and had ended with the Chamber's opening. Even such interference had happened in places where the provincial government was weak and the Committee better organized. Hence the Committee had actually strengthened the executive by interfering with it, or, more accurately, taking over its duties.¹⁴⁵ It denied the military's continued role in politics and condemned the "enemies" who voiced this view. Surely the army had interfered early on but they could hardly be faulted for it. They were the ones who had replaced tyranny with justice and bondage with liberty. Room for criticism and

¹⁴² Y.EE.Kamil 86/34-3381, 5 April 1909/23 Mart 1328.

¹⁴³ *Tanin*, No. 167, 18 January 1909/25 Zilhicce 1326/5 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, "Cemiyet ve Firka," p. 1. See also the previous reference to *Tanin*, No. 140, 20 December 1908/26 Zilkade 1326/7 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Cemiyet," p. 1.

¹⁴⁴ *Tanin*, No. 108, 19 November 1908/24 Şevval 1326, "Hükümetde Mantık," p. 1. See also *Tanin*, No. 66, 4 October 1908/8 Ramazan 1326, "Nazırlarımız Ne Yapıyor," pp. 1-2 (esp. p. 1). *Tanin*, No. 79, 18 October 1908/22 Ramazan 1326, "Memleketin Ahval-ı Umumiyesi," p. 1. For acknowledgement of the overwhelming power of the CUP before the Chamber's opening, see Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, p. 243.

¹⁴⁵ *Tanin*, No. 243, 4 April 1909/22 Mart 1325/13 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Kamil Paşa'nın İzahnamesi," pp. 1-3.

regret remained only if the army continued to interfere in politics, something which all were assured had ceased.¹⁴⁶

An entry in Cahid's memoirs written many years later was perhaps the most accurate depiction of this context. Cahid acknowledged that during Kamil Pasha's tenure as grand vizier, a secret society was at work inside the state machinery and that prior to the counterrevolution this presence had caused much confusion.¹⁴⁷ By late 1909 and early 1910, Dr. Bahaeddin Şakir, a major force behind CUP organizing efforts, could claim that the CUP had more than 360 centers and 850,000 members, the Chamber's majority, and a good number of cabinet members. As such, he claimed, the Committee constituted "Ottoman public opinion."¹⁴⁸ A few years later, the CUP could boast of its incomparable achievements next to the Iranian revolutionaries. This the CUP attributed to its unified and effective party organization, which had set out to establish party branches even in the remotest locations immediately.¹⁴⁹

One could hardly hope for a better exposition of the CUP's understanding of constitutionalism and of its increasing unease with a liberal conception of Ottoman citizenship in favor of a centralized administration constructed in the name of collective interests. Yet, violation of the constitution did not mean its abandonment, even though it indicated a turn toward authoritarianism. This was not a departure from their pre-revolutionary agenda. Another point is that the definition of Ottomanism was being worked out in concrete terms. The CUP certainly had a more inclusive concept of Ottomanism than the old regime, but it was no secret that in both pre- and post-revolutionary contexts their stance toward "Ottoman elements" was not as conciliatory as that of their Liberal colleagues. Yet many ambiguities had clouded this important and sensitive issue in the pre-revolutionary days. In the face of new challenges, the CUP was working out a new definition of Ottomanism that sought to dissolve differences through assimilation in one Ottoman nation. This goal required two things: one, the consent of the targeted communities, and two, a common language for every facet of administration, the courts, businesses, and schools. They did not envision the greater role they sought for Turkish as ethnic chauvinism, but as a step toward creating an Ottoman society that eradicated all privileges, handicaps, and, in short, differences among various ethnicities for the sake of a united nation. The missing ingredient before such radical steps could be taken was the consent of other communities, for whom this smacked of Turkish

¹⁴⁶ "The army should attend to its own business and leave politics to the experts," they wrote, while at the same time admitting that the largest force behind the CUP was the military in Rumelia. Yet, in their view, the army's biggest shortcoming was not interference but indiscipline. This was a legacy of the old regime that they intended to rectify by firings, lowering the ranks, and compensating the unjustly treated. *Tanin*, No. 209, 29 February 1909/7 Sefer 1327/16 Şubat 1324, "Ordu ve Siyaset," p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ *Fikir Hareketleri*, No. 77, 11 April 1935, pp. 389–391 (esp. 390).

¹⁴⁸ *Haftalık Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 203, 13 January 1910/31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325, "Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti," pp. 1–2. Hanioglu *Preparation* p. 288.

¹⁴⁹ *Tanin*, nn., 3 March 1912/14 Rebiyülevvel 1330, p. 1.

nationalism. Turkish nationalism during the Young Turk era requires in-depth treatment beyond the scope of present study. It will be dealt with in a study that is under preparation.

THE POPULAR (MIS)INTERPRETATION OF CONSTITUTION

In the accounts of the revolution, one repeatedly comes across claims that the public had misunderstood and misinterpreted liberty:

“Pay the toll?” said a woman crossing the Galata Bridge. “Why should I pay the toll? Have we not liberty now?” “Is this what you call liberty?” said an Albanian when the Young Turks condemned him to death for shooting a Christian . . . The wildest notions prevailed after the Revolution . . . Debtors thought that liberty meant remission of debts; labourers thought it meant a doubling of wages. Disgusted with the rotten and dangerous steamers across the Bosphorus (the property of the Palace), the public boarded them one evening and refused to pay the fares. A Young Turk officer energetically intervened and just prevented a riot. Next day a notice was posted at the pier. “The honourable public is requested to be so good as to pay the fares; three new steamers have been ordered. – (Signed) The Committee.” And the honourable public paid, and waited patiently for the new steamers.¹⁵⁰

Servet-i Fünun, reporting on the bloody clashes between Greek and Arab Orthodox communities over Arab demands for better positions in the Greek Orthodox church of Jerusalem, concluded that “after the dawn of the constitutional era, the rabble everywhere had mistakenly interpreted the meaning of liberty and made a series of illegitimate demands; the discord in Jerusalem was a case in point.”¹⁵¹ Certainly misinterpretation and misunderstanding did not do justice to the complexity of the situation. These were long-held frustrations and wants, and there was new-found opportunity to express them, as many commentators were aware.

CUP and Political Prisoners

Although, in his speech to the Chamber, Kamil Pasha had placed the blame for freeing prisoners squarely on the CUP, there was nothing to suggest that the CUP had anything to do with freeing ordinary criminals, the more contentious issue. Cahid was correct to blame the government for gaffes in the early days. But government mistakes aside, the commotions were mostly the result of the public’s misinterpretation of “liberty.” The CUP had demanded amnesty for political prisoners, but the majority gained their freedom by force before official

¹⁵⁰ Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 101–102. Another described the understanding in Albanian regions similarly: “The Bariaktar – a fine old man – and several others flocked in. Talk ran entirely on “Konstitutzioon,” the mysterious unknown something that had come upon the land. What it was, said the old man, no one knew.” Durham, *High Albania*, p. 317; see also pp. 326–329.

¹⁵¹ *Servet-i Fünun*, No. 927, 19 Şubat 1324/?? March 1909, “Kudüs’de bir Nümayış,” pp. 261–262 (quote from 262).

approval. The government became badly confused when confronted with unprecedented public action.

That the political prisoners were a variegated group of officers and bureaucrats on the one hand, and members of various rebellious nationalist bands on the other, did not help matters. The government's first response to the new demand was to pardon the political prisoners who had not been charged with capital crimes within the limited scope of the three provinces of Ottoman Macedonia.¹⁵²

With mounting pressure for fast and decisive action from every corner, soon the government extended the amnesty to all political prisoners in all the Ottoman domains.¹⁵³ It acknowledged the confusion caused by the earlier announcement, leaving authorities unable to decide about the fate of those banished to and from Macedonia.¹⁵⁴ Official exchanges disclosed that the latest unambiguous orders were not simply intended to clarify misunderstandings, but also aimed at pacifying the protesting prisoners and their friends and relatives. These had pressured the provincial administrators to release their compatriots and kin from local prisons, or to bring them back from exile. The public pressure was not limited to political prisoners.¹⁵⁵

Adding to the general confusion was the Istanbul police. After misinterpreting the orders, the Police Ministry began releasing ordinary criminals from Istanbul's General Prison regardless of the time served or the kind of crime committed.¹⁵⁶ Out of fear that rearrests could cause more unrest in Istanbul, the government decided not to do anything about its mistake. Instead, it extended the pardons to the rest of Istanbul's prisoners after receiving information that limiting the release would result in prison riots.¹⁵⁷

Very soon, the state extended its pardons to ordinary criminals but again confined it to Rumelia only with similar results. Its overtly candid revelation captured the new spirit of transparency. It granted amnesty to ordinary criminals

¹⁵² With the added provision that they would not commit crimes in future. BEO 252089, 24 July 1908/11 Temmuz 1324/25 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹⁵³ BEO 252528, 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahir 1326; 27 July 1908/28 Cemaziyelahir 1326. See also *Düstur*, I, No. 4, 27 July 1908/14 Temmuz 1324/28 Cemaziyelahir 1326, "Politika Mücremini Hakkındaki Afv-i Umumi . . .," pp. 5–6. On the same day an Imperial Decree extended pardons to all the rebellious bands and groups, on the condition of surrendering arms. *Düstur*, I, No. 3, 27 July 1908/14 Temmuz 1324/28 Cemaziyelahir 1326 "Rumeli-i Şahane'de Tarik-i Şakavet Süluk Edenlerin . . ." pp. 3–4. BEO 252577, 27 July 1908/28 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹⁵⁴ BEO 252528, 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

¹⁵⁵ For governors' reactions, see the telegrams from Izmir and Konya. In Izmir the governor pleaded that he did not know how to handle the situation in light of the public pressure and prison disorders that were getting out of hand, especially when, of the more than 800 ordinary criminals there, a quarter were on death row. BEO 252528, 27 July 1908/14 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁵⁶ It is hard to establish which decree the minister of police misinterpreted. An early decree confusingly referred to "those who have committed murder" when discussing political prisoners, perhaps giving the impression that it was also addressing ordinary criminals.

¹⁵⁷ BEO 253981, 27 July 1908/14 Temmuz 1324.

who had completed two thirds of their sentences because in Monastir, Salonica, and Kosovo, ordinary criminals had been freed by force; to prevent similar actions in future and establish the rule of law, sentences were commuted across the board.¹⁵⁸ Despite its honesty, the government was still hesitant to reveal the full geographical scope of the problem or to admit that in many places, as its internal correspondence repeatedly made known, it was the public that had stormed the local jails to free prisoners. A major reason why political and ordinary criminals were freed indiscriminately was the blurred line between ordinary and political criminals in Macedonia, where rampant interethnic feuds were intimately tied to politics.

So radically had the government departed from its previous policies that the head of the Macedonian Special Courts (*mahkeme-i fevkalade*) in Monastir, set up to try political prisoners, inquired whether his court had been suspended altogether. After all, he remarked half sarcastically, all political criminals had been pardoned and the future perpetrators were to be as well.¹⁵⁹ Shortly after this exchange the special courts were in fact abolished.¹⁶⁰

Liberty for all did not come immediately for all. An example from the more remote İşkodra shows that by the first days of August some prisoners still awaited release. This finally came, but not without threats from the bands who had descended upon the town to celebrate the constitution. The description by an eyewitness affords an understanding of public initiatives:

There was but one black spot in the general joy. Amnesty of prisoners had been granted. Those of other towns, we heard, were already freed. But Scutari gaol remained grimly closed, and the white-faced prisoners crowded at the windows, vainly waved their hands, and cried to the Mends below, who awaited their release . . . The prisoners still stared pitifully from the bars – daily expecting release, daily disappointed. I went to the governor of the prison for news; there was none. The mountain men began to leave the town. The prisoners were in despair. Two were Shala men, and they yelled to their tribe, “Shala, save us!” And all the two hundred prisoners took up the cry. Shala swore promptly not to leave the town till all were freed, and the remaining tribesmen swore to support Shala. Scutari was anxious. Shala calmly drew up an ultimatum in the terms of “Forgive us our trespasses,” saying: “We have been ordered to swear *besa* among ourselves, to pacify our blood feuds, and forgive those that have broken our tribe-law. We obey. But you too must forgive. If the prison doors are not open by noon to-morrow – we force them!” . . . Finally, late in the evening I met a well-known priest coming from the Government House . . . He looked at me with victory twinkling in his eyes, and burst out laughing . . . And at midnight quietly the two hundred prisoners were freed.¹⁶¹

As soon as amnesty became official policy, the government received petitions from criminals at large, among them robber bandits. The notorious bandit

¹⁵⁸ *Düstur*, I, No. 5, 28 July 1908/15 Temmuz 1324/29 Cemaziyelahir 1326, “Rumeli Vilayetinde Ceraim-i Adiye Mahkumlarından Sülûsan-ı Müddetlerini İkmal . . .,” p. 7.

¹⁵⁹ TFR.I.MN 17468, 9 August 1908/12 Recep 1326/27 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁶⁰ *Düstur*, I, No. 14, 13 August 1908/16 Recep 1326/31 Temmuz 1324, “Ceraim-i Siyasiye Erbabını . . .,” pp. 46–47.

¹⁶¹ Durham, *High Albania* pp. 225, 228–229.

Hüseyin Çavuş in Salonica, for example, expressed regret for past misdeeds, which he blamed on ignorance (*cehalet*), and asked for protection after invoking equality. The wish was immediately granted to his band of four on the condition of surrendering arms.¹⁶² Perhaps such leniency was not so surprising given the open recruitment of bandits in the course of revolution.¹⁶³

Yet the larger issue remained the ordinary criminals. They, their friends, relatives and associates pushed for an all-inclusive policy beyond the sensitive regions. As the government acknowledged publicly, the rampant prison disorders and the threat of public unrest called for immediate solution.¹⁶⁴ In response, the government of Kamil Pasha extended the policy for ordinary criminals beyond the sensitive regions (which had later included Izmir), allowing release of all prisoners who had completed two thirds of their sentence, or fifteen years of a life sentence with hard labor. This it did begrudgingly, after admitting that the pardons were for political prisoners alone, and that setting ordinary criminals free before they completed their sentences violated public and individual rights. Nonetheless, because ordinary criminals were released in Istanbul and some provinces “out of necessity,” other prisoners had demanded equal treatment and they were faced with the threat of public outbreaks.¹⁶⁵

Releasing prisoners was indeed a complicated affair, especially in Macedonia with its background of ethnic warfare. The decision increased the insecurity of the region. It also created discontent among the criminals’ victims and the public, who regularly came across the perpetrators freely roaming about. This situation forced the subprovincial governor of Priştine (in Kosovo, a particularly sensitive area) to organize a public ceremony and subject the gathered thousands to a ten-page speech in Turkish and Albanian about the need for unity, the benefits of education, and temporal and religious reasons why one should not commit murder, robbery, assault, or engage in other misdeeds – after which the audience members were sworn to unity. The remaining hundreds of fugitives, he announced, were to be sworn as soon as they reported to the appropriate government offices.¹⁶⁶ The door had thus been opened for the nationalists to add another layer of complexity to the meaning of “liberty” and to mobilize more openly. The General Inspectorate shortly ordered deportation of the non-Ottoman rebels to their home countries of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and

¹⁶² TFR.1.SL 19240, 30 July 1908/17 Temmuz 1324; 31 July 1908/18 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁶³ Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi* pp. 109, 112, 115–116.

¹⁶⁴ See decree of 13 August (below), and also various documents in BEO 253981.

¹⁶⁵ *Düstur* I, No. 12, 13 August 1908/31 Temmuz 1324/16 Recep 1326, “Sülûsan-ı Müddetlerini İkmal Eden Ceraim-i Adıye Mahkumunu ile On Beş Senedenberi . . .,” pp. 43–44. Despite the claim that all ordinary criminals in Istanbul were released, later correspondence showed that only a little more than a thousand were released from Istanbul’s General Prison. BEO 253981, 26 August 1908/13 Ağustos 1324/29 Recep 1326; 28 August 1908/15 Ağustos 1324/1 Şaban 1326; 29 August 1908/2 Şaban 1326; 1 September 1908/19 Ağustos 1324/5 Şaban 1326.

¹⁶⁶ TFR.1.KV 20617, 8 August 1908/26 Temmuz 1324. See also the communication with the Island of Samos (Susam) in the expectation of rising disorders with the general amnesty and return of fugitives. BEONGG 702, p. 125, 11 September 1908/29 Ağustos 1324.

Crete. The decision was turned back, however, within ten days because of its political sensitivity. For now, voluntary departures were encouraged.¹⁶⁷

With respect to ordinary criminals, two categories were of concern: suspects at large (primarily those convicted in absentia, but occasionally criminal suspects) and illegally freed prisoners, set free by the public, by personal initiative, or by official mistake. The last category was particularly embarrassing. The administrators could not decide whether the pardons embraced any or all and had thus proceeded inconsistently. Some had granted pardons indiscriminately.

In late August, the government tightened measures against ordinary criminals who had never been arrested or freed; these were to be pursued and brought to justice. Greater caution was exercised in Rumelia and Istanbul; freed ordinary criminals were granted leniency for the time being, but this was not the case for those who had never been detained.¹⁶⁸ Yet, given the volatile situation of Rumelia, even this decision did not sit well with the locals. The news from Kosovo, İškodra, and Yanya, for example, spoke of the adverse effects of attempts to detain ordinary criminals who remained at large. It also warned that the policy interfered with the undertakings of the Blood Feud Reconciliation Commission (*Musalih-i Dem Komisyonu*). The latter, an institution created by the old regime to resolve ethnic hostilities, showed extraordinary success when it came to be dominated by the CUP, despite its simplicity. These considerations forced the government in October to forfeit its pursuit of criminals at large in Rumelia.¹⁶⁹

A particularly good example that forced a policy change came from Kosovo. An official here related his concerns about making arrests when the new administration had insufficient authority in the locality. He warned that this prompted the ordinary criminals, who minded their own business, to set out for the mountains with arms from many places and to fall back into the same patterns of band formation. This was particularly true for Albanian regions that had not yet calmed down. Many ethnic groups there were not pleased with the revolution, related the official, and the fugitives in these bands provided a chilling source of support for them, not to mention possible manipulation by foreign powers from behind the scenes. The complete absence of government authority in the Albanian regions was one of the old regime's crimes that had left it in the torment of perpetual chaos for years, added the official, which had led to many crimes and thousands of fugitives. On a more positive note, he noted, the Albanian bands, together with Serbian and Bulgarian ones, had asked for safety of life and limb from the government, and by meeting with the Blood Feud Reconciliation Commission had resolved their differences. Now these band members had returned home and were busy with their daily lives, and the government would commit a blunder if it opened the books on them and started

¹⁶⁷ TFR.I.A 3923, 14 August 1908/1 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁶⁸ Although the document is of a later date, it precisely recounts earlier decisions and events. BEO 253981, 12 October 1908/29 Eylül 1324.

¹⁶⁹ BEO 253981, 12 October 1908/29 Eylül 1324.

arrests. This would seriously endanger Rumelia at a sensitive moment, and even the lives of judicial employees in various locations, including his own, would be in danger.¹⁷⁰ The CUP center in Kosovo (at Skopje) agreed with this assessment and urged the General Inspectorate to halt the policy, and the latter promptly complied.¹⁷¹

The general inspector blamed the freeing of ordinary criminals alongside political prisoners partly on police incompetence and partly on the inhabitants. Despite acknowledging its dangers for regional tranquility, he nonetheless warned against undoing the mistakes. Furthermore, he argued against arresting those with records dating before the revolution, in spite of government directives to the contrary. After all, he noted, had they been arrested, they would have been set free alongside the more notorious criminals. As he explained, most crimes were acts of revenge in Rumelia; they were having some success in resolving these through the Blood Feud Reconciliation Commission and wrong policies would undo the peace among the various ethnicities, which reacted to slightest change. He recommended the adoption of the same policy toward all convicts and their uniform application.¹⁷²

The irregularities and confusing exceptions prompted the Ministry of Justice to recommend a consistent policy in mid-October. It suggested the annulment of all claims against ordinary convicts with pre-revolutionary records, and against prison escapees in the days of revolution for the entire empire.¹⁷³ It pointed to the irrationality of forgiving criminals because they were freed, but punishing simple convicts for avoiding arrest before the revolution, a wrong policy that contributed to disturbances. CUP Minister of Justice Maniyasizade Refik Bey ordered an expert commission to recommend a uniform policy to end the confusion.¹⁷⁴ When he pleaded for the urgently needed commission twice in January, he characterized affairs as being in a perpetual state of “doubt and confusion” (*tereddiid ve teşevvüſ*).¹⁷⁵

Prisoner’s riots and pleas from around the empire bore witness to his claim. Prisoners jealous of the unexpected fortune of their escaped fellows demanded equal treatment and governors and provincial administrators were utterly confused about what to do. Prisoners from Anatolia protested the inequity with Istanbul and Salonica, whose prisoners, they claimed, were set free entirely and unconditionally. Unhappy with the mere reductions they receive, they

¹⁷⁰ TFR.I.KV 20788, 28 August 1908/15 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁷¹ TFR.I.KV 20788, 30 August 1908/17 Ağustos 1324; 8 September 1908/26 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁷² TFR.I.A 3874. The document is undated, and although the catalogue entry fixes the date on 15 November 1908/21 Şevval 1326, the context indicates that it was in all probability written earlier, before October 12.

¹⁷³ Yet, in case of repeated offenders, the entirety of the previous sentence was expected to be served. BEO 253981, 12 October 1908/29 Eylül 1324.

¹⁷⁴ BEO 253981, 8 December 1908/25 Teşrin-i Sani 1324/14 Zilkade 1326.

¹⁷⁵ See, for example, the communications from the Ministry of Justice and Religion to the Grand Vizier. BEO 253981, 12 January 1909/30 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/19 Zilhicce 1326; 27 January 1909/14 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/5 Muharrem 1327.

considered serving any sentence as utterly unjust. Their petitions condemned the “despicable old regime,” blaming their crimes and convictions on the dark tyrannical atmosphere that prevailed under it and the exceedingly harsh sentences meted out by its unjust judicial system. In their suddenly discovered nationalist and constitutionalist callings, they declared their readiness to sacrifice their lives for the fatherland and considered it only fair to be set free as those in Istanbul and Salonica had been; they pleaded for the “protection of the clause that commanded Equality in our constitution.”¹⁷⁶ The General Prison of Istanbul, the site of the original mistake, did not escape the tumult. As it turned out, not all but more than a thousand had been released, leaving the rest angered about the arbitrary policy. This served as reason for a riot in December 1908 that involved more than 200 prisoners who demanded release in accord with the declaration of liberty (*ilan-ı hürriyet*) and ended with death and injury.¹⁷⁷ Such riots were by no means new or exceptional. In October warnings had been issued about widespread prison riots throughout the empire.¹⁷⁸

On the last day of May, the minister of justice presented his definitive decision for ordinary criminals based on the commission’s recommendation. The results, however, were disappointing and included only some minor additions, with the Rumelian provinces still left with a large number of exceptions.¹⁷⁹ The arrest or release of many suspects and criminals in both Rumelia and Anatolia was delayed because the local officials still did not know what to do.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ See in particular the telegram from Trabzon. BEO 253981, 17 December 1908/4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324. See additional examples from Muğla and Erzurum, 17 December 1908/4 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324; 30 December 1908/17 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324.

¹⁷⁷ ZB 329/12, 18 December 1908/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324. *Takvim-i Vekayi* No. 70, 20 December 1908/7 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/26 Zilkade 1326, “Mevad-i Umumiye,” p. 5. For figures of the released prisoners see MV 120–29/1, 29 August 1908/16 Ağustos 1324/2 Şaban 1326.

¹⁷⁸ BEO 253981, 12 October 1908/29 Eylül 1324.

¹⁷⁹ The sentences were reduced to two-thirds of the original (or were commuted by one-third) across the board, except for life sentences, which were commuted to fifteen years. With respect to the thorny issue of the fugitives at large, for the sake of “equality” and in contrast to its previous and more lenient recommendation, the sentences were reduced to two-thirds rather than abolished. Yet this was qualified for Rumelia, which excepted those who had requested protection, and those whose enmities had been reconciled. These were to be considered on a case-by-case basis. Direct reference to the Blood Feud Reconciliation Commission, and the CUP, were avoided although they were clearly involved. Finally those who had escaped illegally (with or without help), which seemed to have affected Rumelia more than others, could not benefit from these pardons, but again with some major qualifications. The escapees were not to be pursued actively, were to be arrested only after committing a new crime, under favorable circumstances, and kept in isolation or two at a time for fear of too much attention. Once convicted, they were expected to serve the original sentence in full, like all repeat offenders. BEO 253981, 31 March 1909/18 Mart 1325/9 Rebiyülevvel 1327. For the commission’s recommendation see 10 March 1909/25 Şubat 1324/17 Sefer 1327. For enforcement of an individual case in which a released prisoner was brought back to complete the original sentence for having committed a minor new crime, see 15 May 1909/2 Mayıs 1325/25 Rebiyülâhır 1327.

¹⁸⁰ BEO 253981, 27 May 1909/7 Cemaziyelevvel 1327/14 Mayıs 1324; 14 June 1909/25 Cemaziyelevvel 1327/1 Haziran 1324; 20 June 1909/7 Haziran 1325/1 Cemaziyelâhır 1327;

One trend that was more or less clear was that the provincial officials' wish for a softening toward Anatolia went hand in hand with the desire for a hardening stance in Rumelia. By mid-April there were indications that the former pattern of band formation and ethnic hostilities, to which the amnesty was contributing,¹⁸¹ had returned. This is not to argue that prisoners' release outside Rumelia had not been a problem. In Aydın, for example, one of the first sites of prison breakouts and where more than five thousand robber bandits were released in an area with a long tradition of banditry, attacks on the police and Gendarmes and raids on their arms depots were on the rise. The problem was particularly acute in the Ödemiş, a district of İzmir in which eight hundred bandits had been released.¹⁸² Nor did the government necessarily refrain from adopting harsh measures in ethnically mixed regions, as in May 1909 when it began investigating whether the district governor and a police official in Pervari (in Bitlis) were to face trial for releasing eighteen political prisoners.¹⁸³

In Rumelia, however, the ethno-national conflict was of a different scale. In May 1909, after the defeat of counterrevolution, the authorities were anxious about the non-Ottoman band leaders and supporters who refused to leave voluntarily and engaged in sedition. They reportedly roamed villages and threatened and assaulted the inhabitants, and the terrorized public refrained from contacting the courts or asking the government for help against the aggressors. The report was substantiated by details, such as notes on a Serbian bandleader Bosnian Vasil and company, their atrocities against the locals, seditious connection to Belgrade, and other incriminating details. The Inspector suggested

21 June 1909/2 Cemaziyelahir 1327/8 Haziran 1324; 9 July 1909/20 Cemaziyelahir 1327; 14 July 1909/ 25 Cemaziyelahir 1327.

¹⁸¹ When in Tepedelen (in Yanya), with the encouragement of the elite, two Muslims bands were formed to counter Christian ones, the government held that the participants were naïve, had no permission to do so, should disperse immediately, and their organizers brought to justice. BEONGG 704, p. 21, 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325.

¹⁸² BEONGG 693/2, pp. 395–396, 29 November 1908/ 16 Teşrin-i Sani 1324. Aydın, with its capital İzmir, was a particularly boisterous region. From early on, officers, soldiers, and inactive reservists, upon return from Rumelia in mid-August 1908 (28 Temmuz 1324), had attacked government offices, the courts in particular, in almost all districts to destroy records. Significantly, the soldiers were assisted by large crowds, and even district administrators had taken part in this, sometimes leading to armed confrontations. These continued for a few months. The government had ordered action against such serious breaches, especially in response to pressure from the religious establishment that had seen many of its records destroyed. Yet the governor convinced it otherwise out of fear that arrests for earlier acts was certain to lead to larger disturbances for which it was not ready. Instead, it resorted to small-scale punitive measures, such as firing or transfer of a few administrators. DU-MUI 55-1-7, 31 January 1909/18 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/9 Muharrem 1327; 20 February 1909/7 Şubat 1324/28 Muharrem 1327; 3 March 1909/18 Şubat 1324/10 Safar 1327; 13 March 1909/28 Şubat 1324/20 Sefer 1327; 24 March 1909/11 Mart 1325/2 Rebiyülevvel 1327; 2 January 1910/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325/20 Zilhicce 1327.

¹⁸³ As in other places, their release had come after protests by a thousand locals in front of the governor mansion. The government decided it was unfair to punish them, after citing similar happenings in other locations and faulting imprecise communication from Istanbul. BEO 266208, 11 May 1909/20 Rebiyülahir 1327.

active intervention to hand these back to their governments.¹⁸⁴ Similarly, in June the Rumelian officials asked for the deportation of the non-Ottoman band leaders and supporters who, despite grant of amnesty and residence, were not found to be legitimately employed, an indication of sustenance by local villages and antigovernment activities. These were to be deported according to the recently approved vagrancy (*serseriler*) statutes, unless they were employed.¹⁸⁵ By late June the minister of justice was pleading with the government to rearrest ordinary criminals of all ranks, that is, the escapees, the suspects, and the convicts in all of Rumelia. The request for policy reversal was prompted by complaints of relatives of the victims of ethnic clashes, who were upset at the free roaming of the perpetrators. These harsher policies were previously requested in the Yakova and İpek districts of Kosovo, where complaints had been particularly severe and the government had ordered a roundup of all convicted criminals. Now the officials and the minister were requesting their application to the entirety of Rumelia, both in the name of equality and to bring an end to confusion in judicial dealings.¹⁸⁶

Although by mid-July a clear and definitive government policy could not be discerned, a good sense of the challenges, and the direction toward which policy was moving could be had. For our purposes, one can claim with confidence that the CUP was unfairly blamed for disorders in the aftermath of prisoners' release, as was done by the prime minister. The release of nonpolitical convicts and the state of anarchy that prevailed was not its doing. In fact it was doing its best to reconcile differences in Rumelia through commissions of its own and taking over responsibilities that under normal circumstances belonged to the government. Additionally, the investigation opened a comparative window into the conditions in Rumelia and Anatolia, and the far more sensitive conditions of the former, evinced by the lengths to which the government was willing to go to grant it leniency and provide provisions for exceptional treatment. Significantly, however, the investigation also afforded a look at the government's gradual hardening toward Rumelia in the aftermath of counterrevolution and the revival of ethnic band formation.

Freedom from Taxes

The creative use of "liberty" resurfaced in yet another form when villagers refused to pay their customary taxes. The problem was especially acute in Anatolia. Kamil Pasha, in his first appearance in the Chamber, placed the blame indirectly on the CUP, accusing it of encouraging the public not to fulfill their obligations. These would have been believable accusations only if this had

¹⁸⁴ He provided the prime minister with an intelligence list of individuals under scrutiny in Rumelia. TFR.I.A 3923, 22 May 1909/9 Mayıs 1325.

¹⁸⁵ BEONGG 704, p. 42, 1 June 1909/19 Mayıs 1325.

¹⁸⁶ BEO 253981, 28 June 1909/15 Haziran 1325/9 Cemaziyelahr 1327; BEO 253981, 29 June 1909/10 Cemaziyelahr 1327; 30 June 1909/17 Haziran 1325/11 Cemaziyelahr 1327.

been the pre-revolutionary context, as the CUP was no lover of anarchy once in power. The partial truth in Kamil Pasha's accusation, however, was that the CUP used tax collection to extend its influence, thus underscoring its friction with the government over the issue.

In the early months, when the tax problem had reached an alarming scale, the CUP strongly encouraged the members of the public to comply with their duties. In fact, it took full credit for the orderly tax collection in Rumelia, an area it boasted to be under its control with its influence increasing by the day. Anatolia, on the other hand, was of concern; telegrams to the Ministry of Finance, of which the CUP was well aware, had shown that tax collection there had come to a complete halt with peasants claiming that "now there is liberty." Their refusal was not an entirely unjustified reaction, sympathized the CUP: The peasants had borne the brunt of the onerous burdens under the old regime by paying a multitude of unjust taxes. Nonetheless, it had let the peasants know that constitutionalism and liberty did not entail lack of authority, and that at this time of justice, beside their newly won rights, they had obligations and called for an end to resistance to tax collectors.¹⁸⁷

In Rumelia, where similar "misrepresentations" of constitutionalism had appeared, the CUP had resolved them through intervention. An example that comes from the CUP stronghold in Salonica shows how it used the issue early on to meddle in state affairs, and the fluidity of the line between a legitimate political party outside the state and a revolutionary one that strove to dominate it.

A little more than two weeks into the new regime, the CUP learned of the Lithor (subdistrict) governor's request that the military intervene because the inhabitants had abused the tax agent (*tahsildar*) and refused to pay taxes after invoking their new constitutional rights. Having learned that military intervention was imminent, the Katrin-district CUP quickly stepped in to dissuade the local administrators at such a sensitive moment and to suggest a way of resolving the matter peacefully. The CUP was probably correct that military intervention in a Greek-inhabited region shortly after a peaceful revolution that promised equality would have appeared quite odd, not to mention dangerous. It thus quickly dispatched a mixed five-member (two Christians, three Muslims) fact-finding delegation to investigate and resolve the issue. In the subdistrict center, the delegation found that contrary to the official reports, the inhabitants were jubilant about the new constitutional regime and willing to conform to their traditional duties. The misinformed few who had refused to pay taxes by saying "we are free, we do not pay taxes," were exceptions. The tax-collector was thus

¹⁸⁷ *Tanin*, No. 19, 19 August 1908/22 Recep 1326/6 Ağustos 1324, "Taşralarda," p. 1; *Tanin*, 25, 25 August 1908/28 Recep 1326/12 Ağustos 1324, "Mevkiin Ehemmiyeti," p. 1; *Tanin*, 25, 25 August 1908/28 Recep 1326/12 Ağustos 1324, "Vergi Verecek Miyiz?" pp. 1–2. In one instance breaking the power of local notables (*ayan, aşraf*) was considered more important. They were also worried about the selection of deputies where notables wielded undue power and suggested that the CUP, by sending delegates for advice (*nasibler*) to Anatolia, could put the peasants' minds at ease (*Tanin*, 19, p. 1).

blamed for hasty and wrong generalizations, which had in turn led to the subdistrict governor's imprudent action. The inhabitants, the delegate reported, were deeply unhappy with the subdistrict governor and tax collector and complained of arbitrariness and incompetence.

The delegation did not deny that the villagers had initially refused to pay taxes, but they had done so after being fooled by a few outsiders from Salonica who had claimed that after "liberty was announced, no one is paying taxes in Salonica, taxes have been forgiven." Calling a general village meeting, the delegation duly informed the residents of their rights and obligations under the constitution, including the duty to pay taxes and obey authority, to guarantee the survival of their newly won freedoms and security. They made it known that until the opening of the Chamber and the passage of new laws, their obligations remained the same. The easily convinced and readily cooperative inhabitants, the delegation reported, expressed their indebtedness to the CUP in Katrin for having sent its envoys, to the CUP in general for its role in establishing the constitutional system that granted honor and fortune, and were emphatic about their loyalty to the Ottoman nation and government. The Salonica center strongly supported the inhabitants' request to change the widely hated government officials, and criticized their haste in asking for military intervention. The CUP considered it critical to prove its goodwill and justice to the public, and invited the government to attend to the matter expeditiously.¹⁸⁸

The government, unhappy with the CUP meddling, rebuffed the claims of incompetence and strongly defended its tax agent for abiding by the administrative regulations to the letter. As for the subdistrict governor, it could not find any tangible evidence of wrongdoing after reviewing the CUP report, but as a concession, promised an investigation.¹⁸⁹

The incident demonstrated the difficulty of establishing a clear demarcation line between the new revolutionary group and the government, a distinction that was far more visible in Iran. Quite telling was that the five-member CUP delegation was composed entirely of civil and military officials, including a second lieutenant in the army (*mülazım-ı sani*) and an assistant district governor, individuals who were openly Committee members. The CUP members did not feel any need to conceal their full names or titles.¹⁹⁰

Although the taxation issue seemed to have resolved itself shortly thereafter, other problems persisted. As late as mid-January, a deputy from Edirne (Süleyman from Dedeğaç) spoke on the Chamber's floor about the public's ignorance of freedom and tendency to interpret it according to their own disposition. They believed that they were free to do everything that had previously been forbidden by government. Arms dealings had become rampant. More

¹⁸⁸ TFR-I-SL 19426, 12 August 1908/30 Temmuz 1324; 16 August 1908/3 Ağustos 1324; 18 August 1908/5 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁸⁹ TFR-I-SL 19426, 18 August 1908/5 Ağustos 1324; 26 August 1908/13 Ağustos 1324; 27 August 1908/14 Ağustos.

¹⁹⁰ TFR-I-SL 19426, 12 August 1908/30 Temmuz 1324.

alarmingly, public expression of dislike for an official had become sufficient ground for dismissal, and thus officials lived in perpetual fear of suspension for past sins. The old administration was disrupted, while a new one had not taken root, and no one, neither the inhabitants nor the officials, knew what to anticipate –and everything was expected from the Chamber of Deputies. Likening the revolution to a victorious army in an invaded territory that conducted business through ad hoc administration and public declarations, he accused the government of neglect in failing to educate the public about rights and obligations under the constitution, and recommended doing so in declarations in all public places to avoid anarchy, to which unhappy state they were now awfully close.¹⁹¹ The suggested remedy was not met with enthusiasm, but, more important, it spoke of the instabilities that were present some six months after the revolution.

Reclaiming Rights

The Days of Freedom were also the time for guilds to reclaim rights lost under the old regime and for the emerging working class to gain rights it had never had. The new situation was chance exploited by both. The porters and boaters for some time had been involved in a battle with foreign companies over new barges and quays needed for more efficient transportation of cargo and passengers, changes that had threatened their livelihoods. Their latest setback had come in early 1907, when their numbers were reduced through firings and their negotiation rights curtailed. The porters now returned to the quays as a group, occupied the internal customs office by force, and assumed their guild's right to carry merchandise from the domestic customs to the boats. They refused to recognize the foreign company that held the rights to the quays, or its regulations, and, without legal authorization, set out to transport merchandise according to rates negotiated by themselves, not those set by the company. Pressured by the foreign company and fearful of retaliation by foreign embassies, the government ordered police intervention and gave the police the names of leaders who were to be arrested if warnings were ignored.¹⁹² A petition by the quay company in early October showed that, much to the company's dismay, the government had failed to eject the porters from the quays and the area remained under tight control by the porters, who went about business as usual. This was a sharp contrast to the old times, when porters had been swiftly removed once the authorities were informed of trouble.¹⁹³ Considering the guilds' rashness a result of their "misinterpretation of new ideas," a misinterpretation that spread like a disease from one group to another, the company sent the prime minister a long

¹⁹¹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 93, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/23 Zilhicce 1326, (session 12, 13 January 1909/31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), p. 6.

¹⁹² BEO 258370, 17 September 1908/21 Şaban 1326; 6 October 1908/[10 Ramazan 1326]. See also BEO 255630, 28 September 1908/2 Ramazan 1324.

¹⁹³ BEO 258370, 6 October 1908/[10 Ramazan 1326].

list of unresolved complaints, saying that the guilds were “emboldened because their compatriots had gone unpunished.”¹⁹⁴

The boycott of Austrian goods that soon followed saw concerted action among the boaters and porters, who used the nationalistic fervor to their own advantage. The boycott advocated by the CUP became a chance for porters to widen participation and tie their demands to the boycott to reclaim their recently lost rights.¹⁹⁵ On the other hand, their antimodern form of action, frowned upon at first by the CUP,¹⁹⁶ came to be avidly supported by it when the CUP realized it could channel the boaters’ and porters’ discontent against an embarrassing foreign policy setback for the revolutionary regime. The boycott of Austro-Hungarian goods, symbolized by a boycott of the fez, found a welcoming support within government circles. A governor’s telegram from the province of Adana on 14 October 1908, reported that during the spontaneous protests against the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the public had removed and torn up their Austrian fezzes and adopted a multitude of other hats instead. The protest, which soon spread to other localities within the province, was joined and supported by military officers, soldiers, and government employees. In some places the boycott included the goods of Austria’s allies (i.e., Italy and Germany),¹⁹⁷ and in Istanbul the protesters not only prevented the public from shopping at the stores of merchants and guilds that carried Austrian fezzes, but also attacked some stores and confiscated their hats.¹⁹⁸ The ensuing complaints by businesses that had been attacked and the boycotted guild wardens prompted the government to take a more resolute stance.¹⁹⁹ In the ensuing weeks the government made half-hearted attempts to prevent escalation and to dissuade the public from further protest, arguing against the necessity of greater vigilance because the European powers took a stance similar to that of the Ottoman government and had refused to recognize the annexation.²⁰⁰ By late November, the public still would not buy Austrian goods; the porters refused to carry commodities to the shore and independently hired porters were also banned,

¹⁹⁴ BEO 258370, 6 October 1908/[10 Ramazan 1326]. As the reaction of peasants in the Western provinces demonstrated, “misinterpretation” was not an uncommon occurrence. More interesting was the extent to which such “misinterpretation” was feigned or genuine, or even a combination.

¹⁹⁵ For later involvement of Foreign Customs see BEO 260923, 20 January 1909/27 Zilhicce 1326, 23 January 1909/1 Muharrem 1327. In addition these were joined by peddlers who had earlier been pushed back and cleared from the area.

¹⁹⁶ *Tanin*, No. 20, 20 August 1908/7 Ağustos 1324/23 Recep 1326, “Tatil-i İşgal,” p. 4.

¹⁹⁷ BEO 256518, 14 October 1908/18 Ramazan 1326, 25 October 1908/29 Ramazan 1326.

¹⁹⁸ BEO 256005, 15 October 1908/19 Ramazan 1326.

¹⁹⁹ BEO 256005, 15 October 1908/19 Ramazan 1326.

²⁰⁰ BEO 256518, 26 October 1908/30 Ramazan 1326. For more on the connection between the porters, boaters, the boycott of Austrian goods, and the CUP, see Donald Quataert, *Social Distintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881–1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 95–145. See also Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 128–129, 235–237; Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, pp. 237–239.

with the result that cargo sat on the ships, to the great loss of the parties involved. The Austrian embassy protested this and the government was now “recommending” facilitating the landing of the Austrians’ goods.²⁰¹ The skirmishes between the companies, boaters, and porters continued long after the boycott was over, with the CUP finding itself more involved in the guilds’ affairs.²⁰²

The Days of Freedom also saw a proliferation of strikes for the first time in the history of the empire, with a “strike wave” that came to encompass more than 110 recorded cases.²⁰³ The timing of these strikes was not by chance. In many strikes, the CUP appeared as a legitimate negotiating party between the companies, the striking workers, the government, and the military, which was always on hand at the slightest news of activity. In some cases the CUP emerged as the principal arbitrator between the government, the workers, and the companies, which were for the most part foreign; this development further bolstered its prestige.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ BEONGG 702, p. 146, 23 November 1908/10 Teşrin-i Sani 1324.

²⁰² For the escalation in March 1909, where the original forty-two porters claimed that more than a thousand porters employed by customs were to join them, and the police request to eject them with the help of the army, see ZB 330/167, 9 March 1909/24 Şubat 1324.

²⁰³ Donald Quataert, “Labor History and the Ottoman Empire, c. 1700–1922,” in *International Labor and Working Class History*, No. 60, Fall 2001, pp. 93–109.

²⁰⁴ For an example of one of these, see the strikes at the Aydın Railway Company where the CUP, under Enver’s leadership, was the major party in the negotiations. BEONGG 693/2 pp. 373–374, 28 September 1908/15 Eylül 1324; BEONGG 693/2 pp. 374–375, 29 September 1908/16 Eylül 1324; BEONGG 693/2 pp. 375–377, 30 September 1908/17 Eylül 1324; BEONGG 693/2 p. 377, 1 October 1908/18 Eylül 1324; BEONGG 693/2 p. 377, 3 October 1908/20 Eylül 1324.

The Staff Policies and the Purges

Nothing demonstrated more clearly the frustrations of the emerging educated middle class than its view of the internal workings of the Ottoman state. That the CUP represented this class has been a central claim of this study. Few have accorded this class the independence it deserves. It is usually seen as being under tutelage and pursuing the project of another more “fundamental” class, more closely tied to the production process, be it the (industrial) bourgeoisie or the landowners. Yet this was a cohesive and independent professional middle class, capable of pursuing programs of its own. In this so-called bourgeois revolution, it displayed strong antagonism toward the prosperous Ottoman bourgeoisie, which was ethnically distinct. On the other hand, when it did foster the development of the Turkish industrial bourgeoisie from scratch, through the planned National Economy program during the First World War, its aims were both ethnic and economic. The CUP, and the revolution, were not organic evolutionary byproducts of an economic system. The class and its programs could not be reduced to economic determinacy, and if anything, it was the emerging bourgeoisie that was under its tutelage. The Turkish bourgeoisie would not have come into existence in that shape, form, and time without the intervention of the middle class in a project that had nationalism and orientation to the state at its core.¹

Before concern for the economy, the CUP was focused on the blocked mobility of the emerging class. Here educational credentials were its weapon of choice. It portrayed its zeal not as expression of self-interest but a wish for the general good, adamant that its particularistic interests converged with those of the empire’s inhabitants. Its harsh staff reforms were depicted as a necessary, albeit painful, step toward saving the empire and achieving all that a rational, modern state promised. With this attitude it easily dismissed criticisms of

¹ This project was meant to provide a substantial revenue base for the state through taxation of industry and market-oriented agriculture. Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Milli İktisat* (Istanbul: Yurt Yayınları, 1982). François Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Yusuf Akçura (1876–1935)*, translated by Alev Er (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1996, 2nd ed.).

narrow self-interestedness and focused with confidence on the “scientific” task at hand, something it could not as easily do when it came to criticisms of its constitutional conduct. No position of high rank was safe any longer. Most top administrators and military men were either guilty of connection to the sultan, or considered to be without merit or proper education. The low-ranking bureaucrats of all kinds, and military rankers, were no more secure. Their large numbers were argued to be a drain on the treasury.

CONSOLIDATING GOVERNMENT WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT

After the July revolution, the CUP demanded radical staff policies that in principle were agreed to by the Sublime Porte. The two parted ways in style, pace, and scope. The CUP favored extensive and rapid purges, backed by strong-handed policies to contain the reaction, while the Sublime Porte desired a more modest, controlled, gradual, and less disruptive policy. The counter-revolution that broke out in April 1909 was chiefly a violent response to unsettling staff policies.

Judged through Chamber legislation, one might conclude that the major staff changes had to await the defeat of the counterrevolution, when the CUP was in much better control. The absence of legislative backing certainly did slow down staff cuts, yet a closer look shows that change was at hand. The precedent of rapid turnovers set by the patrimonial tradition enabled the reformers to carry out extensive purges legally and without the need of legislative support. Furthermore, with help from civilian and military supporters in its branches and clubs, the CUP carried out a campaign to expunge the disfavored civilian and military officials. Some such undertakings violated the law, but more often, they hovered over the fringes of legality, legitimated through orchestrated public petitions that demanded them. The following section is devoted to revealing the CUP’s successful penetration of the executive through staff reforms and purges, legal or otherwise. This was a major means through which the CUP sought to consolidate its hold over the executive short of an outright takeover; the line separating the CUP and the state was blurred indeed.

Administrative Issues

When, in 1908, the CUP organ *Tanin* recounted administrative problems, they bore an uncanny resemblance to those recounted earlier in Mehmet Murad’s novel. The reforms were gleefully cheered: “Bureaucrats and clerks are being fired everywhere,” and this was fair because all, from the largest grandees to office directors, had brought under their official protection as many personal acquaintances as they could, overpopulating offices and ministries with useless parasites who had no reason to work without prospects of promotion.² These made appointments in violation of all laws and regulations and without regard for

² *Tanin*, No. 18, 18 August 1908/5 Ağustos 1324/21 Recep 1326, “Dairelerde Tensikat,” p. 1.

capability and suitability; in place of high-school (*idadi*) graduates, offices were filled with middle-school (*rüşdiye*) diploma holders in a variety of useless positions. So long as an influential patron could be found, being able to read and write was enough of an accomplishment to reach the highest ranks.³ The problems were compounded by monetary purchase of ranks and offices (a practice that paled in comparison with Iran). In the enthusiasm and naïveté of the early days, the CUP appealed to bureaucrats to resign voluntarily for the love of the fatherland.⁴

Proportional compensation was a major issue. Outrageously different salaries for two employees who worked side by side on the same job; civil and military staff with years of service who received the same or lower salaries than new recruits with sponsors; overcompensation of a few, leading to the underpayment of a multitude; and the inevitable corruption that was a consequence of exceedingly low salaries for those with onerous duties (e.g., telegraph operators, police) were just some of these problems.⁵ There were also many concerns about administrative inefficiency and the unnecessary complication of tasks. This was particularly evident in center–province communications, prompting *Tanin* to ask rhetorically whether the Regie and the PDA, two semicolonial administrations in the Ottoman lands, operated the same way.⁶

The CUP combined its brash defense of young university and high-school graduates with a demand to purge 90 percent of high-salaried officials “without a trace of guilt,” officials who used their offices as wellsprings of wealth and palatial residences. It considered unacceptable to employ a graduate of the School of Civil Administration at a lower rank than a middle-school graduate. When one worked in the office, the other worked hard at school, and their superior knowledge qualified them for leadership because their imagination did not remain stifled within the bounds of office experience.⁷ Demands for regular and orderly pay for civil and military officials also received their share of attention.⁸

Reform within the Law: Istanbul and the Provinces

Official reform measures in the period between revolution and counterrevolution were confined, with one exception, to the capital. Yet the archival record

³ *Tanin*, No. 18, 18 August 1908/5 Ağustos 1324/21 Recep 1326, “Dairelerde Tensikat,” p. 1. *Tanin*, No. 260, 24 May 1909/11 Mayıs 1325/4 Cemaziyelevvel 1327, “Tensikat,” p. 1.

⁴ *Tanin*, No. 13, 13 August 1908/31 Haziran 1324/16 Recep 1326, “Kaht-ı Rical,” p. 1.

⁵ *Tanin*, No. 255, 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülahır 1327, “Katt’-ı Hesap Kanunu,” p. 2. *Tanin*, No. 260, 24 May 1909/11 Mayıs 1325/4 Cemaziyelevvel 1327, “Tensikat,” p. 1. For an intelligent discussion of how to solve bribery and problems associated with it, see *Şura-yı Ümmet* No. 11, 4 September 1902/1 Cemaziyelahir 1320, “Bir Misal,” p. 1. *Şura-yı Ümmet* No. 18, 15 December 1902/15 Ramazan 1320, “Dahil-i Memalik-i Osmaniye’de Rüşvet,” pp. 3–4. *Şura-yı Ümmet* No. 19, 31 December 1902/1 Şevval 1320, “Dahil-i Memalik-i Osmaniye’de Rüşvet,” pp. 3–4.

⁶ *Tanin*, No. 249, 10 April 1909/28 Mart 1325/19 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Tedvir-i Umuru Sadeleşdirmek,” p. 1.

⁷ *Tanin*, No. 18, 18 August 1908/5 Ağustos 1324/21 Recep 1326, “Dairelerde Tensikat,” p. 1.

⁸ *Tanin*, No. 36, 5 September 1908/23 Ağustos 1324/9 Şaban 1326, “Para İhtiyacı,” pp. 1–2.

clearly indicates that the provincial administration had engaged in extensive reorganization by this time. Complemented with state yearbooks, a definitive picture of the changes emerge. The following should be a representative sample of these transformations.⁹

High officials with blemished records were fired almost immediately, and in more serious cases, were placed on trial as well. In an atmosphere that exuded hostility toward the higher ranks, many opted for “voluntary” resignation. Predictably, the government placed a nearly absolute premium on educational credentials when making decisions about hiring, firing, retirement, and compensation. The disgraced officials who lost jobs or were forced into retirement objected to unfair treatment; sometimes they protested directly, but more often than not, they resorted to petitioning, leaving behind a trail of their trials in their own words.

When Kamil Pasha’s new cabinet met for the first time on 5 August 1908, it proposed minor financial measures to prevent unwarranted allocation of funds to widows and orphans.¹⁰ Before long, however, the cabinet took up the CUP-demanded purges. On 9 August the cabinet reduced the Tax Council (*Cemiyet-i Rüşumiye*) staff from forty-seven to seven, the initial number with which the office had commenced its work twenty years earlier. In addition, the twenty-six-member Inspection Council (*Heyet-i Teftişiye*) of the tax office was abolished altogether, as the cabinet suddenly found it “impossible” to make use of the entire staff and to justify the heavy burden on the treasury. The remaining personnel were either retired, if “deserving,” or, based on their previous rank, salary, and service, were hired in other administrative positions at half, one-third, or one-fourth of current pay. With the two offices consolidated under a single Tax Council and appointment of an additional four to six officials, all previous duties of the Inspection Council were to be fulfilled. By the end, one office had been eliminated altogether and the staff had been reduced from the original seventy-three to ten or 12. The only selection criterion for the staff that survived the reductions was professional expertise, such as training in law or taxation.¹¹ This was a good start, and an early vindication of CUP claims about

⁹ Although the yearbooks provide a definite picture of changes, the archival record offers a better glimpse of the souls that are hidden behind the numbers. Archival records for personnel changes were gathered by constructing a statistically representative sample, through first identifying personnel change records and then selecting every seventh entry out of a total of about 2,000 records, primarily in Dahiliye, BEO. This yielded a sample of more than 14 percent of the population, which is quite representative. This selection criterion, however, was not always followed strictly. The files pertaining to the first months were studied in their entirety; in some instances when the summary entries appeared too enticing, the sampling rule was relaxed and the file inspected. Furthermore, the sample was complemented with additional, nonsampled information from other locations (e.g., BEONGG, Dahiliye: Gelen–Giden). It is my sense that the overall picture is an in-depth and near-representative account of transformations in the provincial administration. The same could not be done with respect to the army, and I have had to rely on archival evidence from outside the military administration in addition to newspaper reports and memoirs.

¹⁰ MV 119: 97/1–2. 5 August 1908/23 Temmuz 1324/8 Recep 1326.

¹¹ MV 119: 99/1–2. 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/12 Recep 1326.

excessive overstaffing. Add to this the emphasis on educational qualifications by the cabinet, and it becomes no wonder why the CUP spoke so glowingly about the new chief minister, Kamil Pasha.

Soon matters took a turn for the worse. In response to pressure from the CUP, Hilmi Pasha, still Inspector General of Rumelia, requested adjustment of large military and civil administration salaries that had resulted from illegal multiple appointments, or unusual increases; the cabinet keenly agreed with the suggestion. Yet, in too cautious a move, it ordered the compilation of a list of primary appointments and salaries of the officials in question before recommending any changes.¹² And when it acted on this shortly, it confined itself to highly specific – and by CUP measures quite limited – sections of the civil administration and the army.¹³

The cabinet's conservatism was partially justified. A day after announcing reforms in the taxation bureau,¹⁴ Treasury employees in the Ministry of Finance were the first to put up a short-lived resistance to the modern (*usul-ı cedid*) staff reductions. As soon as the government learned of the leaders' intent to organize fellow workers, it issued arrest warrants and sent in military and police to make arrests at the ministry. It was unclear whether the grave response was occasioned by the sensitivity of the location or fear of large-scale opposition, but the government was certainly not shy about its decision. In a public announcement, it promised harsh and swift measures against any future agitators, and encouraged the disaffected to use legal channels of redress in place of disturbing peace.¹⁵

This was soon followed with additional but limited reform measures. In mid-August, an all-too-honest announcement – an early mark of constitutional transparency – acknowledged that the incident in the Ministry of Finance was against the unfairness of recent undertakings, but defended the necessity of reforms in central offices. Many officials and scribes were to be dismissed because of inflated numbers and lack of need, or because of improper skills – indirect wording for inadequate formal education. These were to be assigned provisions according to a formula, until the future Chamber decided their final fate.¹⁶

¹² MV 119: 104. 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/12 Recep 1326.

¹³ MV 120: 3/1–2. 15 August 1908/2 Ağustos 1324/18 Recep 1326.

¹⁴ *Düstur*, I, No. 10, 11 August 1908/29 Temmuz 1324/14 Recep 1326, “Cemiyet-i Rüşumiye'nin Azasının Tenzil-i Adediyle Heyet-i Teftiş-iye-i Rüşumiye'nin Lağvı Hakkında İrade-i Seniye,” pp. 39–40.

¹⁵ BEO 253025, 12 August 1908/15 Recep 1326/30 Temmuz 1324.

¹⁶ The legislation on 14 August 1908 stated that the dismissed clerks with a salary of 1,000 kuruş would be paid in full. Those with salaries above that amount were to be paid according to the following formula: $1,000 + ((\text{Full Salary} - 1,000)/2) = \text{the new salary}$. *Düstur*, I, No. 17, 14 August 1908/1 Ağustos 1324/17 Recep 1326, “Devairce İcrası Mukarrer Olan Tensikat . . .,” pp. 55–56. Other legislation with respect to purges prior to the counterrevolution were as follows: Those receiving large salaries in the ministry of commerce and public works *Düstur*, I, No. 20, 21 August 1908/8 Ağustos 1324/24 Recep 1326, “Ticaret ve Nafia Nezaretî'nin . . .,” pp. 61–62; Reduced salaries for ministers and some other high ranking government positions *Düstur*, I, No. 21, 21

When a high-ranking official was fired, it was not uncommon to preface the order with a detailed account of his faults or crimes and to contrast these with the qualifications and skills of the successor. The water director of Istanbul was typical in this regard. Dismissed for the ruinous state of all embankments and public and private waterways in Istanbul and three boroughs, a matter that had allegedly been a constant source of complaint by the public, he was replaced with a lower-ranking municipal administrator with a proven record.¹⁷ Many were also brought to trial, like Bedri Bey, a member of the recently abrogated Finance Council (*meclis-i maliye*) whose later election as Chamber Deputy (Albanian from Kosovo) brought him immunity from arrest, but not from standing trial before the State Council.¹⁸

The State Council was facing extensive transformations of its own. When the reformers ordered a severe shakeup of the rather small, highly prestigious, and highly controversial State Council by cutting forty-six members,¹⁹ eight of those “struck with purges” (*tensik zadegan*) filed a petition detailing the action’s unfairness, more so for them than other Council members. In so doing they offered a glimpse of the workings of the old and new systems. The petitioners divided the State Council members into four broad categories: 1) older senior members who should be retired, 2) provincial landowners who had been appointed against their will and should be released from duty to return to their original residences and assigned a salary,²⁰ 3) high-ranking officials with children and relatives in school under their care, who should be left to continue in the same position while many others with unfit character should be fired, and 4) those with experience and knowledge who had passed through every administrative rank after long years of service, the group of bureaucrats who should either remain or be appointed to a new one. As might have been expected, the petitioners belonged to the last category and claimed to have borne the brunt of injustice.

The petitioners refused to recognize the decision of the reform commission. In their eyes the principal aim of the recent reorganization, more than financial

August 1908/ Ağustos 1324/24 Recep 1326, “Vükela ve Nuzzar ile . . .,” pp. 62–63; Purges in the State Council *Düstur*, I, No. 26, 2 September 1908/20 Ağustos 1324/6 Şaban 1326, “Şura-yı Devlet’in Teşkilat ve Tensikati . . .,” pp. 71–72; and finally, reducing the salaries of governors and independent regions’ governors *Düstur*, I, No. 34, 2 October 1908/7 Ramazan 1326/20 Eylül 1324, “Valilerin Üç Sınıfa Taksimiyle . . .,” pp. 85–88. Also, employees were banned from receiving multiple salaries and only the larger one was assigned to them. BEO 260696, 17 January 1909/25 Zilhicce 1326/4 Kanun-ı Sani 1324; 20 January 1908/28 Zilhicce 1326/7 Kanun-ı Sani 1324.

¹⁷ BEO 253237, 12 August 1908/30 Temmuz 1324/15 Recep 1326; 13 August 1908/31 Temmuz 1324/16 Recep 1326; 16 August 1908/3 Ağustos 1324/19 Recep 1326.

¹⁸ BEO 255247, 21 September 1908/8 Eylül 1324/25 Şaban 1326; 2 November 1908/20 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/7 Şevval 1326; 9 February 1909/17 Muharrem 1327/27 Kanun-ı Sani 1324; 17 March 1909/23 Sefer 1327/4 Mart 1324.

¹⁹ BEO 255262, 14 September 1908/17 Şaban 1326; 24 September 1908/27 Şaban 1326; 29 September/3 Şaban 1326. The purges resulted in 269,795 kuruş of savings.

²⁰ Some provincial notables had been brought to Istanbul with various excuses, such as appointment to the State Council, to be under close scrutiny.

austerity, was to separate the fit from the unfit and the moral from the immoral. Yet the reformers had violated this main principle by carrying out a secretive investigation that was partial and whimsical; they had arrived at their decision, cast in secretive votes, without consulting the background files or paying attention to years of service, uprightness of character, or expertise. The result was that the connected and protected held on to jobs and those without suffered dismissals. Even worse, after years of service and toil they were detestably stigmatized. The bureaucrats thus requested assignments to other positions in Istanbul or in the provinces as they became available, so that their earned rights and honors could be protected. If the state acted accordingly, they reasoned, additional benefits other than obvious financial ones accrued: when the state refrained from using purges as punishment, it protected the constitution and with it the esteem of a free and independent state.²¹ Their telegram to the prime minister professed loyalty to the constitution.²²

The risky petition of the disgruntled high-ranking bureaucrats – in spite of its strong accusation against the chief reformer, identified by name – paid off, and the cabinet, after deliberation, promised jobs as they became available in Istanbul and provinces.²³ Conspicuously absent from the bureaucrats' petition was any reference to educational credentials, which they tried to compensate for by insisting on experience. Judging from the CUP's single-minded approach to educational credentials, they were indeed lucky to have received any favors; this could only happen early on.

When the Chamber of Deputies began deliberations a few months later, it also expressed unhappiness about State Council reforms, both for reasons named by the petitioners and, more critically, for the ones they left out. In late January, the Chamber questioned the head of the State Council, Fehmi Pasha, about reforms that were in constitutional violation. Despite the reductions and new appointments, the deputies accused him of sticking to the old-regime patterns and unfairly overlooking the capable and educated officials, especially graduates of *Mülkiye*. Fehmi Pasha pointed to a few who had been educated among the new appointees, but argued that to simply value bookish knowledge over, and at the expense of, accumulated experience and on-the-job know-how was impractical, unjust, and a disservice. To this a number of deputies objected strongly. The Kurdish Liberal deputy from Mamuretülaziz, Ömer Lütfi Bey, for example, argued that of the incapable old-regime administrators, those with the highest connections had been selected. He counted many pashas in the list, four with the title royal son-in-law (*damad*); he found this unjustified when there were twenty to thirty *Mülkiye* graduates who, in spite of long years of service and education,

²¹ BEO 255551, 22 September 1908/9 Eylül 1324/25 Şaban 1326.

²² BEO 255551, 22 September 1908/9 Eylül 1324/25 Şaban 1326.

²³ Tevfik Pasha was the official who was the subject of complaints. BEO 255551, 24 September 1908/27 Şaban 1326; 29 September 1908/16 Eylül 1324/3 Ramazan 1326. MV 120-83. 23 September 1908/10 Eylül 1324/27 Şaban 1326.

were selected as deputies. His speech was repeatedly interrupted by roaring applause.²⁴ When Fehmi Pasha responded that the title son-in-law should not serve as reason for disqualification, others, such as the CUP deputy from Kastamonu, Yusuf Kemal, responded that their concern was not the appointment of this or that pasha, but their secretive, nontransparent procedures. He then pressed Fehmi Pasha for a more detailed explanation of how appointments had been made. Fehmi Pasha, in turn, dismissed the zealous scrutiny of the Chamber as a fight over “why Zeyd was overlooked but Ömrü selected,” using generic characters to stress the Chamber’s overreach.²⁵ In effect, as the Chamber eventually admitted, the problem revolved around the relation of the legislative with the executive and the level of supervision and scrutiny the legislative was allowed. The Chamber’s avid interest in educational criteria was also worthy of note.

The purges or “voluntary” resignation in the early days²⁶ was a boon for mobility. And it reverberated more the higher up it happened: a position that opened at the top allowed a string of eager, young, educated civil or military personnel to be promoted one step up the ladder all along the hierarchy. For example, the firing of the head of the Appeals Court of the State Council, one of the highest legal authorities in the land, allowed the promotion of five lower officials reaching to the middle rungs of the legal hierarchy, although the assignments took place in a complex and intricate way.²⁷

In the new liberal atmosphere, the press noted many complaints against bureaucrats, with explicit mention of names and crimes, pressuring the public prosecutor to initiate investigations. Without a doubt, opening investigations based on press charges was an explosive issue. Yet, uncharacteristically, the moderate government of Kamil Pasha legally obliged its offices to take all published complaints, damaging news, and reports against bureaucrats with

²⁴ Other deputies, among them Rıza Tevfik, the Liberal Turkish deputy from Edirne, reiterated the same point when he questioned why other capable officials, despite their long years of service in the same administration and their superior education, were overlooked in favor of the old regime administrators. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 106, 29 January 1909/16 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/6 Muharrem 1327 (session 17, 23 January 1909/10 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 1–8 (see especially pp. 2–3, 8).

²⁵ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 107, 30 January 1909/17 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/7 Muharrem 1327 (session 17, 23 January 1909/10 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 1–2.

²⁶ “Voluntary” resignations were voluntary so far as they saved the officials from the humiliation of being fired, and were routinely accepted by the government. See, for example, BEO 253053, 12 August 1908/15 Recep 1326; BEO 253049, 13 August 1908/16 Recep 1326.

²⁷ The head of the Superior Court of Appeals was assigned to the vacated position in the State Council, and in turn a member of the Appeals Court took his place as the head of the Superior Court of Appeals, which in turn led to the appointment of a member of the Superior Court of Appeals to the vacated position of a member in the Appeals Court. While the Appeals Court fell out of the loop, the promotions left a vacated position in the Superior Court of Appeals which was filled with a member of the court of first instance (ordinary court), and finally, the assistant public prosecutor of the court of first instance was assigned to the vacated position in the latter. BEO 260299, 14 January 1909/1 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/21 Zilhicce 1326. The director of the Royal College (*Mekteb-i Sultani*) was another case in point when he was elected to replace the vacated position of the head of the Royal Land Office (*Defter-i Hakan*) and a search to fill his old position was announced. BEO 252850, 6 August 1908/24 Temmuz 1324/9 Recep 1326.

utmost seriousness and considered them reason enough to initiate official investigations.²⁸ Based on accusations that had appeared two months earlier in the newspaper *Servet-i Fünun*, for example, the public prosecutor was empowered to open preliminary investigations against the previous minister of post and telegram, Hasib Bey.²⁹ The decision to prosecute rather freely had come partly as a result of pressure from the public prosecutor himself, who had consistently pestered his superiors for guidance about the right course of action in the face of constant “public pressure” to bring officials to trial. That he failed to make a single mention of the CUP as at least one pestering source spoke volumes about the real origin of “public pressure.” This was an unstable legal environment for the accused, as it was for the hapless officials who were prosecuting them, and the higher authorities were of no help. The cabinet, for example, compounded the confusion over prosecutions when it announced that all previous regulations, orders, and instructions that contradicted the spirit or the letter of the constitution were annulled, leaving the administrators perplexed as to what to ignore and what to abide by.³⁰

The cabinet’s decision included the military, and the domestic press office warned of the devastatingly demoralizing effect of the inflammatory newspaper articles on military officers. This meant the officers did not obey superiors whose names had appeared in newspapers, which resulted in breakdown of discipline. The government, however, responded quite cautiously to the press office’s request for shutdowns and appointed a commission to make recommendations.³¹

The barrage of accusations and innuendoes, some justified, some unfair, made officials of all ranks vulnerable to charges of wrongdoing and spying, against which they could hardly find recourse. Newspapers were aided in this by an active populist and semiclandestine press, whose pamphlets targeted high-ranking statesmen such as the sultan’s aides-de-camp (*yaveran*), an institution that had expanded a good deal under Abdülhamid.³² *Tanin* had already lamented the small scale of the reductions of the sultan’s advisors and associates, one of the earliest targets of reforms. This criticism was picked up in pamphlets, such as *The Reform of Aides-de-Camp or the New Spy Committee at Yıldız*,

²⁸ MV 120: 2. 15 August 1908/2 Ağustos 1324/18 Recep 1326. BEO 253331 18 August 1908/5 Ağustos/21 Recep 1326.

²⁹ BEO 257146, 31 October 1908/18 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/5 Şevval 1326; 6 November 1908/24 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/11 Şevval 1326.

³⁰ An example came from Hüdavendigâr provincial administrators who were confused about who had the right to annul the trial of a civil official who had been recommended for one by the public prosecutor but cleared of it by the interrogator; see BEO 256934, 31 October 1908/5 Şevval 1326/18 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324.

³¹ MV 120: 51. 7 September 1908/25 Ağustos 1324/11 Şaban 1326.

³² According to Tahsin Paşa, the Sultan’s first secretary, the *Yaveran* were divided into three categories, two of which, *Yaver-i Ekrem* (a title given to field marshals), and *Yaver-i Has*, were similar to one another. But the third category was simply trusted couriers used for sensitive official correspondence with important officials such as the *Şeyhülislam*, prime minister, or head of the army (*serasker*); this was used by many as a status symbol. Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, p. 29.

which did not feel constrained by the lenient code that governed newspapers. In brief biographical entries they blasted the *yaveran* not only for spying, but also for a string of additional crimes, some of quite a serious nature.³³ The publications that followed went into far greater length in identifying and branding hundreds within the administration and army as “spies,” who were classified according to official rank, the degree of harm caused by *jurnalcilik*, and other crimes.³⁴ Even the Chamber deputies were not immune from the spy label.³⁵

The reforms were particularly favorable toward graduates of the *Mülkiye*. The ministry of interior, much to the approval of the CUP, lowered the age limit for provincial positions from 25 to 21 by citing its unfairness to *Mülkiye* graduates. Given their rising numbers and mounting requests for jobs, the government saw it appropriate to assign them to provincial posts immediately and to promote to district governors (*kaymakam*) within three years to prevent their “discouragement.”³⁶

The turn against the “improperly” educated was exemplified in the new regulations for architects, which made practicing architecture considerably more difficult for those without a degree. The latter were now required to pass a number of exams at several institutions for certificates and pay sums equivalent to school fees paid by architectural school graduates for their degrees. An internal communiqué expressed this new attitude: “[I]t was not proper for architects who graduated from the School of Fine Arts to practice their trade alongside an ignorant bunch who used the same title.”³⁷ The police administration took the same posture. When the first, second, and third police commissioner ranks were dissolved in Istanbul and provinces, they were reorganized using educational credentials as the ultimate criterion for assigning new commissioners and determining their ranks. This was now considered to be a necessity because lack of knowledge, particularly in law, hampered proper operation of the police. The First Commissioner job thus went to those with highest-level certificates from law schools, followed by holders of lower-level certificates who were assigned as second, third, and lieutenant commissioners.³⁸ The value of

³³ Ahmed Raci, *Yıldız'da: Yeni Casuslar Cemiyeti Yahud Yaveran Tensikatu* (n.p., 1324/1908).

³⁴ Anonymous, *Hafiyelerin Listesi*, 2 vols. (n.p., 1324/1909). Volume two was published as *Hafiyelerin Listesi Yahud İstanbul'da Kimler Hafiyelik Etmiş* (n.p., 1326/1910). Some of these pamphlets did not remain obscure publications but acquired something of a celebrity status and were frequently cited.

³⁵ When, for example, the governor of the independent subprovince of Bingazi was elected as a deputy but found to have a reputation for spying, a preliminary investigative committee disqualified him, which was seconded afterwards in the Chamber's general session. BEO 259580, 27 December 1908/14 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/3 Zilhicce 1326.

³⁶ BEO 256097, 14 October 1908/1 Eylül 1324/18 Ramazan 1326. For other examples of promotion, citing *Mülkiye* credentials, see BEO 253320, 17 August 1908/4 Temmuz 1324/20 Recep 1326. BEO 259650, 27 December 1908/14 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/3 Zilhicce 1326.

³⁷ BEO 262214, 4 February 1909/12 Muharrem 1327; 22 February 1909/1 Sefer 1327.

³⁸ The assignments beyond the first rank were made on the basis of the kind of educational certificate and the previous rank. The qualified previous commissioners and lieutenants were also eligible to apply. BEO 265627, 6 April 1909/15 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

educational credentials was at the center of all reform decisions and certainly was the most divisive issue in the military.

The bureaucrats and scribes in Istanbul and the provinces who were left without jobs and or means of livelihood protested to various government offices; significantly, many turned to the Palace. The CUP was quite sensitive to this issue and condemned the practice. Under the old administration, wrote *Tanin*, the Palace was the public place of recourse, and ministers down to the lowliest scribe referred to it for every order of business. All decisions emanated from there. Today, however, the constitutional administration was in place and the Sublime Porte was the site responsible for all public affairs. The Palace was a place of retreat for the sultan and the public infringed on his comforts and rights by appearing at its door in search of promotion, back pay, and redress. Legal requests were to be addressed to the ministries and the Porte, and it was to be understood once and for all that the search for miracles at the Palace for illegal requests was futile.³⁹ These warnings had come even before the onslaught of major purges. As the purges progressed and discontent grew more intense, the state issued stronger warnings against petitioning the sultan and directed the petitioners first to the State Council and later to the Chamber of Deputies. The issue had deeper roots, however, and the practice continued even after the fall of Abdülhamid.⁴⁰

After the Chamber opened, establishing a petition or grievance committee (*Arzuhal Komisyonu*) was a first task it took upon itself. Taking over the general task of handling petitions from the State Council, it directed them to the appropriate ministerial bureaus as it saw fit. The guidelines required the Chamber to answer back within 15 days.⁴¹ There is no indication that the large volume of petitions hampered the Chamber's operation, which was a stark contrast with Iran. This did not mean that handling petitions was not problematic for the Ottoman Chamber, but when the issue came up, the deputies were all prepared to discuss whether they were of a criminal or a civil nature, and whether the Chamber interfered with the judiciary and executive by attempting to resolve them. To this some deputies answered that the Chamber was obliged to defend citizens against injustice, but it was the site of last resort, a place to turn to only after citizens had exhausted recourse to the authorities and the courts. The Chamber thus decided to direct petitions to appropriate locations, and only if the matter

³⁹ Tanin, No. 8, 8 August 1908/26 Temmuz 1324/11 Recep 1326, "Saraya Müracaat," p. 3.

⁴⁰ Despite repeated warnings the problem persisted at least into early May, as indicated by a government warning to the governors and subprovincial governors who continued to send their requests to the Palace Secretariat (*mabeyn*). Petitioners were admonished for violating the constitution by corresponding with the Palace in place of the Porte. BEO 265634, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325/16 Rebiyülahır 1327.

⁴¹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 69, 19 December 1908/6 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324/25 Zilkade 1326, "Heyet-i Mebusan Nizamname-i Dahilisinden Mabad, Sekizinci Fasil: Heyete Verilen Arzuhaller," p. 2.

remained unresolved would it step in and question the relevant authorities.⁴² As we will see in Chapter 7, it took the Iranian Assembly a very long time to sort out these matters, or to resolve them, if at all, within the framework of division of powers.

Petitions from the purged employees, high and low, continued to pour in, before and after the convening of the Chamber. One high customs official, for example, complained of personal difficulties facing him and many others, protesting the illegality of their purge and deprivation of retirement pay.⁴³ Occasionally, these complaints were made collectively, as with a group of Arab bureaucrats in the capital. Uncharacteristically, the prime minister attended to the latter by personally requesting his ministers to find them new jobs,⁴⁴ only to be told by the ministers that it was impossible. After learning this, the unconvinced Arab officials persisted in obtaining another review by the prime minister.⁴⁵ It was indeed hard not to sympathize with such petitioners as lowly scribes who spoke of large families, small children, and no means of feeding and providing for them. Extreme cases were frequently accorded a small sum for a short time, but rehiring, especially at such low ranks, was quite rare. By late December, the cabinet acknowledged that the plight of purged officials and their petitions in protest had agitated the public.⁴⁶

At the same time, the cabinet's lenient treatment of the purged high officials was contested by the CUP. Such was the case with the former governor of Trabzon, the head of an office in Kadıköy municipality, and a State Council member, the first two of whom had petitioned for fair treatment and assignment of appropriate sums, as had other purged peers. Interior Minister Hilmi had expressed doubt about the possibility of any payments. When the cabinet discussed these cases, it acknowledged that reappointing them would inflame public opinion because they were fired for "known reasons" (*esbab-ı malumeden dolayı*); but although they could not be rehired, or accorded regular severance pay (*mazuliyet maaşı*), there were no legal obstacles against giving them a reduced retirement pension (*takaud*).⁴⁷ What made their treatment perhaps less harsh had to do with the language used to describe their plight. "Known reasons" or the "known circumstances" (*ahval-ı malumeden dolayı*) were not references to past misdeeds, but were used as terms of choice whenever the CUP had a direct part in forcing out an official, and hence was a code word in government circles for those considered worthy of protection. Its use implied that the government disagreed with the treatment received or suggested, or with the accusations of wrongdoing against them. Such officials were usually treated

⁴² *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 100, 23 January 1909/10 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/30 Zilhicce 1326, (session 14, 18 January 1909/5 Kanun-ı Sani 1324), pp. 1–6. *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 101, 24 January 1909/11 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/1 Muharrem 1327, (session 15), pp. 1–6.

⁴³ BEO 260952, 27 January 1909/4 Muharrem 1327.

⁴⁴ BEO 257595, 6 November 1908/11 Şevval 1326; 16 November 1908/21 Şevval 1326.

⁴⁵ BEO 257595, 27 November 1908/3 Zilkade 1326; 16 December 1908/22 Zilkade 1326.

⁴⁶ MV 122–123: 58. 23 December 1908/ 29 Zilkade 1326.

⁴⁷ Regular retirement pay could only be assigned to officials eligible for rehiring and without a past record. MV 122–123: 61. 23 December 1908/ 29 Zilkade 1326.

more leniently – given assignment to a lower rank or payment of some kind – in contrast to those with authenticated proofs of past misconduct. In this and similar cases, it was doubtful the cabinet was truly exercising caution against public anger as it expressed on the record. Rather, it was careful about not vexing the CUP, which had a habit of expressing its views in the name of the public. Nonetheless, some complaints did emanate from the public, with or without CUP instigation.

A Closer Look at the Provincial Administration

The purges led to a scramble for better positions among many young and ambitious bureaucrats, eagerly touting their degrees for promotion to the recently opened posts. The first such requests trickled in less than ten days after the revolution. The district governor of Tiran (in İşkodra), for example, after citing his *Mülkiye* credentials, requested appointment to the more prominent Florina or Pirlepe districts of Monastir, pointing out the available positions. He supplemented this request with a recommendation from the Monastir governor.⁴⁸ Similarly, the subdistrict governor of Bereketli (in Kosovo) complained that despite educational credentials and an unblemished record of service, he had been overlooked while peers with similar records were promoted to full districts. Although such incidents had lessened his desire for the job, he added, he was ready to serve the fatherland and nation to his utmost capability – but, apparently, not before he was awarded the governorship of a full district in Kosovo, a post that was about to open after the purges.⁴⁹ Although such requests came predominantly from younger officials, they were not the only ones. An Armenian postal official, a *Mülkiye* graduate of twenty-three years' standing, asked for appointment to the recently vacated position of lieutenant governor in Edirne or the Mediterranean Islands.⁵⁰ Another not-so-young captain explained that he had voluntarily retired after serving in the same post for thirty years despite being a graduate of Military Academy (*Mekteb-i Harbiye*). But now, he asked for reappointment as chief police commissioner in one of several Arab provinces after citing educational credentials, knowledge of Arabic and Kurdish, and the previous injustices inflicted on him and his large family.⁵¹

Even officials of lower ranks found in this period of reshuffling an opportunity to improve their lot, though frequently only after demonstrating their pre-revolutionary credentials. A recently reappointed policeman from Razlık (in

⁴⁸ The request was then forwarded to the inspector's office. TFR.1.MN 17411, 31 July 1908/3 Recep 1326. All districts were administratively considered at the same level, but the latter were distinguished by each having 3 *nahiyes* where Tiran lacked any.

⁴⁹ TFR.1.ŞKT 16050, 7 September 1908/25 Ağustos 1324. Similar request came from the district governor of Toyran, a rank 3 district in Salonica who asked to be promoted to the governorship of Gevgili, a rank 2 district. TFR.1.ŞKT 15969, 23 August 1908/10 Ağustos 1324.

⁵⁰ BEO 257092, 8 November 1908/26 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/13 Şevval 1326.

⁵¹ BEO 259232, 19 December 1908/25 Zilkade 1326.

Salonica) wrote that he had been fired in the last years of the old regime after twenty-three years of service, purportedly “for not cooperating with the tyrannical designs.” Having suffered frequent relocations, with only his meager salary, he had again been forced to leave his impoverished family behind in Nevrağ; he was unable to support residence in two cities. But now that the “light of liberty and justice had touched all the poor and suffering,” he expected he and his like would be beneficiaries and would either be transferred to his family’s place of residence or retired with appropriate benefits.⁵²

A comparison of provincial appointments between the years 1908 and 1910 with those between 1902 and 1904, using the state yearbooks, should give us a very good sense of the transformations during the stormy first year or so of revolution (see Table 1).⁵³ The comparison also brings to light some surprising information about the staff policies of the old regime. Accounting for changes between 1902 and 1904, rather typical years under the previous administration, it becomes apparent that governors, subprovincial governors, and district governors were transferred at surprisingly rapid rates, or more precisely, at the rates of 52 percent, 73 percent, and 70 percent, respectively. This means that after a mere two years, more than half the governors found themselves in a new assignment, and this change was even more pronounced for the subprovincial and district level governors, with nearly three fourths transferred to new positions. These surprisingly high turnover rates correspond rather closely for the governors for the years 1906 to 1908, which stood at 59 percent.⁵⁴ These figures reveal a good deal about the Hamidian administration and the apt description of it as patrimonial, which had as its *modus operandi* the constant and rapid circulation of officials to prevent local entrenchment and to protect the center’s status as the unique site of loyalty for key administrators. In the Ottoman case, as officials were spread across a far-flung empire that was constantly struggling to centralize, this was a crucial low-cost strategy for thwarting the development of local bases of power that could challenge state authority. But even these high

⁵² TFR.1.ŞKT 16145, 21 September 1908/25 Şaban 1326.

⁵³ A definitive picture of overall changes in the top provincial administrative ranks after the revolution can be constructed by relying on the yearbooks of the Ottoman Empire and comparing the years 1908 and 1910. To prove the unusually high level of changes, it was necessary to compare them with a two-year period under the Hamidian regime. For this purpose, the years 1902 and 1904 were chosen. The decision to estimate changes by comparing 1908 with 1910 instead of with 1909 was due to several considerations. For one, the 1909 yearbook was a casualty of revolution and never published. Furthermore, a look at publication dates for the 1908 yearbook shows a lag. The 1908 yearbook reflects changes between March 1907 and the end of February 1908, and is thus predominantly concerned with 1907. The 1909 yearbook would probably have reflected changes for at most six early months of revolution (although publication years for Almanacs were inconsistent). Considering the early publication of yearbooks, and the likely lags in reporting, year 1910 may be an appropriate choice for reflecting changes in the first year of revolution; it does not inflate changes by including records much beyond the first year. Furthermore, our point of comparison is a similar two-year period under the old regime.

⁵⁴ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 287.

numbers pale in comparison with the first year or so of revolution when rates of change reached 100 percent for governors, and 98 percent and 97 percent for governors in lower administrative rungs, as revealed by comparison of year-books for 1908 and 1910 (see Table 2). Hence, nearly every single governor within the administrative hierarchy of provinces was changed in the first year or so of revolution. Hanioglu's assessment for the rate of change for different administrative ranks during this same period complements these results quite nicely and strengthens the conclusion about their magnitude.⁵⁵ These results indicate a massive personnel overhaul and its implications are revisited in Chapter 5.

It should be clear, however, that the large turnover of the revolutionary period was not entirely the result of purges or demotions and new appointments or promotions. The administrative turnover rate was quite high for the Hamidian regime, mostly the result of lateral moves and rotation (*icra-yı becayış*) of officials of the same rank. This practice remained in place after the revolution. A case in point was Fuad Bey, the first-class district governor of Mamuretülhamid (in Van), who was sent to the same job in the similarly first-class district of Tutak (Antab, in Erzurum) and replaced with the governor of the first-class district of Çölemerik (in Van).⁵⁶ Sometimes the rotation of a chain of officials led to only a minor promotion; a single new position was filled by moving several officials laterally and promoting only a single one at the end of the chain. This inflated the magnitude of change while in reality there was only one minor jump up the ladder.⁵⁷ In some cases the lateral chain of substitutions ran longer, but without dramatic upward or downward moves.

What makes evaluating the scale of change more difficult, however, is that not all lateral moves were neutral. Some positions of same rank had greater appeal

⁵⁵ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 287.

⁵⁶ BEO 252381, 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahir 1326. For further examples see BEO 257306, 12 November 1908/30 Teşrin-i Evvel 1326/17 Şevval 1326. Similarly, when the governor of the third class district of Atina (in Trabzon) was rotated he was given the same position in the district of Bahçe (in Adana). BEO 252415, 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahir 1326. Although administratively of the same rank, there were subtle differences between these positions. For example, when two governors of second-class districts of Ahtebolu (in Edirne) and Aynaroz (in Salonica) exchanged positions, the exchange seemed not to have been entirely neutral as the position in Ahtebolu came with a deputy and host of officers and offices that were not to be found in Aynaroz, and as such one could be considered to have received a promotion and the other a demotion; yet, the more important criteria of official district rank remained the same for both. See BEO 253056, 12 August 1908/30 Temmuz 1324/15 Recep 1326. Similarly, when the chiefs of police in the provinces of Monastir, Edirne, and Baghdad substituted for one another or were assigned to same position in other provinces, it was stated that the change had been "occasioned by observed necessities," (*görüünen lüzum üzerine*), and thus implying a broader motive than routine rotation, even though their ranks had not changed. See BEO 261209, 23 January 1909/10 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/1 Muharrem 1327.

⁵⁷ See also the first class district of Çölemerik (in Van) which was filled with the first-class district governor of Şirvan (in Bitlis), and the latter's position was in turn filled with the governor of the second-class district of Cizre (in Diyarbakir). BEO 253067, 13 August 1908/16 Recep 1326. For a chain of rotations among very high-ranking bureaucrats see BEO 262276, 21 February 1909/30 Muharrem 1327; 24 February 1909/3 Sefer 1327.

TABLE I. *Provincial Appointments, 1902–1904*

	New Governor		New Subprovincial Governor		New District Governor	
Hijaz	1	0	2	1	5	2
Yemen	1	1	3	3	27	23
Basra	1	0	3	3	10	8
Baghdad	1	1	2	1	17	11
Mosul	1	1	2	2	14	12
Aleppo	1	1	2	1	21	17
Syria	1	0	3	3	21	16
Beirut	1	1	4	3	15	14
Tripoli (Trablusgarb)	1	1	4	3	16	10
Hüdavendigâr	1	1	4	2	24	13
Konya	1	1	4	0	24	16
Ankara	1	0	4	4	18	15
Aydın	1	0	4	2	37	25
Adana	1	0	4	4	15	9
Kastamonu	1	0	3	2	18	12
Sivas	1	0	3	3	23	16
Diyarbakir	1	1	2	1	11	10
Bitlis	1	1	3	3	13	9
Erzurum	1	0	3	3	15	10
Mamuretülaziz	1	1	2	2	14	10
Van	1	0	1	1	9	5
Trabzon	1	1	3	2	18	10
Aegean Islands	1	0	3	2	12	7
Edirne	1	0	5	4	27	14
Salonica	1	0	3	2	24	14
Kosovo	1	1	5	4	26	23
Jenina (Yanya)	1	0	3	2	16	13
Scutari (İşkodra)	1	1	1	1	8	6
Monastir	1	1	4	4	18	15
Jerusalem			1	0	4	3
Benghazi			1	0	3	1
Zor			1	1	4	3
İzmit			1	0	5	3
Kal'a-ı Sultaniye			1	0	5	4
Çatalca			1	0	2	1
Mount Lebanon			1	1	7	4
Total	29	15	96	70	546	384
Percentage			Subprovincial		District	
New on the Job	Governor: 52%		Governor: 73%		Governor: 70%	

TABLE 2. *Provincial Appointments, 1908–1910*

	New Governor		New Subprovincial Governor		New District Governor	
Hijaz	1	1	2	2	8	7
Yemen	1	1	3	3	30	26
Basra	1	1	3	3	13	11
Baghdad	1	1	2	2	17	16
Mosul	1	1	2	2	14	13
Aleppo	1	1	2	2	21	21
Syria	1	1	3	3	21	19
Beirut	1	1	4	4	15	15
Tripoli (Trablusgarb)	1	1	3	3	20	20
Hüdavendigar	1	1	4	4	25	25
Konya	1	1	4	4	25	24
Ankara	1	1	4	4	19	19
Aydın	1	1	4	3	37	37
Adana	1	1	4	4	13	13
Kastamonu	1	1	3	3	19	19
Sivas	1	1	3	3	24	24
Diyarbakir	1	1	3	3	11	11
Bitlis	1	1	3	3	13	13
Erzurum	1	1	2	2	16	16
Mamuretülaziz	1	1	2	2	14	14
Van	1	1	1	1	9	9
Trabzon	1	1	3	3	19	19
Aegean Islands	1	1	3	3	12	11
Edirne	1	1	5	5	27	27
Salonica	1	1	2	2	26	25
Kosovo	1	1	5	5	28	27
Jenina (Yanya)	1	1	4	4	16	15
Scutari (İşkodra)	1	1	1	1	8	8
Monastir	1	1	4	4	19	19
Jerusalem			1	1	4	4
Benghazi			1	1	5	5
Zor			1	1	3	2
İzmit			1	1	5	5
Kal'a-ı Sultaniye			1	1	5	4
Çatalca			1	1	2	2
Mount Lebanon			1	0	7	7
Total	29	29	95	93	570	552
Percentage New on the Job	Governor: 100%		Subprovincial Governor: 98%		District Governor: 97%	

or political significance with an internal hierarchy not captured by the administrative grid, necessarily simplifying. Thus, rotation was now certainly used more systematically to punish or reward officials.

Yet the large ratio of changes did in fact indicate large-scale purges, and there was thus something quite different at work compared with the more moderate, though still quite large, percentage of changes under the old regime. In the new circumstances, many provincial officials were relieved with severance pay without any particular reason – that is, not because they had committed any wrong, but for lack of proper educational qualifications. Such was the case with the subprovincial governor of Kerkük (in Mosul), the district governor of Gevgili (in Salonica), and a host of other officials.⁵⁸ In some other cases however, general incompetence (*killet-i ehliyet*) was explicitly cited, such as when the governor of Beirut, Muhammad Ali, was replaced with the subgovernor of Jerusalem, Ekrem.⁵⁹ The governor of Aydın, Faik, was similarly dismissed for the inability to attend to the disciplinary needs of the delicate situation in his province.⁶⁰

Many were removed because of faults and abuses under the old regime, such as powerful members (*ashab-ı nüfuz*) of the administrative council of Akhisar district (in Aydın) who were found to be guilty of abuse of the opium tithe by granting them at low prices.⁶¹ Such was also the fate of the governor of the third-class district of İnegöl (in Hüdavandigar) who was fired because of local complaints and replaced with a former district governor of the same rank.⁶² Indeed, complaints emanating from local inhabitants were a powerful tool used to dismiss many officials in these days, and something the CUP was able to put to good use. Local accusations were now deemed sufficient to open investigations (as did those in the press) that could even result in the dismissal of governors. Such was the fate of Mustafa, the governor of Mosul, who was dismissed within four days as a result of complaints, or the district governor of Duma (in Syria), among many others.⁶³ Some, in addition to dismissal, were placed on trial for wrongdoings, like the district governors of Kuruçay (in Erzurum), Elmalı (in

⁵⁸ BEO 252874, 8 August 1908/11 Recep 1326; BEO 252886, 8 August 1908/11 Recep 1326. BEO 252888, 9 August 1908/12 Recep 1326; BEO 253374, 16 August 1908/19 Recep 1326. BEO 256153, 14 October 1908/18 Ramazan 1324; BEO 258623, 5 December 1908/11 Zilkade 1326; BEO 260963, 21 January 1909/28 Zilhicce 1326.

⁵⁹ BEO 252765, 9 August 1908/12 Recep 1326.

⁶⁰ BEO 252740, 9 August 1908/12 Recep 1326. Similarly, the district governor of Cuma (Kayalar, in Monastir) was dismissed for not heeding warnings about disciplinary matters and for incompetence. BEO 253004, 12 August 1908/14 Recep 1326. For other examples see BEO 264814, 12 April 1909/16 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

⁶¹ The initially dismissed district governor was reinstated later. BEO 252336, 29 July 1908/16 Temmuz 1324/1 Recep 1326.

⁶² BEO 252421, 26 July 1908/27 Cemaziyelahr 1326. For other examples see BEO 252651, 3 August 1908/6 Recep 1326.

⁶³ BEO 252750, 8 August 1908/26 Temmuz 1324/11 Recep 1326. BEO 253011, 12 August/30 Temmuz 1324/15 Recep 1326. BEO 255926, 11 October 1908/28 Eylül 1324/15 Ramazan 1326. See also public complaints against the district governor of Çeşme (in Aydın). BEO 252348, 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahr 1326.

Konya), or Hasanmansur (in Mamuretülaziz), with the latter charged with serious crimes.⁶⁴ Similarly, the district governor of Karaferye (in Salonica) and the police in the district of Filat (in Yanya) were placed on trial. The latter were accused of extorting 100 villagers by force with the consent of the former, who was then serving as a gendarme in the locality.⁶⁵

The prisoners' release complicated matters for the Gendarmes, especially in the ethnically charged Macedonia, as many could now become the target of accusations from previous detainees. A case in point was a gendarme officer serving in the Serbian border region of Kosovo whose duty, in his own words, was to counter and neutralize the local Christians' widely known vile designs under the old regime, and "to apply salve to the fatherland's wounded body." He lamented that those he had patriotically arrested were now set free; and, by abusing the abundant enthusiasm for liberty, were falsely, and without witness or evidence, accusing him in the courts of wrongdoing. He complained of being left without pay for the past five or six months while the case was pending in the judiciary, which he considered an ironic injustice in the age of constitution and justice, when he received punishment before proven guilty. Bemoaning that his honor and service had been trampled upon, he complained that wretchedness had reduced him to begging, and thought that such treatment also blemished the government's majesty and dignity. Ashamed of his situation, he asked to be compensated until the trial and only to save his family from perishing.⁶⁶

Naturally, not all firings were fair or systematic, adding to the suffering it had caused among all ranks, high and low. The subdistrict governor of Hurpişte petitioned that false accusations had led to dismissal and appointment to a lower rank before trial. He now asked for back pay and reappointment after citing the hardship that had befallen him and his large family.⁶⁷ Similarly, the dismissed treasurer of Orhaniye (in Kosovo) complained of falling into depression after becoming a target of injustice and asked for his old position at the same or a different location.⁶⁸ Likewise, the deputy district governor of Prizren, who claimed an excellent record and reputation, requested legal investigation after another had taken his post ten days after the revolution.⁶⁹ Also, the former deputy district governor of Florina expressed his frustration with the constitutional government that had trampled upon seventeen years of service by firing him. Having been left without an income, he spoke of his family's destitution in the past two months and appealed for a month's pay, as had been given to colleagues who had been compensated.⁷⁰ It was common for the wronged to protest their loss in the language of injustice, constitution, and condemnation of

⁶⁴ BEO 259190, 15 December 1908/21 Zilkade 1326. BEO 252784, 29 July 1908/29 Cemaziyelahir 1326. BEO 261484, 7 February 1909/15 Muharrem 1327.

⁶⁵ BEO 260960, 17 January 1909/24 Zilhicce 1326; 20 January 1909/27 Zilhicce 1326.

⁶⁶ TFR.1.ŞKT 16482, 7 February 1909/25 Kanun-ı Sani 1324.

⁶⁷ TFR.1.ŞKT 15985, 16 August 1908/3 Ağustos 1324; 21 August 1908/8 Ağustos 1324.

⁶⁸ TFR.1.ŞKT 15992, 26 August 1908/13 Ağustos 1324.

⁶⁹ TFR.1.ŞKT 15995, 27 August 1908/14 Ağustos 1324.

⁷⁰ TFR.1.MN 181835, 2 May 1909/19 Nisan 1325.

the old regime (*devr-i istibdat, devr-i sabık*). “This suffering that has been inflicted on us is opposed to equity and justice and is a whimsical act incompatible with constitutional laws,” protested a fired police commissioner from Kosovo.⁷¹

Many were fired not for an explicitly stated reason but for the “known circumstances.” As stated earlier, in such cases, the governments of Said and Kamil Pasha tried to provide some level of protection by finding new posts, although not always on the same rank. Such was the case with the district governor and his lieutenant in Gostivar (in Kosovo) who were forced to leave and come to the provincial capital “for the known circumstances,” two days after the revolution. Inspector Hilmi, seemingly concerned about their fate, strongly insisted on their appointment elsewhere, to which the government consented.⁷²

On some occasions, “voluntary” resignations or firings proved surprisingly reversible and we can only surmise that protection extended by the CUP must have been the reason. When the governor of Edirne, Nazım, resigned early on, he was immediately reappointed to a governorship, though to the less prestigious Aegean Islands.⁷³ When the fired governor of Adana petitioned for severance pay (*mazuliyet maaşı*), not only was he granted the request, but was found fit for employment in another capacity as he had not violated public rights.⁷⁴

Finally, not all dismissed officials were humbled all the time. A translator in the Palace secretariat who was recommended for reappointment to an appropriate position by the sultan himself was bold enough to complain of the injustice of appointment of a peer to a high position while he was ignored and requested a similar position.⁷⁵

In late February 1909, a detailed and unsolicited letter by the newly appointed subprovincial governor of Mardin provided a window onto the ongoing changes within the provincial administration. Although the principle of extension of responsibility was clearly mentioned in the constitution, stated the governor, most high-level administrators did not understand it clearly and conducted affairs in the old regime’s centralized style. This happened despite the routine identification and purging of the followers of the old thinking by the new administration, and the replacement of them with the “enlightened and upright” who were aware of constitutional principles, by which he certainly meant the educated. In his opinion, this principle should be adopted in every administrative

⁷¹ TFR.1. ŞKT 16705, 17 July 1909/4 Temmuz 1325.

⁷² The early date and the location clearly indicated that “known circumstances” was a concealed reference to the CUP’s hand in the matter. BEO 252383, 25 July 1908/12 Temmuz 1324/26 Cemaziyelahir 1326; 26 July 1908/13 Temmuz 1324/27 Cemaziyelahir 1326.

⁷³ BEO 252757, 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/12 Recep 1326.

⁷⁴ BEO 262560, 26 February 1909/4 Sefer 1327; 1 March 1909/8 Sefer 1327. Also the subprovincial governor of Muş who was recognized as fit for reemployment after being initially fired. BEO 256437, 16 August 1908/19 Recep 1326. It should be noted that the reappointments after firings were almost always to lower positions.

⁷⁵ BEO 259138, 17 December 1908/23 Zilkade 1326.

level to empower them to appoint and punish petty officials. As an example he cited the plight of lower administrators who were not authorized to fire a single police or a gendarme sergeant in their locality; the matter was left to the whims of the police and Gendarmerie chiefs in provincial centers.⁷⁶ In fairness, this was a matter of which the government was painfully aware.⁷⁷ Yet, as the Mardin administrator was also aware, habits changed slowly.

Another problem was the low salaries of minor officials which discouraged all, the “parasitic” officials and the active and dedicated ones, and thus contributed to government’s not-quite-real presence in the locality. To make his point he cited the familiar scribe, through whose hands passed the entire business of provincial administration, and whose salary of 150 kuruş made corruption inevitable. He also suggested elevating the general rankings of some important districts to increase their pay scale, and abolishing some unnecessary subdistricts to save money and finance the reforms.⁷⁸

Mardin’s chief administrator’s concern about bribery was echoed more forcefully in the Selimiye district (in Syria), whose inhabitants petitioned for government protection against the regional officials. They complained that under the old regime, bribery was standard, but at least done illicitly. Under the constitutional regime, however, the officials boldly put on sale the property of merchants who had refused to offer bribes; lower-ranking police and justice officials who habitually subsidized their salaries with this act offered false witnesses to support extortion and jailed those who refused their schemes; they filled prisons with their victims.⁷⁹ Although certainly exaggerated, the combination of low administrative salaries and corruption was a long-running problem for the reformers.

Officials’ grievances in provinces were not all that different from those in Istanbul. The government reaction to them was different, which betrayed its apprehension about the capital. Not all fired officials received severance pay; those below a certain threshold of years of service were simply fired, but Istanbul remained an exception. Here, all retired or dismissed employees received a compensation, necessitated by the extraordinary circumstances in the capital, that could not be extended to the large number of those who were purged in the

⁷⁶ BEO 263554, 25 February 1909/12 Şubat 1324.

⁷⁷ About a week earlier the center had asked provinces not to fall under the old-regime habit of asking the Sublime Porte for permission for the most routine tasks when it was clearly within their responsibility. Such behavior contradicted constitutional principles, delayed government business, and led to public complaints, the center insisted, and the Porte should be contacted only for matters outside their legal jurisdiction or for conflict resolution with other offices. BEO 262009, 18 February 1909/26 Muharrem 1327.

⁷⁸ The administrator went on to make additional illuminating suggestions about staff changes in other facets of provincial administration, settling of tribes, reform of municipalities, and financial administration that were quite indicative of the new spirit but cannot be considered here. BEO 263554, 25 February 1909/12 Şubat 1324.

⁷⁹ BEO 261464, 25 January 1909/2 Muharrem 1327; 7 February 1909/15 Muharrem 1327.

provinces. Such admissions came less than a month before the outbreak of counterrevolution.⁸⁰

The Military Staff

Within the military, CUP applied similar pressures to allow young, educated officers better chances of advancement and to devise money-saving measures. Retiring military staff members with connections to patrons or the sultan and discriminating against the old troopers or rankers in favor of educated officers served both ends. The CUP consistently asked the government to reduce the unnecessarily large staff of the army and navy by firing those not worthy of the title, and retiring many at reduced pay or with lump-sum compensation.⁸¹

As with other reforms, major legislation had to await the defeat of counterrevolution.⁸² Major changes were taking place in the military, however, without legislative support, as they were in civil administration. From the first days, large numbers of the military elite were forced into retirement, or, given the hostile circumstances, retired voluntarily.⁸³ Later, at the request of the War Ministry, all military personnel who had gained notoriety as spies or because of disreputable activities were fired and stripped of rank.⁸⁴ For the navy, a mere 3,940 commanders and officers were now deemed sufficient for active duty on board ships or in other combat posts, with the aged and the physically inept slated for retirement and the rest purged and compensated. The navy's administrative officers, scribes, and staff, were also to be reduced in number and salaries reformed according to tables and guidelines.⁸⁵ Most significantly, in late February and early March, the army and navy took measures against ranker officers and soldiers (*alaylı*). Although the plans did not go into effect immediately, they did make apparent the intensely anti-ranker slant. One way to achieve

⁸⁰ MV 126: 25. 28 March 1909/15 Mart 1325/6 Rebiyülevvel 1327. Thus, citing these reasons, the state rejected the payment request of two fired employees, one in Beirut and the other in Trabzon and stated that the policy was for Istanbul alone. BEO 264658, 22 February 1909/1 Sefer 1327; 3 March 1909/9 Sefer 1327; 18 March 1909/24 Sefer 1327; 29 March 1909/6 Rebiyülevvel 1327; 1 April 1909/10 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

⁸¹ *Tanin*, No. 9, 9 August 1908/12 Recep 1326, "Techizat-ı Askeriye Nezareti," pp. 2-3. *Tanin*, No. 18, 18 August 1908/21 Recep 1326, "Ordumuz," pp. 1-3. *Tanin*, No. 209, 29 February 1909/7 Sefer 1327, "Ordu ve Siyaset," p. 1. To finance reforms they encouraged international borrowing. See *Tanin*, Nos 37, 40.

⁸² An early and important undertaking was the council created for recommending and supervising reforms in the Ministry of War. See *Düstur*, I, No. 28, 8 September 1908/12 Şaban 1326, "Harbiye Nezareti'nde Meclis-i Meham-ı Harbiye. . .," pp. 75-76. Less vital was rationalizing budgetary expenditures by abolishing the Ministry of Military Equipment and making it part of the Ministry of Finance. *Düstur*, I, No. 24, 30 August 1908/3 Şaban 1326, "Techizat-ı Askeriye Nezareti'nin. . ." pp. 67-69. Also rationalized were the selection criteria for sending soldiers for further training to Europe. This was now done through examinations. *Düstur*, I, No. 44, 28 January 1909/5 Muharrem 1327, "Avrupa'ya İzam Edilecek Zubbat-ı Askeriyenin. . ." pp. 108-110.

⁸³ MV 122-123: 21. 5 December 1908/11 Zilkade 1326.

⁸⁴ MV 124: 87. 20 February 1909/29 Muharrem 1327.

⁸⁵ MV 122-123: 49. 15 December 1908/ 21 Zilkade 1326.

reduced numbers was to provide age limits for positions. This policy was especially aimed at reducing the number of rankers, typically soldiers older than educated peers in the same position.⁸⁶ The commission for purges in the army submitted its proposal in the last days of March.⁸⁷ Although these bills awaited formal approval by the Chamber, and were delayed until after the defeat of the counterrevolution for most, they received initial approval by the government, and collectively demonstrated what was in store for the military personnel.

The military had had a taste already. In late November 1908, the Second and Third Army Corps discharged 13,000 recently recruited reservists by reducing the size of all divisions from eight hundred to seven hundred. The commander of the Second Army Corps had already expressed wariness about the probable discontent among the remaining inactive reservists and noted their far larger numbers, the arms at their disposal, and the possibility of “unfortunate” outbreaks. As a precaution he suggested replacing the fired trainees with active reservists (*ihdiyatiye*) from Anatolia, an implicit countermeasure against the remaining forces. The cabinet disagreed with the suggestion, however, and found the reductions appropriate.⁸⁸ Another move that privileged the educated officers (while streamlining the reserves in general), was to slate the reservist officers who were at the start of their careers for a variety of civil administrative positions, such as gendarme officer or police commissioner, and subprovincial, district, or subdistrict governor, instead of firing them.⁸⁹

In January, Monastir, one of the centers of revolution and a CUP stronghold, witnessed an unusual rebellion sparked not by actual reforms but by the rumor of one. Interestingly, it modeled itself after the recent outbreaks but with one major difference: scribes, not soldiers, were its main instigators. As part of larger restructurings, it was rumored, the Third Army headquartered in Monastir was to be split in two and its center moved to Salonica. Afraid of losing their jobs, low-level employees such as the scribes of the Third Army distributed forged documents that showed the move was imminent. Thus, after provoking the principally Jewish, Greek, and Bulgarian tradesmen to protest, petition the Chamber and the governor, and occupy the telegraph office, the original instigators joined them there together with Muslim inhabitants.⁹⁰ They protested the move as absolutely harmful to the economic prosperity of the city and government: reducing the city population made everyone poorer, and even less capable of paying taxes, and for everyone’s sake – the city, the public, and the state coffers – they pleaded with the Third Army to stay. Drawing upon familiar

⁸⁶ The educated advanced faster. MV 125: 6. 23 February 1909/10 Şubat 1324/3 Sefer 1327. MV 125: 52. 11 March 1909/25 Şubat 1324/18 Sefer 1327. For the similar decision in the navy, see MV 126: 42. 4 April 1909/22 Mart 1325/13 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

⁸⁷ Because the government was busy with the events in the capital, the submission had to await approval at a later date. MV 127: 20. 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülahır 1327.

⁸⁸ MV 121: 64. 25 November 1908/1 Zilkade 1326 [recorded as 30 Şevval 1326].

⁸⁹ MV 124: 52. 7 February 1909/25 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/15 Muharrem 1327.

⁹⁰ TFR.1.MN 18271, 10 January 1909; 13 January 1909.

rhetoric, they condemned the injustice of the old regime, recalled sacrifices for the revolution, and lamented that while “liberty” under the new regime promised prosperity to trades, this was an honor the public in Monastir was to be denied. At the end, they ventured to issue a warning that was more than vaguely familiar: deviation from this request, God forbid, might lead to a disorder for which they could not accept any responsibility.⁹¹

The government’s communication established that such a plan had indeed been drawn up as part of the larger reform scheme and was expected to go through, but a final version had never been submitted to the Chamber. This led to the conclusion that the circulating reports were forged by those most fearful of reforms, such as the scribes. Although the government had initially intended to calm the public by exposing the forgery, the situation had escalated to such a degree that the government denied the existence of any such plan. The government was also fearful that the heavy involvement of non-Muslim trades could be mistakenly construed as political opposition to the Ottoman government by the city’s foreign residents.⁹²

Like the civil administrators, the military personnel defied the ban on petitioning the sultan and did so in large numbers. Although the government had used the excuse of protecting the sultan from unnecessary worries (a language strikingly close to *Tanin*’s), it had initially left the telegram operators in charge of decisions about the appropriate destination. Their large numbers, however, prompted the government to take that responsibility out of the operators’ hands and to reroute all telegrams sent by military staff to the Ministry of War. The sample telegram used for instructing the telegraph offices was not too explicit about what a typical grievance note might express but from context it was clear the precaution was taken against rankers’ protest of the new rules of promotion that valued education while disdaining seniority.⁹³

Consistent with the civil administration’s policy, the government did not accord preferential treatment to military staff with oppositional credentials. This was a hard choice made in consideration for finances. In late January 1909, the Ministry of War requested guidelines for dealing with the complaints of high commanders dismissed under the old regime who asked for back pay. The response that came in March 1909 and covered all civil and military personnel must have been disappointing for all seeking remuneration. Given the dire state of finances, and the large number of claimants, the government concluded that it could not compensate for services not rendered, but added that those dismissed without a legal cause were free to take up their case in court.⁹⁴ That the revolution could not offer any quick fixes for its financial problems was

⁹¹ TFR.1.MN 18271, 21 January 1909.

⁹² TFR.1.MN 18271, 10 January 1909; 13 January 1909.

⁹³ BEO 261201, 20 January 1909/7 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/27 Zilhicce 1326; 24 January 1909/11 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/1 Muharrem 1327; 2 February 1909/20 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/10 Muharrem 1327.

⁹⁴ MV 125: 83, 21 March 1909/8 Mart 1325/28 Sefer 1327.

apparent from the large number of petitions it received from civil and military personnel about salaries being in arrears.⁹⁵

Closer Look at the CUP's Style of Operation

The principal weapon for purging undesirable officials was the law – but many were also forced to flee from office, sometimes literally in fear of their lives. Kamil Pasha raised the issue in his famous appearance at the Chamber by condemning the illegal purges of officials disfavored by the CUP. He softened the blow by blaming these acts on CUP imitators. Eventually, however, the Liberal opposition began to attack the CUP without hesitation, a stance that Kamil adopted too after he suffered the same fate.

The CUP did its best to deny these charges, but when that failed, it justified the actions in the name of protecting the constitution. Its best line of defense was to point out the naïveté of the opposition toward plans to restore tyranny. Here, in light of systematic and consistent criticisms by the opposition, one may surely expect to come across overwhelming archival evidence against the CUP. There are several reasons, however, why the reports are fewer than one might expect. First of all, an increasing number of the provincial administrators were becoming CUP appointees. In addition, there is strong indication that the CUP had close access to almost all government communication, either directly through its well-placed supporters, or telegraph operators who had long-standing CUP connections. Unfavorable communication carried risks. In the routine communication between the prime minister and the Ministry of Interior or the Rumelian inspector, such reports are rarer than one would expect. Open communications engaged in self-censorship and used a qualified language when reporting breaches of laws. Frequently they spoke of officers and officials who had mistakenly, or out of inexperience, failed to abide by the Committee directives. Furthermore, they commonly resorted to a variety of euphemisms such as “public” pressure, or “known reasons.” With the CUP’s tightening grip over Rumelia, such criticisms in this region came to a curious halt within a few months. Yet, one does encounter outrage in secret, coded telegrams sent directly to the prime minister.

The CUP’s aggressive stance in Rumelia, in Monastir in particular, was the reason why the Inspector General Hilmi, the future prime minister, initially refused to accept the post of interior minister. In fact, the career of the general inspector, and his changing relation toward the CUP, was a good indicator of the CUP power in Monastir and throughout the land. What started as a hostile legal stance evolved into meek acceptance of fate when the CUP forced out the governor of Monastir. Yet, as his confidential letter to the Prime Minister Kamil demonstrated on the eve of his appointment as a minister, despite

⁹⁵ In this regard, complaints of bureaucrats from Serfiçe and Debre did not stand out. TFR.1.MN 17622, 31 July 1908/18 Temmuz 1324.

appearances, Hilmi was still unsympathetic toward the CUP and anxious about what it had in store.

Shortly after the revolution, Rumelian Inspector Hilmi asked Governor Hifzi of Monastir to prevent the CUP and the public from harassing and illegally forcing out officials in Kırçova, some of whom were soon to be tried. Although his language was conciliatory and gave even partial credence to the CUP, he was particularly incensed at the treatment received by the district governor, the tax administrator, and a number of top district officials, whom the CUP had expelled to replace with supporters. The governor's response, a person who had lived in fear of his life for some time, was quite telling.⁹⁶ The abused governor found ways to sanction these acts, but distanced himself from his own assessment by letting the superior know that his conclusion was based on Kırçova's "acting" district governor explanation; that is, the very official the CUP had appointed. According to reports he had received, related the governor, all the dismissed officials had acted tyrannically and abused the local inhabitants. Had they remained on the job, their survival was uncertain, given the public threats; in effect he implied the Committee had protected them through firing. He further added that the situation continued to be life threatening; the officials could not even stay in the city of Monastir and had thus left for Salonica in fear for their lives. In their places, the CUP had appointed "acting" officials with the public trust behind them; as a result, peace, order, tranquility, and justice had been restored. The governor thus assured the inspector of his search for a new tax collector, census official, and secretary, and of his recent appointment of a new district governor and chief of justice (*ceza reisi*), who were about to depart to assume their new posts. The highest-ranking authority in Monastir thus found ways to sanction blatantly illegal acts by assuring the center that appointments were only temporary, made for the preservation of peace and tranquility, and that new appointments were to be made by him.⁹⁷ Whether the CUP considered them temporary replacements, as the title "acting" implied, was of course a different matter.

A week later, the governor was still referring to the district governor as "acting," implying that his candidate was yet to assume the post. The governor had to endure another legal breach in Kırçova when the CUP took up the execution of a locally convicted gendarme. In the words of the CUP, the gendarme had committed a grievous crime after posing as a Committee member and it was forced to cleanse its reputation and set an example against the abuse of its good name for personal advantage. The matter of fact report by the acting district governor related that the courts had fully authorized the execution. Surprisingly, the governor did not find anything unusual about this incident either.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ See for example Niyazi, *Hatırat-ı Niyazi*, pp. 181–184.

⁹⁷ TFR.1.MN 17429, 3 August 1908/5 Recep 1326/21 Temmuz 1324.

⁹⁸ TFR.1.MN 17506, 9 August 1908/27 Temmuz 1324/11 Recep 1326; 15 August 1908/2 Ağustos 1324/17 Recep 1326.

Another seemingly insignificant exchange brought to light the evolving relationship between the CUP and administration in Rumelia. It showed that officials such as Hilmi were eventually forced to come to terms with illegal requests without offering resistance and involving judicial authorities. The choice of words and the dates of correspondence showed that the government considered the CUP a legitimate participant in decision making with whom it negotiated the fate of its administrators.

In early September the police chief in Salonica ordered the police academy to dismiss immediately and send back two recently arrived students, police commissioners from Monastir. The head of the police academy, concerned about his students, enquired of Inspector Hilmi whether he was authorized to send them back, and let him know that the dismissals were “for the known circumstances,” thus implying CUP involvement.⁹⁹ This prompted Hilmi to write to Governor Hifzi in Monastir, who was the intermediary, and point out that the police academy in Salonica was an independent body that did not receive orders from Monastir. He further enquired whether the reasons for which the two were wanted in Monastir concerned matters before or after enrollment in school.¹⁰⁰ Initially, the governor could not justify the requests reasonably, but when pressed, he stated something about their failure to earn the satisfaction of the locals.¹⁰¹ This could not mean anything but the CUP, and was so understood.

As the violations were “local,” Salonica decided to allow the students to complete their studies and to look for future jobs in a province other than Monastir.¹⁰² Upon learning the decision, the Monastir CUP decided to step in directly rather than hide behind the governor. It now protested that of the two police commissioners, one had been condemned to death in pre-revolutionary days because of his relentless pursuit of the Committee, and although he had been pardoned, thanks to their victory, he and his like were first punished by being forced out of their jobs and then driven out of the Committee’s sight for some time. Now, upon discovery of his enrollment at Salonica in anticipation of an assignment there, they insisted he deserved the same punishment as his colleagues who had been expelled without the possibility of reinstatement.¹⁰³ This was an unapologetic admission that as early as late September many had already suffered the same fate in the CUP’s hands. After this communication, the Inspector informed the school and the governor that in light of the recent information, one commissioner was to be dismissed and discharged from the police force altogether, and the other was to remain at school but banned from employment in Monastir.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ TFR.I.MN 17863, 6 September 1908/24 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁰⁰ TFR.I.MN 17863, 7 September 1908/25 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁰¹ TFR.I.MN 17863, 7 September 1908/25 Ağustos 1324; 8 September 1908/26 Ağustos 1324; 9 September 1908/27 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁰² TFR.I.MN 17863, 10 September 1908/28 Ağustos 1324.

¹⁰³ TFR.I.MN 17863, 20 September 1908/7 Eylül 1324.

¹⁰⁴ TFR.I.MN 17863, 28 September 1908/15 Eylül 1324.

Finally, the Monastir governor's turn for dismissal came when the Salonica center asked for it from the minister of interior (Hakkı), citing dishonesty and incompetence. Inspector Hilmi, who was asked about the matter, in a telling response wrote that he was unaware of any wrongdoing by the governor, either financial or legal, yet it seemed necessary (*zaruri görünüyor*) to remove the governor because the investigation conducted by the CUP was apparently (*herhalde*) based on correct information. The position was now granted to Lieutenant General (Ferik) Fahri (in Serres, a CUP stronghold) about a month later,¹⁰⁵ with the choice dictated by the CUP.¹⁰⁶ The episode highlighted the inspector's submissiveness despite his claim of ignorance about wrongdoings, as well as the CUP's ability to fill critical posts.

In Kosovo, a telling example came from the newly assigned Preşova district governor, who found himself the subject of petitions by the keeper of a certain mosque and his associates. He protested the fabrications, which he claimed to have originated with military officers and civil officials with CUP affiliation. He counted this among the latest series of actions against his achievements. Since arrival, he had successfully put an end to transgressions on the judiciary and other offices that had been under severe attack. He had also put a stop to the misconduct of the Blood Feud Reconciliation Commission (a CUP stronghold) that he described as operating under the secret orders of the same individuals and being staffed by criminals, engaged in extortion with the pretext of financial penalties, and causing torment and financial loss for many reputable individuals. When unsuccessful there, these officials tried their hands at new things and used every kind of deception and direct threat to agitate the judges and officials or reputable personalities against him. By doing so they earned him a conviction and financial penalty from the court in absentia, and had now resorted to their latest trick.

Although the district governor was trying to disprove the unjustified allegations against him, he was at the same time doing his best not to offend the Committee. He thus hedged his attacks by dissociating the offenders from the Committee as best he could, and used the Committee's name as little as possible. Thus, when he ridiculed officers who knew not what they talked about, he pointed to their youth, inexperience, and (for the most part) good intentions. And when he further elaborated that these officers and a bunch of civil official underlings attacked him with letters bearing the stamp of the honorable Committee of Union and Progress, he wrote as if the Committee could not have been aware of misuse of its name. At the end, he requested action against specific instigators identified by name, but he also felt necessary to condemn the old regime for nurturing these characters and professed loyalty to the

¹⁰⁵ The job of firing him in fact went to the inspector himself after he assumed the post of Minister of Interior. TFR.İ.MN 18175, 11 November 1908/29 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 12 November 1908/30 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324; 13 December 1908/30 Teşrin-i Sani 1324. The new governor assumed the post five days later on 18 December 1908.

¹⁰⁶ Hanioglu, *Preparation*, p. 281.

constitution.¹⁰⁷ Reference to “inexperienced, young officers and officials” in substitution for the CUP was not uncommon even in high official circles.¹⁰⁸

The CUP found another chance to flex its muscles when its favored acting judge (*niyabet*) in Vodina refused to hand his post to the individual selected by the *Şeyhülislam*. The district governor, who came to his support, requested that the hardworking and upright judge, who had gained public trust in a short period on the job, not be removed.¹⁰⁹ The confrontation escalated when the CUP stepped in to protest what it called arbitrary and groundless decision by the *Şeyhülislam*, and advised the inspector to reconsider the decision to avoid rejection and insult of the new judge by the “public.”¹¹⁰ The inspector took this warning seriously; in his communication with the office of the *Şeyhülislam*, he repeated the locals’ unhappiness with the groundless dismissal and their fondness for the judge. He was certain the new judge would be refused and forced to return, along with other unpleasant incidents.¹¹¹ The power struggle led to the shutdown of all legal transactions and trials, and the matter was still unresolved more than two weeks after the arrival of the new judge while the locals, and the general inspector, put pressure on the office of the *Şeyhülislam* to reconsider its decision.¹¹²

In Anatolia, in the first week of revolution the subprovincial governor of Kozan (in Adana) expressed his anger to the sultan after intercepting a “highly unreasonable” telegram by the CUP. The subgovernor declared the “Ottoman customs are eternal and unchangeable and political institutions may be created only gradually and with moderation.” Having said this, he requested a ban on “impertinent” telegrams to prevent their circulation among “our public that does not know left from right,” and to facilitate this, demanded punishment for the telegraph operators who forwarded them.¹¹³ Such addresses to the sultan dropped sharply with time, and so did candid expressions of disgust with the CUP, at least in nonsecretive telegrams. Surprisingly, it was roughly around the same time, that is, in the first weeks, the CUP itself was guilty of petitioning the sultan. During a confrontation with the local administrators in Trabzon, the “Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress in the name of all local inhabitants” wrote to sultan to scold the acting governor (*vali vekili*) and the regional public prosecutor for “having acted against all Ottomans in defiance of the Prophet’s holy book and the sultan’s approval,” as well as for “the tyrannical behavior that had continued up to this very minute.” They warned of “their authoritarian conduct that was getting harsher by the minute and

¹⁰⁷ TFR.I.KV 21721, 15 March 1909/2 Mart 1325.

¹⁰⁸ See the report to the general inspectorate of Rumelia by the Kosovo inspector. TFR.I.KV 21721, 23 March 1909/10 Mart 1325/1 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

¹⁰⁹ TFR.I.SL 19707, 18 September 1908/5 Eylül 1324, 19 September 1908/6 Eylül 1324.

¹¹⁰ TFR.I.SL 19707, 21 September 1908/8 Eylül 1324.

¹¹¹ TFR.I.SL 19707, 26 September 1908/13 Eylül 1324.

¹¹² TFR.I.SL 19707, 3 October 1908/20 Eylül 1324; 4 October 1908/21 Eylül 1324; 13 October 1908/30 Eylül 1324.

¹¹³ BEO 252380, 30 July 1908/2 Recep 1326.

expected to lead to a general massacre.” But assured that “we, together with tens of thousands of inhabitants, have sworn and pledged to either acquire our rights or lose our lives,” and gathered in the telegraph office to await the sultan’s response.¹¹⁴

In the first weeks the Erzurum governor also asked to be replaced and recalled to Istanbul. He had refused to release eight death-row convicts despite the amnesty and was fearful of a backlash. These were certainly connected to the pre-revolutionary insurgency in Erzurum, an event close to the CUP’s heart. The government, which agreed with the governor’s request and placed the military commander in charge, received a formal complaint by the CUP that demanded the governor stay in Erzurum to face trial. This forced the government to reconsider its decision about the recall.¹¹⁵

In Hüdavendigâr province, the governor anxiously reported in November 1908 that, after the announcement of the constitution, the CUP and associates had expelled high-level and ordinary officials in Kütahya. Among these were two subprovincial governors, appointed back-to-back, who not only gave up office but fled the region after hostile CUP-organized meetings. In the same vein, the CUP had made serious accusations against the provincial officials who were running for the Chamber and attempted to dismiss them, which could also jeopardize their candidacy. The report nonetheless did try to put distance between these actions and the CUP by saying that its name was abused, while the real responsibility lay with notorious instigators who had used this opportunity to settle old accounts under the banner of the constitution. The governor warned that if such meddling became habitual and regular, it was certain to bring the affairs of the regional administration to a screeching halt. More significantly, he warned of the future difficulties of appointing subprovincial governors, or for that matter, employees of any rank when the officials lived in great insecurity. He openly worried about the spread of the Kütahya example to other provinces and districts, and thus asked for immediate dispatch of sufficient numbers of police and the Gendarmes, and, if need be, even the army.¹¹⁶ Before using the full force of the army, the government sent inspectors in the company of police and Gendarmes for the arrest of instigators, and placed the military on alert for immediate intervention at the inspectors’ request.¹¹⁷ The governor himself had been the object of repeated complaints since September, and a State Council member had already been assigned to investigate him.¹¹⁸ Given

¹¹⁴ BEO 252580, 2 August 1908/5 Recep 1326.

¹¹⁵ BEONGG 702, 11 August 1908/29 Temmuz 1324, p. 116.

¹¹⁶ BEO 257913, 8 November 1908/13 Şevval 1326; 22 November 1908/27 Şevval 1326.

¹¹⁷ BEO 257913, 23 November 1908/28 Şevval 1326. The letter from the Ministry of War indicated its readiness to intervene in Kütahya BEO 258672, 5 December 1908/11 Zilkade 1326; 15 December 1908/21 Zilkade 1326; 8 January 1909/15 Zilhicce 1326. An earlier regulation, after reviewing similar guidelines used by the German and French armies, had specified the method of military intervention as police backup during rebellions (e.g., when to open fire, how forceful to be), BEO 255826, 14 September 1908/18 Şaban 1326.

¹¹⁸ MV 121: 2; 30 September 1908/4 Ramazan 1326.

the governor's anti-CUP proclivities, it was not hard to guess the source of complaints.

In Konya, it was the press that reported the CUP meddling in provincial council elections and court appointments, in response to which the government ordered an inquiry.¹¹⁹ Whether the official's failure to report indicated complicity or fear was anyone's guess. Far clearer was the stance of Kastamonu governor who had created a hospitable environment for the CUP, and cast a sheen of legitimacy on its tampering. At issue here were the acting judges (*naib*) in districts of Düzce, Ayancık, Boyabab, and Bartın, whom the governor accused of dishonesty and wrongdoing. The governor provided the prime minister with the investigative results submitted to the Ministry of Justice. He supplemented his report with a message from the Bartın CUP that had warned of impending turmoil if the judges were not removed immediately. The governor complained that they had repeatedly written to the office of *Şeyhülislam*, the authority in such matters, but had yet failed to secure his consent for removal, and as the principle of extension of responsibility had not yet been put into effect, the local government could not take action against them. He added that the offenders, knowing that time was on their side and their positions were secure for now, intensified their wrongdoings against the public that detested them. As these were against the cause of reform, according to the governor, he asked for authority to remove them.¹²⁰

No official in the land could feel secure after the revolution. When newspapers announced the resignation of the head of the Fifth Army, Osman Pasha, he immediately protested to the prime minister about the newspapers' failure to report any reason, which had been listed as unknown. In his written statement to the minister of war, stated Osman Pasha, he had made it amply clear that he was forced to step down, and had detailed the cause. He was adamant about full disclosure,¹²¹ and was dismayed at the government's failure to be upfront with the press. Although the secret and coded telegram did not recount the reasons, given the passionate protest, and the official involved, one could hardly doubt the agency behind it.

CUP conflict was not confined to the government alone; in some locations it also clashed with the clerics and the public. In Yozgad (in Ankara), for example, the müfti and clerics protested to authorities about the CUP's abuse of the public, but the official's best efforts after talks with Committee leaders – that is, the head of the telegraph office and the Gendarmes major – had borne no results, and, according to *Volkan*, the public continued to hate the Committee. *Volkan*'s editor Vahdeti wishfully hoped for the intervention of the Committee center in Monastir against provincial branches that had nothing better to do but create

¹¹⁹ BEONGG 704, 7 April 1909/25 Mart 1325, p. 22.

¹²⁰ The governor at the time was Ali Rıza. BEONGG 693/2, 31 October 1908/18 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324, pp. 385–386.

¹²¹ BEONGG 695, 28 March 1909/15 Mart 1325, p. 12.

discord.¹²² Similarly, *Volkan* published a letter from the inhabitants of Boyabad (in Kastamonu) about severe harassment of the local CUP branch against the *müfti* and the public who had come to his aid. Fourteen individuals were boycotted and the CUP had ordered the tradesmen against selling anything to them and their families, including food. The acting district governor apparently could not do very much either, and *Volkan* appealed for the intervention of the Ministry of Interior to stop injustices in the age of justice.¹²³

RETURN FROM EXILE

A charged and uncomfortable issue for the financially strapped state was its obligations toward the banished and exiled, a dark legacy of the old regime. In the aftermath of amnesty, the return of this variegated group, who came in large numbers with high hopes for rewards after years of suffering, complicated matters. This group included banished officials with assigned stipends that were quite different from those who were left to their own. These were still different from escaped officials abroad, or former students, or yet others who were neither officials nor students but had taken flight to foreign destinations to escape the looming prospects of jail or exile. Upon return, these demanded better positions, but, as the realization crept in that such a prospect was truly dim, they began demanding their old positions, or short of that, a job of the same rank, a retirement salary, back pay for years of lost service, or a regular stipend or a lump sum in exchange for their sacrifice.

A populist pamphlet authored by a navy lieutenant, claiming to be a factual account of a friend's sufferings after arrest by Hamidian spies and a fourteen-year exile in an inhospitable eastern region away from his wife and child, was meant to reflect the plight of many of his kind. Typical of the majority of propagandistic pamphlets rife with references to justice and injustice (*zulm, adalet*), its trite narrative failed to capture the general suffering, but its overt optimism said something about the early expectations of this group.¹²⁴

Euphoria was soon to give way to frustration, and promises turned to luke-warm treatment.¹²⁵ The Sublime Porte, which had promised all the "deserving" a position, was disappointed very early on when it was turned down after asking for a mere three positions from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (which cited the large number of recent reductions as the reason).¹²⁶ Nonetheless, many were able to secure something like their old jobs, and to hold on to them at reduced

¹²² *Volkan* No. 37, 6 February 1909/15 Muharrem 1327/24 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, "Taşra Cemiyetleri," p. 4.

¹²³ *Volkan* No. 76, 17 March 1909/24 Sefer 1327/4 Mart 1324, "Dahiliye Nazırının Nazar-ı Dikkat-ı Acilesine," p. 1.

¹²⁴ Nuriddin Tevfik *Menfiden Avdet: Bir Arkadaşımın Defter-i Hayatından* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmed Kamil, 1324/1908).

¹²⁵ A good number of petitions from such officials, and the state's attitude toward them, only a few of which are cited here, may be found under BEO 254270.

¹²⁶ BEO 257834, 1 November 1909/19 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/6 Şevval 1326.

rates, which was not an insignificant accomplishment given the state's zealous turn against coworkers. A clerk who had been reappointed to the tax office invoked his credentials – six years of exile under dire conditions, two and a half years of which had been spent in jail – to ask for the job of chief secretary (*mektubcu*) in the provincial administration. He had even come close to it by securing an order early on, but was turned away after the state cited the recent firing of many chief secretaries. In a petition to the Ministry of Interior, the clerk called this an injustice and announced his readiness for the qualifying exam; the ministry upheld the decision on the same grounds, but increased his salary by a modest amount.¹²⁷ Similarly disappointed was a clerk who was promised a job at the Ministry of Post and Telegram after return from exile but was given his old job instead when the Chamber of Deputies annulled all such promises.¹²⁸ Some were luckier, however. A former student in the military medical college was offered a “suitable” job immediately after return on the condition that the background check matched his claims.¹²⁹

The Chamber's deliberations showed complication beyond appearance. Cahid and Rıza Tevfik (Liberal, originally CUP from Edirne), for example, claimed that the banished included some spies, who, after returning to Istanbul, received salaries larger than before. The issue had created a lot of noise in the newspapers, and they called for filtering out the spies. Tevfik conceded the difficulties of doing so because of the secrecy and ambiguities of banishment under the old regime; he himself had suffered banishment, apparently because of a subgovernor, but to that day he did not know why, and claimed that many, like him, were victims of the whims of this or that subgovernor.¹³⁰ The government that had asked the Chamber's opinion about ways of dealing raised suspicion among some deputies, including Cahid and Rıza Tevfik, about relegating a complicated and potentially explosive issue to the Chamber (others, such as Yusuf Kemal Bey and Halajian Efendi, agreed). Nonetheless, because of the positive sentiment in the Chamber, a bill was planned to deal with the issue consistently.¹³¹

¹²⁷ BEO 258366, 30 November 1908/6 Zilkade 1326; 1 December 1908/7 Zilkade 1326; 10 December 1908/16 Zilkade 1326.

¹²⁸ BEO 261565, 9 February 1909/17 Muharrem 1327.

¹²⁹ BEO 256252, 21 October 1908/25 Ramazan 1326. See also BEO 254270, 14 November 1908/19 Şevval 1326/1 Teşrin-i Sani 1324. The more favorable treatment of the educated could also be sensed from small gifts and favors advanced to them, such as a former political prisoner who had been a medical student at the time of arrest. BEO 257294, 10 November 1908/15 Şevval 1326.

¹³⁰ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 92, 15 January 1909/2 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/22 Zilhicce 1326, (session 11, 12 January 1909/30 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 6–9.

¹³¹ *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 92, 15 January 1909/2 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/22 Zilhicce 1326, (session 11, 12 January 1909/30 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), pp. 6–9. Chamber deputy Halil (from Menteşe) agreed that the spies should be distinguished from genuine victims. He encouraged creation of a commission that among other jobs, cleansed the state from such harmful “microbes.” *Takvim-i Vekayi*, No. 93, 16 January 1909/3 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/23 Zilhicce 1326, (session 12, 13 January 1909/31 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324), p. 5.

Yet the government gave up on a law after a number of exchanges in which the sympathetic Chamber pressed for some way of compensating all, and decided to resolve things administratively. Leaving out all non-state employees, it promised to give former officials “preference” when placing them in positions comparable to what they had. As for students, the young were readmitted, and those beyond school age were offered some kind of job in the police or comparable offices.¹³² Later, older officials became entitled to retirement stipends,¹³³ but only upon return to their original places of residence, a condition that could not be met by many because of age, health, or lack of acquaintances after years of exile.¹³⁴

Simply being given preference did not mean that a quick solution was at hand. Even high officials wrote of the destitution and hardship endured under the old regime and appealed to the “pure conscience of the patrons of constitution” to ask for compensation, typically for the interval between revolution and the future date of appointment.¹³⁵ The hardship of the lower ranks was incomparable. A clerk in the Ministry of Commerce and Public Works petitioned simply to be saved from starvation; and some others who could not find anything equivalent remained unemployed and asked the state for help.¹³⁶ Even worse was the fate of banished Palace employees, who were to hear they were not considered state employees at all and that the government was under no obligation to find them a job.¹³⁷

The CUP reflected polemically that fleeing to Europe in protest had become quite a fashionable, not to mention lucrative, business. After publishing a few articles, many returned with promotions and new jobs. For those truly subjected to political hardship, they strongly advised looking beyond the state at a time when the cutbacks were aimed to revive the state.¹³⁸

¹³² MV 124: 27. 27 January 1909/5 Muharrem 1327. BEO 261278, 3 February 1909/11 Muharrem 1327/21 Kanun-ı Sani 1324. BEO 254270, 3 February 1909/21 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/11 Muharrem 1327. The decision with regard to students was a moderation of its earlier refusal to consider students who had escaped to Europe as banished. MV 122–123: 58. 23 December 1908/29 Zilkade 1326. The Chamber finally decided to draft a bill in response to this issue on 16 August 1909. BEO 254270, 18 August 1909/5 Ağustos 1325/2 Şaban 1327.

¹³³ BEO 254270, 29 March 1909/16 Mart 1325/7 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

¹³⁴ BEO 254270, 29 March 1909/16 Mart 1325/7 Rebiyülevvel 1327; 30 March 1909/17 Mart 1325; 3 April 1909/21 Mart 1325/13 Rebiyülevvel 1327. BEO 264616, 21 March 1909/8 Mart 1325/28 Sefer 1327; 10 May 1909/22 Nisan 1325/17 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹³⁵ BEO 254270, ?? March 1909/?? Mart 1325; 13 March 1909/20 Sefer 1327. Despite the significantly scaled back demand, the financially strapped state was unwilling to compensate them even for this period.

¹³⁶ BEO 261956, 12 February 1909/20 Muharrem 1327; 16 February 1909/24 Muharrem 1327; BEO 265457, 2 April 1909/11 Rebiyülevvel 1327. BEO 264824, 5 April 1909/14 Rebiyülevvel 1327; 7 April 1909/16 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

¹³⁷ MV 126: 18. 24 March 1909/11 Mart 1325/2 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

¹³⁸ They suggested agricultural jobs for them but with extensive advantages provided by the government, such as free land, and again this was quite in line with the programs of the National Economy program that was to follow. *Tanin*, No. 247, 8 April 1909/17 Rebiyülevvel 1327/26 Mart 1325, “Mağdurin-i Siyasiyenin Mutalebi,” p. 1.

The cold treatment prompted the returnees to form a self-help association in Istanbul called Devotees of the Nation Society (*Fedakaran-ı Millet Cemiyeti*) late in 1908. Its express purpose was to assist the poor and needy, especially the old-regime dissidents and families whose lives had been disrupted by escape or banishment. As one of the first joint stock companies (*anonim şirketler*) of this era, the group intended to raise capital for a brick factory and a carpet-weaving workshop by issuing shares. In a rhetorical jab at the CUP, it declared that unlike other clubs and societies it did not raise money through charitable contributions, selling theater or concert tickets, or extortion. The government, aware of the importance of such grass-roots initiatives for industrial expansion, broke with its resolve against financial assistance to clubs and groups and agreed to buy 5,000 liras of its shares, about a fifth of the amount requested by the initiators.¹³⁹ Ironically, the initiative was very much in line with CUP thinking. In fact such companies became the cornerstone of the CUP National Economy program in the next decade.

CONCLUSION

The cadre reforms in the bureaucracy and military got under way as soon as revolution happened and long before they had legislative backing. The government supported these. The pace and scope of changes, however, were too limited for the CUP, the representative of the emerging middle class, and it could not be contained. Its various legal, extra-legal, and illegal measures to replace officials created a good deal of commotion and hardship. The overall results were astounding when in a year or so after the revolution nearly all key provincial administrators found themselves in new positions, appropriately heralding a new era. The later legislation simply provided firmer ground for the changes that were afoot. If the opposition accused the CUP of being a “government within the government,” this chapter demonstrated in detail what was meant by that and how it came about. The sudden changes to civil and military personnel were serious enough to erupt in an uprising that gripped the Ottoman capital and provinces for about two weeks. The next, and final, chapter on the Young Turk revolution, is devoted to this analysis and the major changes that followed once counterrevolution was defeated.

¹³⁹ It was rather surprising that the government was willing to buy any shares after pointing to the inadequacy of laws for the formation and legal handling of such societies, and after confirmed reports that a previous president had embezzled donations by government and individuals. BEO 259965, 27 November 1908/3 Zilkade 1326, 2 December 1908/8 Zilkade 1326, 9 December 1908/15 Zilkade 1326; 19 December 1908/25 Zilkade 1326, 31 December 1908/7 Zilhicce 1326. For the chilly relation between many returnees and the CUP, and the formation of *Fedakaran-ı Millet Cemiyeti*, see Hanioglu, *Opposition*, pp. 67–68.

Counterrevolution and Its Aftermath

In April 1909 an uprising forced the CUP out of the capital. The event lasted a mere nine days, not because it involved small numbers but because of the crushing response it received from the CUP-organized Action Army. The outbreak brought to light the antagonism – class (economic), cultural, and generational – between the military officers and bureaucrats and their less educated peers and underlings, and also their superiors.

The event served to vindicate the CUP on a number of issues. First, the opposition could no longer denounce the CUP's alarmist posture, which had justified keeping a semi-legal secretive organization on the sidelines. Also, the CUP argument that it had refused to overtake the executive because of its respect for the constitution (read: the limits imposed by its ideology) became more credible. The speed and ease with which the CUP retook the capital confirmed its claim.

The counterrevolution spoke in the language of religion. The choice was significant, and exploration of its different uses by variegated groups affords a closer look at what has sometimes been taken for the expression of religious fanaticism. Revolution demanded many changes. Politically, it asked for radical reorganization of the method of governance; in the realm of the social, it privileged a rising social class; in the sphere of political culture, it strengthened the institutional basis of political and social equality of all religions and ethnic groups, initially at least; and finally, when it came to culture, it was a strong advocate of Westernization, which was considered the only valid civilizational framework of the modern world. Thus, in addition to the social, political, and institutional departures from the old ways, revolution was also a cultural project. The associations the CUP made between reforms and Westernism made its cultural rubric a natural target.

The language of counterrevolution was articulated by the lower-ranking, populist religious organizations. Their views were quite different from those of high-ranking religious authorities. Revolution was unsettling for religious students because it targeted their inflated numbers and questioned their privileged exemption from the compulsory draft. Revolution also raised more general

issues with regard to the role of *şeriat* in a constitutional administration. One was whether a body of lay individuals, including non-Muslims and avowed materialists, could institute laws compatible with *şeriat*, and how to justify law-making by this new institution. Even more disturbing was how to establish equality of all religions and creeds if this were to happen at the expense of Muslim political privileges. In the overly politicized late Ottoman context, where non-Muslims were perceived to enjoy unique economic advantages, the leveling of political differences appeared to be a one-sided deal to many. The main thrust of the counterrevolution came not from religious forces, but from the ranker soldiers and officers who opposed the indiscriminate purges. The populist religious orders and students found in this group a natural ally with whom they had cultural and religious affinity. Their major concerns were somewhat different, however. For the soldiers, to articulate their opposition in the language of Islam was to draw upon a long-established discourse of justice to counter the sophisticated language of constitutionalists, who also invoked justice (as a central tenet alongside liberty, equality, fraternity, and science) to tear at the social standing of the soldiers. The soldiers' primary concern was not with the religious policies of the CUP, but once the opposition articulated its demands in that language, none of the actors could take lightly the empowering, delegitimizing challenge of the language of religion. This forced others to move beyond the soldiers' central concern and focus on the religious aspect of their criticism. The Palace responded by emphasizing its firm dedication to the laws of Islam. The Liberals made instrumental use of it, and the CUP reacted by incorporating the language of religious opposition and making rhetorical concessions. Like the revolution, the counterrevolution was a multi-actor, multi-vocal event that brought together groups with a variety of interests who finally articulated their demands in the same voice, but this time in the language of religion.

Despite a good deal of speculation, government communication and newspapers show that none of the elite competitors had a direct hand in the uprising. That is, neither the Palace, nor the Porte, nor the Liberals initiated the anti-CUP outburst. Contrary to received wisdom, even Dervish Vahdeti and his top aides do not seem to have had any role in instigating it, and from all indications they too were taken by surprise. Nor did they reject constitutionalism, as evinced by their writings in these stormy days. Many religious societies associated with the Society of Muhammad, however, did support the counterrevolution around the empire.

The Liberals, initially joyful at the CUP's ouster, became increasingly wary of the anti-constitutional slant of the movement, and, in a sudden turnaround, attempted to calm the public as best they could. The Palace's major concern was to restore order and prevent the affair from becoming an excuse for foreign intervention, rather than to save the constitutional order. Other than CUP's insinuations, no reliable evidence linked Abdülhamid to the event. The Porte had the clearest position of all. It remained consistently pro-constitutional, vehemently opposed the counterrevolution, and persisted in its

strong anti-Palace stance. Furthermore, it did all it could to prevent the Unionists from riding into the capital. But it could not be determined with certainty if the Porte's real concern was foreign intervention or the desire to keep the Unionists at bay. Clearly, the Porte could have emerged as the biggest winner had the CUP not retaken the capital.

The movement had a reach far beyond Istanbul, as evidenced by provincial outbursts that came to involve the Society of Muhammad. The counterrevolution was also the occasion for the expression of latent ethnic hostilities that led to massacres in a number of ethnically mixed regions. The government was clearly panicked about such outbreaks.

In the aftermath of counterrevolution the CUP unleashed its institutional reforms with full force, particularly the purges. It now curtailed freedom of association and the press more thoroughly, passed legislation on vagrancy to control the public more tightly, and took a more forceful posture toward nationalist band activities in Rumelia. Although the CUP's commitment to legal constitutionalism became fainter with time, it kept formal constitutional institutions and procedures intact. It did not abolish or weaken the Chamber, but (initially) made it even stronger. The constitutional changes that empowered the legislature as the prime actor came back to haunt the CUP.

***Volkan* and the Society of Muhammad**

Historical writings on the July Revolution have ignored for the most part the views of the Society of Muhammad as expressed in its organ *Volkan*, and instead accepted the CUP's depiction of the Society of Muhammad as an ardently anti-constitutional organization. There were indeed many similarities to Iran: concern for the status of legislation and law-making by laymen and the question of compatibility with religious laws; insistence on the Islamic penal code; distaste for equality of Muslim and non-Muslims; and a sharp criticism of Westernist attitude and defense of the culture of Islam against irreligious opponents. Despite taking issue with some liberal aspects of constitutionalism, religions' equality in particular, labeling *Volkan* an anti-constitutional newspaper would be inaccurate. The same cannot be said about many of its supporters. Organizationally, the Society of Muhammad posed the most serious challenge to the CUP and its organ became an outlet for the marginalized groups who received the harsh end of reforms.

To counter the CUP's influence, the Society of Muhammad attempted to drive a wedge between the CUP's Macedonian centers and its branches elsewhere. The central branches in Monastir and Salonica in particular were exalted as the true home of revolutionary heroes. By contrast, branches elsewhere were dismissed as brimming with returned exiles, including intellectuals and theorists who deceptively claimed credit for the revolution and overshadowed the real centers. Their headquarter was Istanbul's Şeref Street, a street whose name became synonymous with abuse, overreach, and treachery. These were joined by a large number of opportunists who turned constitutionalist in search of worldly gains, not the

lofty aims that motivated the officers.¹ True, in moments of anger the CUP was dismissed, and as a whole, revolution was attributed to the bravery of the ordinary soldier and the public.² Furthermore, in exasperation sometimes allusions were made to the complicity of the Monastir and Salonica centers in the misdeeds of other branches.³ But the dominant tendency was to separate the young, battle-hardened officers in the troubled Macedonian lands from the self-seeking “yesterday’s school children,” materialists, intellectuals, and ideologues, who were either avenging the public for their years of suffering in exile in Europe, or simply had found in the CUP a ready-made opportunity for career advancement.⁴

The Society of Muhammad was not engaged simply in religious or cultural critique. More important was its posturing as defender of the large numbers threatened by the zealot brand of reforms. First among these were the bureaucrats, soldiers, and ranker officers, together with students of religion, whom the Society defended in the name of justice and fairness. Second came widows, orphans, and the retired military ranks, needy sectors that were entirely ignored. Surprisingly, the Society of Muhammad did agree with the necessity of reforms, but argued that concern with the inflated numbers of top administrators, or paying lower-ranked bureaucrats on a regular basis, should take precedence over indiscriminate purges. Also mistreated in its view were the old regime’s victims – the unjustly jailed, banished, and dismissed, who were ignored by the new regime.⁵ Dervish Vahdeti himself belonged to this last group.

The Society of Muhammad was acutely concerned with the sharp distinction reformers made between the rankers and the educated in the military. This cause it took up rather late, but when it did, it met an enthusiastic response from the

¹ The accusations against “Şeref Street” were serious enough for the CUP to issue denials. It did so not in official organs, but in pamphlets to avoid the impression they merited refutation. See for example M. Süleyman Avanzade *Şeref Sokağı Esrarı* (Istanbul: Edeb Matbaası, 1909/1327).

² *Volkan*, No. 81, 22 March 1909/30 Sefer 1327/9 Mart 1325, “Millet, Asker,” pp. 2–3.

³ This realization came especially when *Volkan* was boycotted in Macedonia. *Volkan*, No. 72, 13 March 1909/21 Sefer 1327/28 Şubat 1324, “Doktor Nazım Bey’in Konferansları,” p. 1.

⁴ *Volkan*, No. 1, 11 December 1908/28 Teşrin-i Sani 1324, “Hüseyin Cahid Bey’e,” pp. 2–3; *Volkan*, No. 3, 13 December 1908/30 Teşrin-i Sani 1324, “Tanin,” pp. 3–4; *Volkan*, No. 5, 15 December 1908/2 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “İkdam Refikimize,” pp. 2–3; *Volkan*, No. 11, 21 December 1908/8 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Besâ,” pp. 1–2; *Volkan*, No. 11, 21 December 1908/8 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Taaccüb,” p. 4; *Volkan*, No. 12, 22 December 1908/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Tanin,” pp. 1–2; *Volkan* No. 71, 12 March 1909/20 Sefer 1327/27 Şubat 1324, “İşimiz Hep Oyuncak,” pp. 2–3; *Volkan* No. 78, 19 March 1909/27 Sefer 1327/6 Mart 1324, “*Volkan*,” pp. 1–2; *Volkan*, No. 83, 24 March 1909/2 Rebiiülevvel 1327/11 Mart 1324, “İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti’nin Merkez-i Umumisi Manastır’dır,” pp. 1–2; *Volkan*, No. 88, 29 March 1909/16 Mart 1325/7 Rebiiülevvel 1327, “Hükümet İçinde Hükümet,” pp. 1–2. The opposition had so insisted on this division that Niyazi, who was rumored to have joined the Liberals, was forced to deny it publicly and swear loyalty to the CUP until death. *Volkan*, No. 78, 19 March 1909/27 Sefer 1327/6 Mart 1324, “Gazetelerde Görülen Telgrafname Suretidir,” p. 1.

⁵ *Volkan*, No. 14, 25 December 1908/12 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Müttekaidin ve Eytam ve Eramil-i Askeriye Maaşatı-Muamelat-ı Adaletşikenane,” p. 4; *Volkan*, No. 37, 6 February 1909/15 Muharrem 1327/24 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, “Dahiliye Nazırın’a,” pp. 2–3; *Volkan*, No. 41, 10 February 1909/19 Muharrem 1327/28 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, “Posta ve Telgraf Nezareti’nin Nazar-ı İnsafına,” p. 4.

rankers, who rallied around it almost immediately. This was evident in early March when *Volkan* began to protest the navy's recent decision to introduce tests whose results were to be used to purge officers. It called purges unfair and a travesty at a time when even criminals had gone free. It was unreasonable to expect the naval staff to be well trained when, in the paranoid atmosphere of the old regime, use of such words as "torpedoes" was dangerous. The officers directing the policy were thus advised not to become duped by a society, or abide by any force other than the law.⁶ Even when the Society of Muhammad begrudgingly accepted examination for scribes in the navy, it insisted on their use for job classification alone and not as a tool for purges.⁷ *Volkan* insisted that singling out the rankers for punishment, when many were more competent than their educated peers, violated the essence of law, including the religious law. Furthermore, the nation was indebted to the old troopers for their bravery in war and thought that such policies only lessened their ability to confront external challenges, such as the Serbian or Greek designs.⁸

Verbatim publication of grievances from officers and soldiers was common. These ranged from the suicide note of a purged high-ranking officer,⁹ to rankers' lamentations that they too were the fatherland's children,¹⁰ to a letter addressed to the Chamber in the name of 10,000 retired officers in protest against a grave injustice in the age of justice.¹¹ Of particular interest were letters of complaint from the Fifth Battalion of the Imperial Army (*Hassa Ordu*), a division with a significant role in the counterrevolution. These discussed mistreatment at the hands of educated officers, nervousness about being sorted and dispersed to different locations, officers' opposition to the *şeriat* and the law, and the mental torture the battalion suffered. It was not uncommon for soldiers to declare themselves members of the Society of Muhammad.¹²

⁶ *Volkan*, No. 70, 11 March 1909/19 Sefer 1327/26 Şubat 1324, "Bahriye Tensikatına Dair Garib Bir Haber," p. 4.

⁷ *Volkan*, No. 80, 21 March 1909/29 Sefer 1327/8 Mart 1324, "Daire-i Bahriye Küttabının İktidar ve Ehliyetini Tayin için İmtihan Lazım mıdır ve Nasıl İcra Edilmelidir?" p. 2.

⁸ *Volkan*, No. 82, 23 March 1909/1 Rebiyülevvel 1327/10 Mart 1324, "Alaylı-Mektebli Zabitanla Askerler," pp. 1-2; *Volkan*, No. 85, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1324/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "10 Mart Sene 1325 Tarihinde Meclis-i Mebusan Riyaset-i Celilesine Keşide Edilen Telgraf Suretidir," p. 3.

⁹ *Volkan*, No. 74, 15 March 1909/23 Sefer 1327/2 Mart 1324, "Seyfullah Paşa'nın Kabrinden," p. 4.

¹⁰ Ranker officers from Karaman, in the name of the regiment, lauded *Volkan*'s criticism of purges in its 70th issue; they asked officers' suitability for service to be evaluated on the basis of knowledge and capability as a whole and not be based solely, and unjustly, on formal education. *Volkan*, No. 80, 21 March 1909/29 Sefer 1327/8 Mart 1324, "Volkan Sahib-i İmtiyazı Derviş Vahdeti Bey'e" pp. 2-3.

¹¹ *Volkan*, No. 85, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1324/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "10 Mart Sene 1325 Tarihinde Meclis-i Mebusan Riyaset-i Celilesine Keşide Edilen Telgraf Suretidir," p. 3.

¹² *Volkan*, No. 82, 23 March 1909/1 Rebiyülevvel 1327/10 Mart 1324, "Alaylı-Mektebli Zabitanla Askerler," pp. 1-2; *Volkan*, No. 87, 28 March 1909/15 Mart 1325/6 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Nidayı Mazlumane," p. 1.

The open declaration of membership placed the Society of Muhammad in an uncomfortable position after its repeated repudiation of the military's attachment to political societies. It worked around the issue by alluding to spiritual rather than formal membership, claiming that "in essence and religion" the soldiers were part of the Society as long as they swore loyalty to the constitution, but to a constitution that did not thrust the country into foreign habits, or blemish their religion, or was incompatible with *şeriat*. It also advised submission to commanders, some of whom had studied hard at school, and others of whom had accumulated a good deal of experience in the world outside (an obvious nod to the rankers).¹³

Students of religion were nervous about the military draft plan. Citing equality, the new era ended their traditional privilege of military exemption; to facilitate the draft, exams were introduced to evaluate students' religious knowledge and thereby reduce their numbers. The students objected that if equality was at stake, they should be treated like the Istanbul inhabitants who enjoyed a similar exemption. *Volkan* questioned the logic behind "equality" when so many inconsistencies marred the recruitment process, in the Arab and Kurdish regions in particular.¹⁴ Also, trimming the students' numbers translated into fewer clerics in future, which was held to have contributed to the weakening of the empire. Along the way, *Volkan* mocked *Tanin* for publicizing such announcements as if it were an official gazette of the Ministries of War, Interior, and Justice.¹⁵

The issue led to the first murmurings of an organized, populist, Islamist movement in the capital in late February–early March, which started when students of religion surrounded the Chamber and demanded *şeriat*. The CUP portrayed the protests as reactionary, desirous of restoring absolutism. Of course what they said was quite attractive, argued Cahid, but was it possible not to want *şeriat*? Arguing that the sections of *şeriat* that concerned criminal conduct (robbery, adultery, drinking alcohol, etc.) had not been enforced since at least the tenth Islamic century; that no portions of religious laws had been modified in the past few months; and that many Chamber deputies were clerics themselves, Cahid warned "the people in the street"—grocers, street barbers, cotton dressers, scribes, and religious students – to leave such matters alone or suffer the consequences.¹⁶

¹³ *Volkan*, No. 82, 23 March 1909/1 Rebiyülevvel 1327/10 Mart 1324, "Alaylı-Mektebli Zabitanla Askerler," pp. 1–2; *Volkan*, No. 87, 28 March 1909/15 Mart 1325/6 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Volkan," pp. 1–2.

¹⁴ Not discussed in their critique was the much larger and more complex issue of military exemption of non-Muslims in lieu of *bedel-i askeri*. End to this practice was planned at the time toward creation of an equal Ottoman citizenry. Yet the Society, from all indications, was opposed to it.

¹⁵ *Volkan*, No. 46, 15 February 1909/24 Muharrem 1327/2 Şubat 1324, "Meşrutiyet İçinde Müsavatsızlık," pp. 2–3; *Volkan*, No. 53, 22 February 1909/1 Sefer 1327/9 Şubat 1324, "Bir Sadayı Muhik," pp. 3–4; *Volkan*, No. 64, 5 March 1909/13 Sefer 1327/20 Şubat 1324, "Talebe-i Ulum," pp. 3–4.

¹⁶ *Tanin*, No. 210, 2 March 1909/17 Şubat 1324/8 Safar 1327, "Şeriat İsteriz," p. 1; *Volkan*, No. 70, 6 March 1909/19 Sefer 1327/26 Şubat 1324, "Şeriat İsteriz Ünvanı Altında İstemeyiz Fikri,"

The Society of Muhammad seized the opportunity to blast the CUP's disdain for ordinary folk; its contempt for public opinion; its denigration of the "materially poor" but "morally rich"; and its audacity in specifying limits for the public with threats of military force in case of transgression.¹⁷ The article provoked the Society into articulating what was at stake in the term *şeriat*, beyond the call for justice and fair treatment.

Receiving religious instruction from *Tanin* proved a little much for the Society of Muhammad, who considered it an insult to Islam to have irreligious, naturalist, Darwinist freemasons, who had recently learned in school a few words about matters of little significance, interpret and distort the Qur'an, of which they knew nothing. Defensively, *Volkan* reverted to the trope of the powers of Islam being manifested not only in the conquests, glories, and successes of the Ottomans, but also in all that was good in European civilization. It was argued that Europe's tradition of rational law (constitutionalism in particular) – was owed to Islamic tradition, which had been passed on to it over centuries (most notably through Spain) and regrettably abandoned by Muslims for the sake of shallow imitation. All that was needed now was to revert to the original culture and letter of Islam, with European technology, to achieve once again the heights of grandeur. Islam was not fanaticism, and was not against progress at any time in its history. Furthermore, the CUP's accusations that the Society of Muhammad demanded restoration of absolutism because it was preferable to anarchy, or because it was superior to liberty, or that the Society was anti-constitutional, were all incorrect and untrue. The Society of Muhammad even gave a constitutional twist to the recent public protest against the CUP: it was an attempt to make public opinion known to the nation's deputies. Such defensive postures did not hold them back from issuing warnings that the enemies of *şeriat* were to be crushed and scattered.¹⁸

One way to discredit the religious opposition elements was to highlight their similarities with counterparts in Iran. Eight months earlier, a conservative clerical faction in Iran had played a critical role in a counterrevolution that had overthrown the constitutional order, commencing a bloody struggle aimed at its restoration. Here the CUP pointed to the Iranian clerics' praise of the tyrannical shah and their attack on Iranian "lovers of liberty" as irreligious. The analogy was complete with the convergence of their main slogan: "we want *şeriat*." The Society of Muhammad called the comparison

pp. 3–4; *Volkan*, No. 71, 12 March 1909/20 Sefer 1327/27 Şubat 1324, "Şeriat İsteriz Ünvanı Altında İstemeyiz," p. 4.

¹⁷ *Volkan*, No. 64, 5 March 1909/13 Sefer 1327/20 Şubat 1324, "Volkan," pp. 1–2.

¹⁸ *Volkan*, No. 63, 4 March 1909/12 Sefer 1327/19 Şubat 1324, "Tanin'in Tecavüzatını Red," pp. 1–2; *Volkan*, No. 64, 5 March 1909/13 Sefer 1327/20 Şubat 1324, "Tanin'den İstizah," p. 1; *Volkan*, No. 64, 5 March 1909/13 Sefer 1327/20 Şubat 1324, "Volkan," pp. 1–2; *Volkan*, No. 69, 5 March 1909/19 Sefer 1327/29 Şubat 1324, "Merhum Seyyid Fazl Paşazade . . .," pp. 2–3; *Volkan*, No. 70, 6 March 1909/19 Sefer 1327/26 Şubat 1324, "Şeriat İsteriz Ünvanı Altında İstemeyiz Fikri," pp. 3–4; *Volkan*, No. 72, 13 March 1909/21 Sefer 1327/28 Şubat 1324, "Hakikat Hakikatdır," pp. 2–3; *Volkan*, No. 88, 29 March 1909/7 Rebiyülevvel 1327/16 Mart 1325, "İttihad-ı İslam," p. 3.

deceitful.¹⁹ In fact, the Society was equally attuned to the dynamics of revolution in Iran. Its fear of damaging analogies had already brought ridicule of Nuri, the central figure in the Iranian saga, to the pages of *Volkan*. He was described as an Islamic legal scholar (*müctehid*) who had gone wrong, a figure who had lived at home in isolation for seventy years and based his opposition on outdated materials, and not on a flexible Islam that was able to adjust to changing circumstances. They scoffed at the Iranian clerics' opposition to progress, both material and political, and praised figures like Sattar Khan, who fought them. They even addressed the Tehran clerics directly, inviting them to denounce the shah and join the constitutionalist battle against him.²⁰

The Society of Muhammed's protestations aside, the analogies with Iran were many. Before turning against the constitution, the conservative religious opposition in Iran had first demanded compatibility of legislation with shar', and had spoken of the constitution as *mashrutiyat-i mashru'a* (a religiously legitimate constitution), forcing its opponents to defer to this language. The Society similarly demanded compatibility of Chamber legislation with the *şeriat*, using the same language and generating the same response from opponents. The Iranian clerics had similarly branded their opponents with an assortment of labels shared across the border (e.g., Darwinist, materialist, irreligious). They both had complained that along constant cries of long live liberty, long live the fatherland, long live this and that, they had never heard long live religion or long live Islam. This was to be taken as self-evident proof of their opponents' irreligion.²¹ They stood fast by the belief "that without religion, liberty, justice, equality, and fraternity were not attainable."²²

The Society's position on *şeriat*, however, was not as consistent or uncompromising as that of the conservatives in Iran. It did object strongly to Hilmi Pasha when he called for comprehensive study of European laws in preparation for writing Ottoman laws and regulations. They were not a lawless nation like Japan, protested *Volkan*, but had at their disposal the entire library of Islamic law, which was the source for the laws of many (i.e., European) nations; all they needed was to revisit "the Islamic *şeriat* [that] was in no need of reference to the laws of others." Attacked also was the ultraliberal *Şeyhülislam* for not having opposed Hilmi there and then, and for having squandered the prerogatives of an

¹⁹ *Volkan*, No. 69, 10 March 1909/17 Sefer 1327/25 Şubat 1324, "İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti'nin Hakikati," pp. 1-2.

²⁰ *Volkan*, No. 56, 25 February 1909/4 Sefer 1327/12 Şubat 1324, "İran Müctehedlerine," p. 1.

²¹ *Volkan*, No. 69, 5 March 1909/19 Sefer 1327/29 Şubat 1324, "Merhum Seyyid Fazıl Paşazade . . .," pp. 2-3. For accusations against the CUP as irreligious freemasons, for considering *şeriat* as an obstacle to progress, and attempts to lead the youth astray by trying to Europeanize them, see *Volkan*, No. 86, 27 March 1909/14 Mart 1324/5 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Feveran," pp. 1-2. For condemnation of positivism, equated with materialism, see *Volkan*, No. 44, 13 February 1909/22 Muharrem 1327/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, "Varaka," pp. 2-3, and "Volkan," p. 3.

²² *Volkan*, No. 1, 11 December 1908/28 Teşrin-i Sani 1324, "Nutuk," pp. 3-4.

office on par with the prime ministership.²³ Thus the chasm between official and popular religion was on display, a long-running legacy that Tanzimat had only deepened. Furthermore, in response to the claim that the Ottoman constitution was of European origin, especially Belgian, the Society of Muhammad countered that it corresponded with the *şeriat* line by the line and article by article. Hence, the Europeans had either derived their constitution from the *şeriat*, or alternatively, as *şeriat* was the truth, they could have arrived at its teachings on their own so far as it regarded worldly matters.²⁴ By extension, it accepted a compromise with European laws on economics, commerce and transportation, and was even content if the Chamber legislation touched (*temas*) on *şeriat*.²⁵

Nonetheless, *Volkan* did not refrain from publishing the letter from “Muslim inhabitants of Konya” (dated 24 Şubat) that expressed their rage at *Tanin* for attacking *şeriat* and opposing the total implementation of Quranic commandments. *Tanin*, by this act, had displayed disbelief in godly perfection, wounded the hearts of believers, and stirred the hatred of all Muslims, stated the letter, ending with a warning that the signatories were the mortal enemies of *şeriat* opponents. Although *Volkan* ended its own commentary with an invitation to “moderation, moderation, moderation,” devoting the front page to this letter appeared curious at best.²⁶ Milder letters from Yenipazar or Cesr-i Mustafa Pasha, with a strong stance on the relation between *şeriat* and legislation, also found their way to *Volkan*’s pages.²⁷

Rather than arguing that *şeriat* was an unchanging body of law that could serve all Ottomans, *Volkan* chose to concentrate its efforts on drawing up a *şeriat*-based criminal code along the lines of the Ottoman Civil Code (*Mecelle-i Ahkam-ı Adliye*).²⁸ Earlier, a controversy over the opening of a drinking establishment in the Islamic section of Istanbul had provoked the Society of Muhammad to ask that it be shut down,²⁹ urging those desirous of a

²³ *Volkan*, No. 50, 19 February 1909/28 Muharrem 1327/6 Şubat 1324, “Şeyhülislam Hazretlerine,” p. 1. On liberalism of Şeyhülislam, see his interview in Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 170–176; Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, p. 12.

²⁴ *Volkan*, No. 51, 20 February 1909/29 Muharrem 1327, “Kanun-ı Esasi,” p. 3.

²⁵ *Volkan*, No. 63, 4 March 1909/12 Sefer 1327/19 Şubat 1324, “Beyanname,” p. 3. They did, however, warn about wholesale adoption of European laws. *Volkan*, No. 61, 2 March 1909/10 Sefer 1327/17 Şubat 1327, “Din ve Şeriat,” pp. 1–4. *Volkan*, No. 62, 3 March 1909/11 Sefer 1327/18 Şubat 1324, “İntibah,” p. 1.

²⁶ *Volkan*, No. 72, 13 March 1909/21 Sefer 1327/28 Şubat 1324, “Aynen, *Volkan* Gazete-i Muteberesine,” p. 1.

²⁷ *Volkan*, No. 77, 18 March 1909/25 Sefer 1327/5 Mart 1325, “Meclis-i Mebusan Riyaseti Canib-i Alisine,” p. 3; *Volkan*, No. 91, 1 April 1909/19 Mart 1325/10 Rebiyülevvel 1325, “Cesr-i Mustafa Paşa Ahali-i İslamiyesi Tarafından Meclis-i Mebusan Riyasetine Verilen Takrir Suretidir,” p. 4. *Şeriat* was described as a spirit whose body was the Ottoman government.

²⁸ *Volkan*, No. 75, 16 March 1909/24 Sefer 1327/3 Mart 1325, “İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi,” pp. 2–4. For *Mecelle*, see Carter V. Findley, “Medjelle,” in *EI*². The reform-era Ottoman penal law after 1858 was a “secular and comprehensive penal code which followed French law.” See A.S. Tritton, “Ottoman Penal Law” under “DJaza” in *EI*².

²⁹ *Volkan*, No. 63, 4 March 1909/12 Sefer 1327/19 Şubat 1324, “Tanin’in Tecavüzatını Red,” pp. 1–2.

European criminal code to leave for Europe.³⁰ Later, when the Chamber looked into the practice of flogging, some deputies found it unbecoming to the twentieth century and contrary to the rehabilitative aims of the modern penal system. One deputy, the Armenian Zohrab Efendi, had called it a remnant of the inquisitorial system of law. Others had defended it after citing the use of the practice in Britain. Still others argued over the methods of administering *dayak* and cases that required it. Dervish Vahdeti blasted the Europeanized deputies who objected to Islamic penal punishments under *hadd* (e.g., the law of talion, or *kisas*, flogging). He also found it shameful that flogging was defended by reference to Britain, a place whose jails and physical punishments were far harsher than the Islamic method of flogging.³¹

A defense of religion could not be complete without commentary on the Europeanized culture of the opponents, another shared concern with Iran. Although this put them at odds with Liberal allies, it failed to moderate *Volkan's* defense of traditional culture in the name of Islam. Mimicry of European habits, loss of identity, and the women's question were central topics, and *Volkan* blamed the Ottoman decline on becoming duped and deceived by the habits and mores of another culture.³² In schools, it aimed to replace Spencer, Foyer, and Tolstoy with Muslim thinkers such as İbn-i Rüşd, İbn-i Sina, and Farabi. And in foreign or missionary schools, it would take children out of dirty foreign hands and place them in the pure ones of Muslim women with Islamic morals.³³ Finally, for *Volkan*, the theater with its comic plays, loud laughter, and dancing, was the greatest corrupting influence on youth.³⁴ Kamil Pasha had also studied abroad, it grumbled, but did not curl his mustache, frequent theaters, or force upon his countrymen the immoral manners of Europe.³⁵

The revolution's liberalism toward women also struck a chord with the religious opposition. Even more dangerous than regular theater was the proliferation of theaters catering to women; these allegedly taught only romance and dancing. That these were completely at odds with Islam could be seen from the open dress, hair, and behavior of the European *mademoiselles* who attended them, compared with the pious Muslim woman, covered head to toe, who was disgusted at being seen even by her neighbor. For the sake of future generations and before theater attendance became a habit, *Volkan*

³⁰ *Volkan*, No. 70, 6 March 1909/19 Sefer 1327/26 Şubat 1324, "Şariat İsteriz Ünvanı Altında İstemeyiz Fikri," pp. 3-4.

³¹ Added were also objections to polygamy. *Volkan*, No. 92, 2 April 1909/20 Mart 1325/11 Rebiyülevvel 1325, "Dayak Mı Vahşettir, Yoksa Zindan?" pp. 1-2. See B. Carra de Vaux, "Hadd," in *EI*².

³² *Volkan*, No. 4, 14 December 1908/1 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Hüküm Galibindir," pp. 2-3. *Volkan*, No. 88, 29 March 1909/7 Rebiyülevvel 1327/16 Mart 1325, "İttihad-ı İslam," p. 3.

³³ *Volkan*, No. 5, 15 December 1908/2 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, "Naci," p. 1.

³⁴ *Volkan*, No. 37, 6 February 1909/15 Muharrem 1327/24 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, "*Volkan*," pp. 3-4.

³⁵ *Volkan*, No. 2, 12 December 1908/29 Teşrin-i Sani 1324, "Kamil Paşa," pp. 1-2.

appealed to the municipality for their shutdown.³⁶ Also questioned was the amount of attention paid to women's schools, a project that the head of the Chamber took personal interest in developing; it was mockingly asked if all other schools were in top shape for there to be a need for women's schools to teach piano and dancing.³⁷

When it came to the prospect of equality with non-Muslim communities, the Society of Muhammad was less than enthusiastic. Its position was straightforward: not only was equality against *şeriat*, it undeservedly granted additional advantages to the already privileged. In its view, *şeriat* was perfectly capable of protecting non-Muslim rights, as it had for centuries, and the Society of Muhammad issued repeated assurances to the latter and their Chamber representatives.³⁸ Yet this was not exactly a comforting argument in support of citizen equality, a Tanzimat ideal that still awaited full realization. The Society in fact was almost enraged by the call to treat everyone, from the religious scholar and Muslim to the ignorant and fire worshipper (*mecus*), as one; in religion, it held, a sinner and a Muslim could never be equal.³⁹ Although Christians were not named, the greatest concern was the prospect of equality with them. And in this vein, more than anyone, it was the Greek Ottomans who were blamed for manipulating "equality": Greeks who hoped to snatch away the sovereign rights of the Ottomans, acquired after ancestral sacrifices made in building the empire – a conquest for which they could not be blamed, because it was a natural human quest. This was not an unfamiliar argument.⁴⁰ The Greeks were ingrates who had converted the privileges granted to them – thanks to the conquerors' religion – into capitulatory rights.⁴¹ In competition with the economic superiority of non-Muslims, *Volkan* thus espoused its willingness to do everything to benefit coreligionists in education,

³⁶ *Volkan*, No. 37, 6 February 1909/15 Muharrem 1327/24 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, "*Volkan*," pp. 3–4. *Volkan*, No. 39, 8 February 1909/17 Muharrem 1327/26 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, "Tiyatrolar Ahlakımıza Nasıl Tesir Ediyor," p. 3.

³⁷ *Volkan*, No. 53, 22 February 1909/1 Sefer 1327/9 Şubat 1324, "Bir Sada-yı Muhik," pp. 3–4; McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 66–67.

³⁸ *Volkan*, No. 61, 2 March 1909/10 Sefer 1327/17 Şubat 1327, "Din ve Şeriat," pp. 1–4; *Volkan*, No. 62, 3 March 1909/11 Sefer 1327/18 Şubat 1324, "İntibah," p. 1.

³⁹ *Volkan*, No. 53, 22 February 1909/1 Sefer 1327/9 Şubat 1324, "Bir Sada-yı Muhik," pp. 3–4.

⁴⁰ For similar objections to equality during the Young Ottoman movement, see the letter from religious students to Midhat Pasha (August 1876): "We see no reason why we need a Constitution or a National Parliament . . . We have subjugated the Christians and conquered the land with the sword, and we do not want to share the administration of the country with them or let them participate in the leadership of the government." Devereux, *First Constitutional Period*, pp. 39–40 (quote from p. 40).

⁴¹ Two newspapers in particular, *Neologos* and *Prudos*, were targeted. Neither Greece or Bulgaria nor Russia, countries with Muslim populations, had high-ranking Muslim administrators, argued *Volkan*, but Ottomans had Christian ministers and parliamentarians; it added, which nation submitted its sovereignty to an element it did not trust? It called them nothing but a "government within the government." *Volkan*, No. 85, 26 March 1909/13 Mart 1324/4 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Yağma Yok," pp. 1–2.

industry, commerce, and all other social endeavors, and to protect them against foreign transgressions.⁴²

In fact, during its short existence, the Society of Muhammad did make economic initiatives in favor of Muslims by establishing joint stock companies. These had multiple purposes. The CUP was at the very early stages of initiating its ambitious National Economy program to promote commerce and trade, first among all communities, and eventually among the Turks alone and in competition with non-Muslim communities. In contrast, the Society of Muhammad's initiative was devoted to the Muslims, and in competition both with the CUP program and the non-Muslim communities. Its other purpose was to showcase Islam's favorable view of material progress and gain; if Muslims had fallen behind, it was due to insufficient engagement with Islam's prescriptions.⁴³

By foreign transgression *Volkan* mostly meant actions taken against the Muslims of Macedonia, which it blamed on the Greek Ottomans and their openly supportive press in Istanbul – Muslims who had been abandoned by a government too willing to appease foreign powers. *Volkan* thus echoed a familiar complaint: The government had focused all attention on solving the problems of Christians and turned a blind eye to the atrocities of Greek and Bulgarian bands against Muslims. Thus, when the Chamber took up the sensitive “church issue” in Macedonia to end the conflict between various Christian communities there (Bulgarians, Greeks, and Serbians), *Volkan* asked, had the government solved the “mosque” issue there – a half satirical reference to problems faced by Muslims – before being concerned with a small Christian minority.⁴⁴

Organizationally if not intellectually, the Society of Muhammad was the main competition for the CUP. Coordination began comparatively late, but their expansion was amazingly rapid in scope and depth. Admittedly, the society had been active prior to early February, when it formally declared its status, but had remained in hiding out of fear, as had Islam in its early days. Its decision to come out was prompted by the opening ceremony of a large Freemason lodge in Istanbul, which was attended by prominent officials.⁴⁵ News of the Society's rapid spread came not from its announcements alone, but also from the public

⁴² *Volkan*, No. 63, 4 March 1909/12 Sefer 1327/19 Şubat 1324, “Beyanname,” p. 3.

⁴³ As proof, the Society of Muhammad established a maritime line under its name for Haj pilgrims in other Islamic lands, and issued shares to support it. *Volkan*, No. 80, 21 March 1909/29 Sefer 1327/8 Mart 1324, no title, p. 3. Others followed soon. *Volkan*, No. 89, 30 March 1909/17 Mart 1325/8 Rebiyülevvel 1325, “İttihad-ı Muhammedî Şirket-i Bahriyesi,” pp. 3–4.

⁴⁴ *Volkan*, No. 24, 23 January 1909/1 Muharrem 1327/10 Kanun-ı Sani 1324, “Açıkca İttihad-ı İslam,” pp. 1–2. *Volkan*, No. 34, 3 February 1909/22 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/12 Muharrem 1327, “Altı Aylık Meşrutiyetimiz Böyle Mi Olacaktı?” pp. 1–2.

⁴⁵ *Volkan*, No. 36, 5 February 1909/23 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/14 Muharrem 1327 “İttihad-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti,” p. 3. For a political manifesto of İttihad-ı Muhammedî, regulations, party structure, and yet a new announcement of existence, see *Volkan*, No. 75, 16 March 1909/24 Sefer 1327/3 Mart 1325, “İttihad-ı Muhammedî Cemiyeti Nizamnamesi,” pp. 2–4. See also Tarık Zafer Tunaya *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler. Cilt I: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1984) pp. 199–205.

declarations of local inhabitants who were joining the Society of Muhammad en masse. Three thousand, eight and ten thousand, thirty thousand, and even one hundred thousand members were figures claimed for some provincial locations that cared to announce the branch openings.⁴⁶ A highpoint for the Society was the enthusiastic public response to its call for celebration of the Prophet's birthday at Ayasophia (Hagia Sophia) mosque. The supporters were advised to carry small green flags with a pre-selected Quranic verse and the Society's signature. After the ceremonies, they were to march to the nearby Istanbul headquarters to mark its commencement with a ceremonial lamb sacrifice. This was another occasion to boast of the Society's far and wide expansion beyond provincial centers into districts, subdistricts, and villages, conveying their strong grassroots presence in rivalry with the CUP. Expansion to the entirety of Islamic lands was promised to be complete in 18 months, the same duration it had taken Islam to expand to as many lands.⁴⁷ The day, which saw sermons delivered by Dervish Vahdeti and Said Nursi, was a huge success. The alleged one hundred thousand attendees were quite orderly and the event proceeded according to schedule, concluding on time and disproving the CUP predictions of a reactionary mass outbreak. The provincial branches performed similar ceremonies simultaneously.⁴⁸

Although the Society of Muhammad still remained a shadow of the CUP, its rapid organizational growth confronted it with a similar challenge: the proliferation of unauthorized branches in Istanbul and throughout the empire. To combat what it called tools of petty personal gain, it was emphatic about registering all members (in Istanbul or provinces) at the Istanbul headquarters, either in person or through a trusted intermediary.⁴⁹ They publicly dissociated from a recently established branch in Hama that had been announced in *Tanin*, a sure indication of its disrepute.⁵⁰

Counterrevolution Begins

The event that sparked the counterrevolution was the murder of Hasan Fehmi on 6 April 1909, a week before the major outbreaks. A prominent journalist,

⁴⁶ *Volkan*, No. 90, 31 March 1909/18 Mart 1325/9 Rebiyülevvel 1325 "Sabancı'dan Telgrafname: 10000 Kişinin İttihad-ı Muhammedi'ye Duhulu," p. 2. *Volkan*, No. 96, 6 April 1909/24 March / 15 Rebiyülevvel 1325, "Dersaadet İttihad-ı Muhammedi Merkezi Heyet-i Aliyesine," p. 2, see also p. 4. *Volkan*, No. 106, 16 April 1909/3 April /25 Rebiyülevvel 1325, "Dersaadet'te İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti Merkez-i Umumisine," p. 4.

⁴⁷ *Volkan*, No. 90, 31 March 1909/18 Mart 1325/9 Rebiyülevvel 1325 "Menkabe-i Celile-i Hazret-i Mustafavi," p. 1. On the rapid expansion of the Society in its own words, and in explicit competition with the CUP, see also *Volkan*, No. 68, 9 March 1909/16 Sefer 1327/24 Şubat 1324, "Ey Ümmet-i Muhammed! Meyus Olmayınız!" pp. 1-2; *Volkan*, No. 88, 29 March 1909/ 16 Mart 1325/7 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Hükümet İçinde Hükümet," pp. 1-2.

⁴⁸ *Volkan*, No. 94, 4 April 1909/22 March 1325/13 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Menkabe-i Celile-i Cenab-ı Peygamberi," p. 1. *Volkan*, No. 97, 7 April 1909/25 Mart 1325 /16 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Pusudakiler Başlarını Kaldırmasınlar," pp. 1-2.

⁴⁹ *Volkan*, No. 72, 13 March 1909/28 Şubat 1324/21 Sefer 1327, "Beyanname," p. 1.

⁵⁰ *Volkan*, No. 79, 20 March 1909/7 Mart 1325/28 Sefer 1327, "Beyanname," p. 1.

the editor of *Serbesti* newspaper, and a fierce CUP critic, he had organized a meeting that was to meet on April 8 against recent press regulations. He was shot while walking at night over the Galata Bridge in the company of a deposed subgovernor, Şakir Bey, who escaped death (although he was injured). Curiously, the assailant(s) managed to slip away despite the presence of patrols on and at either end of the bridge. The funeral procession turned into a mass demonstration against the CUP.⁵¹ The Unionists publicly denied the “nonsensical” charges,⁵² although they were widely blamed. Two days after Fehmi’s murder, *Volkan* published an incriminating letter that was received by Dervish Vahdeti from an anonymous officer that threatened him with a shining bayonet in the heart and a nickel bullet in the brain if *Volkan*’s publication were not suspended. The letter was dated a day before the murder. Dervish Vahdeti was adamant that the Islamic government would not become a plaything in the hands of Şeref Street, and the Ottomans would refuse to become victims of Ahmed Rıza and sworn naturalists of his type.⁵³ The police investigation was inconclusive, although two policemen were found to be at fault for neglect of duty.⁵⁴ A few days later, on 11 April (29 Mart), the commander of the Imperial Army (*Hassa Ordu*, First Army) issued condemnations of the Society of Muhammad and warned the rank and file against joining it. First Army soldiers complained that the officers had been mentally preparing them to kill the turbaned clerics upon orders.⁵⁵

The counterrevolutionary incident began on the night of 13 April 13 (31 Mart), less than nine months from the day of revolution, in the barracks of the light infantry battalions (*avcı taburlar*) of the Third Army Corps. This was a force brought in from Macedonia because of its proven loyalty to the CUP, and as a counterweight against, and partial replacement for, the First Army Corps [the Imperial Guard (*Hassa Ordusu*)]. The latter was a numerically and politically significant force that had many privileges because of its special relation

⁵¹ *İkdam*, No. 5347, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325/23 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Dünkü Hadise-i Askeriyenin Mebdei,” p. 1. According to Nadi, an ardent Unionist, the opposition unfairly blamed the CUP, and by his own admission, the accusations were believed by a deceived public. Nadi, *İhtilal ve İnkılab*, p. 19; Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 100. On the press meeting see *Volkan*, No. 98, 8 April 1909/26 Mart /17 Rebiyülevvel 1325, “Miting,” p. 4. By one estimate, the funeral was attended by 30,000, although higher numbers were also claimed. Nuri *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, vol. 3, pp. 1180–1181.

⁵² *Tanin*, No. 248, 9 April 1909/27 Mart 1325/18 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Fırsattan İstifade,” p. 1.

⁵³ *Volkan*’s anger was particularly directed toward Ahmed Rıza, Hüseyin Cahid, Bahaeddin Şakir, Dr. Nazım, Rahmi, and Cavid. *Volkan*, No. 98, 8 April 1909/26 Mart 1325/17 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti-La Türki Gazetesi,” pp. 1–4.

⁵⁴ ZB 353/74, 9 April 1909/27 Mart 1325. The later insistence of the Chamber during the counter-revolution did not change the results. ZB 332/27, 20 April 1909/7 Nisan 1325.

⁵⁵ *Volkan*, No. 106, 16 April 1909/3 Nisan 1325/25 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Umum Ordu Emri,” p. 1. *Volkan* claimed the soldiers were also asked whether they liked their nation or their Sultan, which it found absurd. *Volkan*, No. 103, 13 April 1909/31 March /22 Rebiyülevvel 1325, “*Volkan*,” pp. 1–2. Others confirmed instructions from officers to soldiers. McCullagh *Fall of Abdülhamid* p. 68. Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, p. 329.

with the sultan, and it was a cause of concern for the CUP. When Kamil Pasha intended to remove the *avcıs* from Istanbul, citing military needs, his motives were seriously questioned. Hailing the infantrymen as heroes and defenders of the constitution, the Unionists had opposed the move and used it as one reason to interpellate Kamil Pasha.⁵⁶

As it turned out, that very force became the most serious threat to the CUP's existence. The infantrymen or *avcıs* began their revolt by arresting their officers around 6:00 or 7:00 at night and then marching toward the Chamber, assembling at Ayasofia and Sultan Ahmed squares. Meanwhile, they dispatched small groups of soldiers to various military barracks to incite others to join. A few hours after midnight, the soldiers in front of the Chamber numbered five or six thousand. As news circulated in the city, soldiers and the public continued to pour into the square, their numbers growing throughout the night and into the morning. The same scene seems to have been played out in front of the Ministry of War, where the soldiers fired arms into the air throughout the night. Minister of War Rıza Pasha, along with Prime Minister Hilmi, showed reluctance to suppress this behavior. In the absence of their officers, at Sultan Ahmed the soldiers chose a sergeant (*çavuş*) as their chief commander, a gesture whose symbolism was not lost on any of the eyewitnesses.⁵⁷

At the square soldiers were joined by several groups, the most significant being thousands of teachers of religion (*hocas*), students of religion (*softas*), lower-ranking clerics (*imams*) and preachers. These protested the cultural attitude and legal policies of the CUP, including the Committee's liberal stance on minorities.⁵⁸ Another major grievance was mandatory military service for students of religion.⁵⁹ Many civil officials took an active interest and, according to some, played an important role. Kamil Pasha had gathered around

⁵⁶ They had questioned why soldiers from other places could not be found in place of this critical force. *Tanin*, No. 192, 12 February 1909/30 Kanun-ı Sani 1324/20 Muharrem 1327, "Tebeddül-i Vükela," p. 1. *Fikir Hareketleri*, No. 87, 22 June 1935, pp. 133-134 (esp. 134); Kemal, *Memoirs*, pp. 324-325, 332; McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 104; Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani Vol. 3*, p. 1178. Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 100-104.

⁵⁷ Yunus Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 33-34, 39, 41. For conspicuous absence of officers, see Ali Cevat *İkinci Meşrutiyet*, pp. 88-89; *İkdam*, No. 5347, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325/23 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Dünkü Hadise-i Askeriye," p. 1; Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani, Vol. 3*, pp. 1185-1186. Ismail Kemal described the Chamber the next morning as follows: "The neighbourhood of the Chamber and the building itself were filled with troops. There were about 25,000 of them outside, while the hall and galleries of the Chamber were crowded with soldiers, all armed, without a single officer, and with a good sprinkling of the public." *Memoirs*, p. 332.

⁵⁸ In addition to the discussion in *Volkan* on these issues, for the participants and the minority question see David Farhi, "The Şeriat as a Political Slogan – Or the 'Incident of the 31 Mart'," *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, No. 3 (1971), pp. 275-299 (esp. pp. 275, 281); Shaw, *History*, pp. 279-280; Ahmad, *Young Turks*. At least one pro-CUP eyewitness maintained the soldiers forced many in the streets to join in, making their support "by consent and constraint." Nadi *İhtilal*, pp. 40-41. Another commented that the soldiers were extremely protective of the teachers of religion. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani, Vol. 3*, p. 1185.

⁵⁹ Danişmend, *31 Mart Vak'ası*, p. 22.

himself high-ranking officials of the Porte, as well as scores of lower-ranking officials.⁶⁰

The *Şeyhülislam*, whom the ministers rushed to the scene to learn the demands, was presented with a five-article list from the infantrymen. The first, second, and fifth of these asked for the resignations of Minister of War Rıza Pasha and Prime Minister Hilmi, which in effect meant the fall of the cabinet; the expulsion of five prominent Unionist statesmen and journalists (according to *Volkan*, these were Ahmed Rıza, Cahid, Rahmi, Talat, and Şakir); and a guarantee of immunity from punishment and responsibility for the incident. The third demand, which has captured the imagination of many, was restoration of *şeriat*.⁶¹ Yet the fourth, critical demand called for the “banishment and change of their superior educated officers [and] the reassignment of the fired ranker officers who were treated unjustly.”⁶² Also heard were cries against the harsh new Prussian style of discipline and training, which had forced soldiers to ignore the call for prayer and religious ablutions, time-honored rites.⁶³ These were obvious reactions to the CUP’s administrative and cultural policies.

A CUP founder and a medical doctor, İbrahim Temo, recalled that he had been stopped and interrogated when rushing to rescue two wounded educated officers. He was permitted passage only after his companion pointed to Temo’s beard as evidence that he could not possibly be an educated officer.⁶⁴ Such markers occasionally proved fatal. As one eyewitness put it, the soldiers killed any educated officer they could set their hands on in barracks, and even dragged them out of their homes to be killed in front of their families.⁶⁵

The infantrymen’s demands linked religion to the injustices of their situation. Their insistence on *kısas* resonated with *Volkan*’s recent discussions. As many came from Macedonia, on occasion they spoke of long-running grievances at

⁶⁰ Danişmend held that those made jobless because of staff reductions played an important part in the anti-Unionist movement. See *31 Mart Vak’ası*, p. 22; *BDFa* Vol. 20, Doc. 26, 31 January 1910, p. 110. For the participation of the Sublime Porte and dismissed officials see Farhi, “Şeriat,” pp. 280–281. See also Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, p. 328.

⁶¹ For these demands see Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 35–36. For overwhelming emphasis on the third demand see Farhi, “Şeriat,” pp. 275–276; Ahmad, *Young Turks*, pp. 40–45; Shaw, *History*, pp. 279–280. For a description of this uprising as an expression of religious fanaticism see *BDFa*, Doc. 18, pp. 22–23.

⁶² Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 36. For a more abbreviated version see *İkdam*, No. 5348, 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325/24 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Evvelki Günkü Vakayı,” p. 1. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani* Vol. 3, p. 1183. Nadi, *İhtilal*, p. 51. Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani* vol. 3, p. 1184.

⁶³ TFR.1.MN 18822, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325. For a letter from soldiers during the revolt against their commanders who had forced them to ignore the call for prayers, see *Volkan*, No. 106, 16 April 1909/3 April 125 Rebiyülevvel 1325, “*Volkan* Gazetesi İdarehanesine, Birinci Nişancı Taburundan,” pp. 3–4. Ali Cevat *İkinci Meşrutiyet* p. 47. Akşin remarks that under the old regime the exercises and drills were much more lax and soldiers had used the occasion to escape training which were now deprived of. Akşin *31 Mart Olayı* pp. 46–47, 312, 314–315. McCullagh *Fall of Abdülhamid* pp. 63–64, 67.

⁶⁴ Temo, *İnkılabı Milliye*, pp. 221–222. ⁶⁵ Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, vol. 3, p. 1186.

home, which had worsened in the new era. They also highlighted the link between religion and the constitution for mobilizing the ordinary soldier:

When we were in Monastir, we used to bear the roaming about of our father's murderers in front of our eyes. The despotic era's influence prevented us from doing anything. However, our officers told us that with the removal of the era of despotism, *şeriat* would take its place, and whatever the Qur'an (*kelam-ı kadim*) says will be done. We thus listened to it, put our lives in danger, and brought about the present constitutional era. Now, however, neither the *şeriat* is put in place nor anything else. They have people assassinated and hide the assassin. Where is *şeriat*? Why don't they bring out the murderer and hang him? Does not the Qur'an prescribe an eye for an eye (*kisas*)? Look! Today we want *şeriat* and justice. We will stay here for a month if that's what it takes to put *şeriat* into effect. The money in our pockets will suffice to sustain us. May our lives be sacrificed for *şeriat* and justice!⁶⁶

Close to the Chamber, an old, bearded major lectured the soldiers on his readiness to die for *şeriat*, even at his age. A dismissed soldier and father of a small child, he thought that his suffering was not consistent with *şeriat*, a lamentation that brought bystanders to tears, including the deputies.⁶⁷

Many deputies had started to trickle into the Chamber as soon as they heard the news. Forty had appeared by 4:00 a.m.; by 7:00 a.m. there were about eighty. The deputies who had set out for the Palace in carriages were forced to return by armed threats, and one (Arslan Bey, a Beirut deputy) was fatally shot because of his resemblance to the combative Unionist, Chamber deputy, and editor of *Tanin*, Hüseyin Cahid. Shortly before, the Minister of Justice had lost his life because he had been mistaken for the head of the Chamber, Ahmed Rıza. The minister of navy, on the other hand, escaped death after suffering injuries.⁶⁸ This was the extent of the harm to prominent personalities, but many officers had been killed already, and more awaited this fate. The Unionist press, including the newspapers *Tanin* and *Şura-yı Ümmet*, were sacked.⁶⁹

When the *Şeyhülislam* relayed the soldiers' request to the cabinet, it stepped down, followed by the head of the Chamber, who officially resigned. Prime Minister Hilmi Pasha's resignation letter promised greater attention to *şeriat* in every institution.⁷⁰ The sultan accepted the cabinet's resignation and relayed it to the Chamber by First Secretary Ali Cevat. His message also granted amnesty

⁶⁶ See *İkdam*, No. 5347, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325/23 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Dünkü Hadise-i Askeriye," p. 1. Nadi recounts a very similar speech by an infantryman. Nadi, *İhtilal*, p. 40. See also McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid*, p. 103.

⁶⁷ *Tanin*, nn., 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325/6 Rebiyülâhır 1327, "Cehennemî Bir Gün," pp. 1-2. Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, pp. 309-310.

⁶⁸ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 38, 42. See *İkdam*, No. 5347, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325/23 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Dünkü Hadise-i Askeriye," p. 1; *Tanin*, nn., 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325/6 Rebiyülâhır 1327, "Cehennemî Bir Gün," pp. 1-2.

⁶⁹ Osman Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, vol. 3, p. 1186. For later punishment of some of the perpetrators against the two Unionist organs, see DH.EUM.THR 3-16, 16 Ağustos 1325/29 August 1909; DH.MUI 58/16, 24 January 1910/11 Kanun-ı Sani 1325.

⁷⁰ Ali Cevat, *İkinci Meşrutîyet*, pp. 48-49 (esp. 49).

to the soldiers, discharged them of responsibility, and ordered more diligent attendance to the prescriptions of *şeriat*, though after reiterating that the government was Islamic already. The soldiers were invited to return to the barracks and the public to their homes and businesses.⁷¹

The Liberal newspaper *İkdam*, which reported these incidents, despite its general accuracy, made a significant omission. As *Tanin* was later to disclose, a prominent Liberal deputy, Ismail Kemal, had immediately called for a vote of no confidence against the cabinet and formed a Chamber delegate to request a new prime minister from the Palace. These calls were made before the cabinet had resigned and against the wish of some deputies.⁷² Ismail Kemal was to admit this much in his memoirs: A delegate of ten deputies led by him, in company of the *Şeyhülislam*, had gone to the Palace to submit the Chamber's resolution for the cabinet's dismissal and ask for a new one. It had taken the sultan a long time to decide who should be chief minister and minister of war, but he had finally settled on Tevfik Pasha and Edhem Pasha.⁷³ It was clear that the resignation of the cabinet was not self motivated and that it came after being presented to the cabinet as a *fait accompli*. Another significant development was the election of Ismail Kemal as the president of the Chamber by the deputies present.⁷⁴ Putting aside the question of the legality of these undertakings, especially given the small number of deputies in the Chamber, Ismail Kemal defended his actions on the grounds of urgency and the need to end the insecurities. He was quick to defend his sincerity; he had refused to accept various ministerial positions offered by the sultan that very night, including the minister of interior.⁷⁵ In this light, the claim that after the CUP's retreat to Salonica the Liberals had stepped in to assume political power gains some credibility.⁷⁶ Such maneuverings were both feeble and short lived, however.

If it was the first secretary who brought the sultan's message to the Chamber, for the rankers it was the *Şeyhülislam* that was chosen for the job. The first secretary, who accompanied the *Şeyhülislam* to a room where the message was read aloud, recalled the disparate concerns of the clerics and soldiers. Upon assuring the soldiers that the sultan was ready to comply with the rankers' demands in full, they inquired about the fate of the minister of war, whom they held responsible for their plight. Those who insisted on the observance of *şeriat* in all institutions, however, were not the soldiers but the clerics.⁷⁷ A soldier

⁷¹ *İkdam*, No. 5347, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325/23 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Dünkü Hadise-i Askeriye," p. 1.

⁷² The eyewitness account was provided by Ismail Hakkı, the Baghdad deputy who had opposed Ismail Kemal. *Tanin*, No. nn., 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325/6 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Cehennemî Bir Gun," pp. 1-2.

⁷³ Ismail Kemal, *Memoirs*, pp. 333-335. ⁷⁴ Ismail Kemal, *Memoirs*, p. 335.

⁷⁵ Ismail Kemal, *Memoirs*, pp. 339-340.

⁷⁶ Shaw, *Reform*, p. 280; Tunaya, *Siyasal Partiler*, pp. 145-153; Ahmad, *Young Turks*, p. 43; Halil Halid Bey, "The Origin of the Revolt in Turkey" in *Nineteenth Century and After*, Vol. LXV (1909), pp. 755-760 (esp 758-760); Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, pp. 323, 328.

⁷⁷ Ali Cevat, *İkinci Meşrutiyet*, pp. 50-51.

with a white beard (a sign that he could not be an educated officer), for example, approached Ali Cevat and asked the whereabouts of the Minister of War Rıza Pasha; and upon hearing of Ali Cevat's lack of knowledge, the soldier replied, "if I find that cursed [Rıza Pasha] who deprived me of promotion, I will kill him." Examples of soldiers' complaint about promotion and salary abounded.⁷⁸

When the soldiers at the square heard the news, they cheered with cries of "long live the sultan," but they continued to gather at the square into the night, demanding to see the new prime minister and minister of war in person. The Liberals elicited a surprising degree of sympathy for the anti-CUP rebellion and they lauded the persistence of the soldiers who, after a very long day, even when the public was returning home, "restlessly awaited the future prime minister and minister of war," determined "to put an end to the tyranny of the secret society (*cemiyet-i hafiye*), and to institute true justice within limits set forth by the Islamic *şeria*."⁷⁹ Only when the new minister of war made an appearance between 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning with assurances that the sultan would grant their wishes did they begin to disperse, yelling long live the sultan and firing guns in celebration.⁸⁰ Still, news of fresh clashes and death of officers continued.⁸¹

When the Chamber met the next day, 15 April, it reviewed the rankers' demands from the various army corps, including the Imperial Guards, which had a large proportion of rankers⁸² and had suffered a reduction of 1,400 officers.⁸³ The Imperial Guardsmen had joined the infantrymen,⁸⁴ and now, together with more than 7,500 ranker officers of various army corps, especially the Second and Fourth, addressed the Chamber as follows:

We have a request from our nation's just deputies: From the proclamation of constitution up to now, an unfair perception of the ranker officers is being nurtured. That is, the seeds of discord that were sown some time ago between the educated and ranker officers began to grow at this time. As known by the esteemed Chamber, we are also among this holy fatherland's loyal servants (*bendegan*) [but] for whatever reason, some of our educated comrades in arms looked at us condescendingly. This is [to be blamed] entirely on the secret design of our ministers of armed forces. Recently, the battalion cadres were reorganized, eighty five percent of the ranker officers were fired, and the [rest] began to be dismissed one by one. And now, in order to prevent public expression of dissatisfaction, they administer an exam and [with that excuse] it is clear they will fire all ranker officers. Thus, like educated officers, we request that of our friends who are fired, those deserving of retirement be retired in a just manner and we request that their pensions not

⁷⁸ Ali Cevat, *İkinci Meşrutiyet*, pp. 53, 60.

⁷⁹ *İkdam*, No. 5348, 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325/24 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "1 Nisan Gecesi," p. 1.

⁸⁰ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 44–48. *İkdam*, No. 5348, 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325/24 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "1 Nisan Gecesi," p. 1.

⁸¹ Nadi, *İhtilal*, p. 51. ⁸² David Farhi, "Şeriat," p. 281.

⁸³ Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, pp. 46–47; McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid* pp. 88–89; Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, pp. 329–330.

⁸⁴ See *Fikir Hareketleri*, No. 87, 22 June 1935, pp. 133–134 (esp. 134).

be lower than 500 liras. Those not deserving of retirement, as long as they are considered useless [and] on the condition that they will never be drafted again, should be given a monetary gift according to their ranks from 500 to 1200 liras . . .

The officers went on to make the following requests:

First, to [assign] ranker officers to the Army Corps and have several members in the military commission in Istanbul and the Higher Military Council from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant General. Second, the War Ministry should officially announce in the Army that there are no such labels as educated and ranker, and to announce in the newspapers that they are all this fatherland's children. Third, not to appoint ranker officers to all positions in the 5th, 6th, and 7th Army Corps and to assign them justly. In return, if in other Army Corps there are eight educated officers for every two rankers, change this balance in a just manner. We request acceptance of the just demands enumerated above. If they are not accepted, dreadful events may happen in the Army Corps; for the good of the fatherland we inform you of this and wait for an answer.⁸⁵

As an eyewitness pointed out, this was no request, but an ultimatum, and the Chamber thoroughly approved all that was demanded and submitted them to the Ministry of War.⁸⁶

From this demand, it was obvious that the uprising was fueled by the conflict between the educated and the rankers. Even foreign eyewitnesses, with their hyper-sensitivity to religious rhetoric, were aware of it.⁸⁷ This is not to deny the close cultural affinity of rankers with religious forces, or to downplay a critique of injustice in the language of religion against forces of irreligion, but to emphasize the disparity between the concerns of the participants. Without this institutional conflict, a counterrevolution, or for that matter, a revolution, was hard to imagine.

The records of the cabinet meeting, in which most ministers participated, showed that they had indeed been taken by surprise. They were quite hostile to the rebellion and to the Society of Muhammad in particular. Upset about the inflammatory and purportedly anti-constitutional writings in *Volkan*, they took immediate legal action against it, only to learn that the Justice Ministry employees were dragging their feet "for no apparent reason." Their sympathy allowed the newspaper to publish for a week after the incident. In retaliation, the cabinet promised swift action against the disobedient and called for the provincial administration to bring to an immediate halt the Society of Muhammad's recruitment efforts.⁸⁸ Shortly after, the cabinet approved immediate salary

⁸⁵ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 55–57. ⁸⁶ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 57, 59–60.

⁸⁷ Buxton, *Turkey in Revolution*, pp. 50–51, 92; McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 88–89; Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, pp. 258, 329–330.

⁸⁸ The latter was prompted in particular by the recruitment activities of the Society of Muhammad in İskeçe in the province of Edirne. MV 126: 53. 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325/24 Rebiyülevvel 1327. BEO 265105, 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325/24 Rebiyülevvel 1327. Same order for shutdown was issued for *Hilal*, a religious newspaper that began publication during counterrevolution. BEO 265300, 21 April/8 Nisan 1325/1 Rebiyühahir 1327; 22 April 1909/9 Nisan 1325/2 Rebiyühahir 1327.

payment for the Istanbul police force, after citing the dangers of not doing so.⁸⁹ The decision was extended to all employees in the capital the same day.⁹⁰

The center's communication with the provinces were emphatic about the cabinet's constitutional commitments and the Chamber's safety. Yet, in the first few days especially, the center toned down and even distorted the state of affairs in the capital to calm the public and administrators. Although concerned with the growing movement, its larger fear was with the forces mobilized against the counterrevolution. The earliest reports, for instance, related that Istanbul was calm and quiet, the constitution safe, and that the deceased deputy, Arslan Bey, had been killed accidentally by stray bullets of soldiers returning to the barracks.⁹¹ Another recommended plain denial of all rumors about disturbances in Istanbul, justifying it as a pure and patriotic duty to prevent the spread of disturbances to the provinces.⁹²

For the government, the prospect of a military advance to Istanbul was unwelcome. Not only did it promise a bloody confrontation in the cosmopolitan capital, but it left an equally dangerous military vacuum in Macedonia that could be exploited by hostile neighbors. Upon receiving anxious telegrams from the provinces about the public's inability to contact their deputies, the government attempted to calm fears by reporting the deputies' overall safety. It also explained that because of the turn of public opinion against the Committee, some, like the Salonica deputy, had gone into hiding and could not be reached. It strongly cautioned against hasty military action to quell the rebellion, citing the danger it posed to the survival of the constitution; and also advised the Third Army not to commit any mistakes, so as not to encourage Bulgarians and other adversaries to inflict irreparable damage.⁹³ The government's fear of a military march to the capital was justified. The anxiety over the fate of Rumelia and the reaction of Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbians, Montenegrins, and Russians over the incidents in Istanbul extended to all groups, including the CUP, which, like the government, was worried about the prospect of action by Bulgaria in particular.⁹⁴

Yet, given the recent history of mobilization in Macedonia, it was hardly possible for the CUP not to react. On 15 April, after reviewing the ranker officers' petition, the Chamber listened to a CUP telegram from Yanya that for the first time revealed the plans of the central Committee – the earliest of its kind:

The cabinet that is formed in a manner not befitting the constitution, and for a detestable purpose, must fall immediately and the previous cabinet should take its place. According

⁸⁹ MV 126: 56, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

⁹⁰ MV 126: 57, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

⁹¹ TFR.1.MN 18822, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325. BEONGG 704, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325, p. 27.

⁹² TFR.1.MN 18822, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325.

⁹³ BEONGG 704, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325, p. 27. TFR.1.MN 18822, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325. BEO 265675, 18 April 1909/5 Nisan 1325.

⁹⁴ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 113–116.

to the protestation of our CUP center, the presumptuous and the murderers should be struck severely with the fist of the law. We have absolutely no trust in the present cabinet. We, the various elements of the nation, have emphatically sworn to march on Istanbul in unity.⁹⁵

The CUP telegrams to the sultan and the first secretary, in a newly rediscovered religious language, accused the cabinet of being against the constitutional and Islamic laws.⁹⁶

This forced the cabinet to explain its actions, or its inaction, and to make its best effort to counter the possibility of a march into the capital. The minister of interior blamed the government's inaction on the wide scope of the uprising, which had embraced all soldiers and left nothing reliable under its control; but he reasoned that the scale of uprising could have expanded even further, and the situation worsened considerably, had the government done otherwise. Whatever could be granted of the soldiers' demands was granted, he added, and tranquility restored after changes in the cabinet, the Chamber, and official publication of resignations. Naturally, since the state could not remain without a government, a new cabinet was formed, and the religiously sanctioned principles of constitution (*usul-ı meşrua-ı meşrutiyet*) were not violated in any form or manner. Furthermore, the cabinet had put forward a program and gained the Chamber's approval after negotiation; unfortunately, the minister added, some foolish publications had propagated that the new cabinet was in violation of the constitution, causing undue excitement among the public. If the religiously sanctioned principles of the constitution were in danger, retorted the minister, the one-million-strong inhabitants of Istanbul who had suffered the wrongdoings of the old regime would rise in its defense, thus implying that there was no need for an outside force to intervene on their behalf. At the end, in the name of the country and after invoking the dangers of the opportunistic enemies, he invited everyone to calm, moderation, and unity.⁹⁷

Similarly, the prime minister issued an empire-wide telegram denying that the constitution had been abolished or that it was connected to the recent events in Istanbul, calling both rumors circulated by some *şeria*-minded types in provinces. He added that the Chamber had convened its normal session with approximately two hundred members on 15 April (Thursday), and that on the following Monday, the new cabinet was to introduce its program to the Chamber and ask for a vote of confidence. Furthermore, during the oath-taking ceremony of the new cabinet, in the sultan's presence, the sultan had reaffirmed the importance of the fundamental laws and constitutional principles, and had stressed the unity of nation and state. The prime minister thus encouraged the provincial administration

⁹⁵ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 57–58. For a number of similar telegrams from the CUP to the Chamber from a variety of locations, as well as some less severe ones in the name of the public, see *İkdam*, No. 5353, April 20 1909/7 Nisan 1325/29 Rebiyülevvel 1327, “Meclis-i Mebusan,” p. 1.

⁹⁶ For some of these see Danişmend, *31 Mart Vak'ası*, pp. 35–36, 40, 60–61, 63, 66–67.

⁹⁷ TFR.1.MN 18822, 16 April 1909/3 Nisan 1325.

to invite the people to be calm and to use proper language when notifying the public.⁹⁸

Between the Porte and the Palace, it was obvious now that the former was in better control and had not relinquished its antagonism toward the latter. Surely, the Sublime Porte stood to lose a major chance to restore its lost authority if the CUP returned to the capital. But its concerns were not entirely self-serving. Ottoman officials from Bulgaria were reporting that emboldened Bulgarian officers were ready to take advantage of the new situation and were pressing their government to take action. If the issue was not soon resolved, insisted the officials, an attack was imminent. This had created great anxiety among the Muslims of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.⁹⁹

The Liberals, after a surprisingly strong initial support for the anti-CUP rebellion, began to backtrack by citing internal and external dangers and resorting to an uncharacteristic religious rhetoric.¹⁰⁰ In a highly charged symbolic display, on 17 April, the Liberals, the CUP, the Armenian Dashnaktsutiun, the Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian (*Başkimi Merkez Kulübü*), Kurdish, Circassian, and other groups announced their unity in a joint declaration reminiscent of the days of revolution. Their first stated premise was setting aside differences to unite and defend the constitutional administration. They also formed a joint association with members from each group for meetings with the Chamber and the cabinet, and to unite all relevant parties and societies, groups, and newspapers. Whenever the constitution was invoked, it was qualified as being religiously legitimate (*meşrutiyet-i şeria* or *meşrutiyet-i meşrua*).¹⁰¹ Sabahaddin himself addressed the soldiers. He used the language of the Qur'an and examples from *hadith* to argue that Islam's message was peace, exhorting the soldiers to reconcile with and obey their officers. He also gave advice about good treatment of non-Muslim men and women, foreign and compatriot, and ended his defense of the constitution with the cry of "long live the *şeriat!*"¹⁰²

Contemporary public declarations from high-ranking clerics were surprising only in the lengths they went to defend the constitution. Steadfast against the onslaught of the allegedly ignorant clerics, they also took a surprisingly hostile stance toward the Palace – even the sultan – by citing the many abuses that were later to find their way into the *fetva* that deposed him. Starting from the second day of counterrevolution (15 April), and even before the Liberals changed their stance, the higher-ranking clerics publicly declared their unconditional

⁹⁸ BEOVGD 265211, 16 April 1909. ⁹⁹ BEONGG 695, p. 17, 18 April 1325/5 Nisan 1325.

¹⁰⁰ *İkdam*, No. 5350, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "En Büyük Tehlike Nedir?" p. 1. They also reported their refusal to publish articles regarding the soldiers' complaints against their officers. *İkdam*, No. 5350, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327, p. 4.

¹⁰¹ *İkdam*, No. 5351, 18 April 1909/5 Nisan 1325/27 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Heyet-i Müttefik-i Osmaniye'nin Beyannamesidir." p. 1. Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp 75–78 (on Dashnak participation see p. 144).

¹⁰² *İkdam*, No. 5352, 19 April 1909/6 Nisan 1325/28 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Sultanzade Sabahaddin Bey Efendinin Osmanlı Askerine Hitaben Açık Mektupları: Asker Kardaşlar," p. 2.

backing for the Chamber and maintained the constitution's compatibility with *şeriat*, going so far as to call defense of the constitution a religious duty. Further, by recounting the religious book-burnings during the despotic period, they highlighted their hostility toward the Palace. The announcements added that with the exception of the resigned deputies, or the escapees, the remaining Muslim and non-Muslim deputies had the clerics' and the nation's confidence, and all further resignations would be considered betrayals. They also pleaded with the soldiers to abide by the clerics' advice, to be obedient, and to preserve peace and order.¹⁰³ A few days later they steered away from accusing the sultan of direct involvement in the affair, and instead attributed the anti-constitutional mongering to a lowly, traitorous bunch surrounding him; but the late and minimal clarification not only betrayed their lingering bitterness, it also managed to implicate the Palace.¹⁰⁴ As they continued to berate the soldiers and condemn *Volkan* for its inflammatory articles, as well as the clerics who misused religious garb to fool the public, they made an interesting remark that revealed their worries about ramifications abroad:

Using the exalted *şeriat* as a tool has blemished the *ulema* in the eyes of the Muslim public, and tainted both the *ulema* and our *şeriat* in the eyes of Europe. As long as the European governments make daily material progress and increase their grandeur and power, and as long as our authority and power declines lower and lower to the point of disappearance, the [Europeans] attribute this fault to our *şeriat* and *ulema*, and they say that it is the religion of Muslims that has prevented their progress.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, *Beyan ül-Hak*, the official publication of high-ranking clerics, defended the religiously sanctioned constitution. After a brief reference to the sultan's recent approval, *Beyan ül-Hak* also condemned the old regime for tyranny from which it claimed there had been respite only recently, thanks to the constitution. Inviting the soldiers to calm and obedience, it claimed more harm was brought by ignorant clerics than by self-interested violators of religion, the latter being a not-so-flattering reference to the CUP.¹⁰⁶ It also took issue with *Volkan*'s purported request of the sultan on 14 April to abolish the constitution and close the Chamber.¹⁰⁷ Even stronger condemnations of tyranny and praise of the pro-constitutional soldiers were voiced by the editor's

¹⁰³ *İkdam*, No. 5349, 16 April 1909/3 Nisan 1325/25 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Cemiyet-i İslamiye'nin Beyannamesidir," p. 1. For the same announcement see also Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 62–64. For additional elaboration see *İkdam*, No. 5350, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Cemiyet-i İlmiye Tarafından Gönderilen Heyet-i Nasiha," p. 2. Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 155–157.

¹⁰⁴ *İkdam*, No. 5354, 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/30 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Asker Evladlarımıza Hitabımız," pp. 3–4.

¹⁰⁵ *İkdam*, No. 5354, 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/30 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Asker Evladlarımıza Hitabımız," p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *İkdam*, No. 5349, 16 April 1909/3 Nisan 1909/25 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Ahalimize, Mu'azzez Asker Kardışlarımıza Bir Nasihat-ı Diniye," p. 1. *İkdam* No. 5350, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Kanun Mü'temen," p. 1.

¹⁰⁷ *İkdam*, No. 5350, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325/26 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i İslamiye'den Tebliğ Olunmuşdur," p. 4.

son.¹⁰⁸ Finally, in a public declaration, the association of higher-ranking clerics publicly supported the formation of the United Ottoman Association (Heyet-i Müttefika-ı Osmaniye), and stressed the need for unity between various Ottoman elements at such a critical moment.¹⁰⁹

This incident was as shocking to the leaders of the Society of Muhammed as to anyone else. Not only did they profess to know nothing about the soldiers' demands, they were still under the impression, as was everyone else, that the event had been masterminded by the sultan and was under his control. Like the initial Liberal reaction, they celebrated the soldiers' uprising against the occupiers of Şeref street who had dominated the government, and cheered the fall of the minister of war, the chief minister, and the cabinet with them. In a departure from the Liberals, they welcomed the sultan's involvement and even hailed it as proof that the grant of freedom was a prerogative of the sultan, a statement that served as the sole basis for accusations of *Volkan's* anti-constitutionalism. What they said about the constitution, however, certainly went against what was being claimed in their name from every corner. On the first day of events, the Society implored the sultan not to shut the Chamber for even a second, and to dismiss any advice to the contrary as a betrayal of religion and fatherland, after a passionate defense of the constitution, consultation, liberty, and all.¹¹⁰ The next day, while congratulating the soldiers for their brave deed, the Society protested the label "reactionary" that was being hurled at them; it spoke of a future system that would be a blend of European civilization and Islam.¹¹¹ Yet the Society pleaded with the sultan to select a cabinet that excluded both the CUP and the Liberals.¹¹²

Volkan called for an end to disorder and violence and invited everyone to peace and reconciliation. It absolved the educated officers of firing rankers by arguing that the blame lay elsewhere (with the CUP) and called on the soldiers to submit to officers unreservedly, as the Qur'an had ordered obedience to superiors. Letters from rankers who claimed no enmity toward the educated officers appeared in its pages: They had only thrown off a small number of officers to reassign a few unjustly fired in their place. The Society of Muhammed combined its calls for calm to the rebels with appeals to educated officers to stop discriminating against the rankers in the future.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ *İkdam*, No. 5352, 19 April 1909/6 Nisan 1325/28 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Meşrutiyet Meşru'dur," p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ *İkdam*, No. 5352, 19 April 1909/6 Nisan 1325/28 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Heyet-i Müttefika-ı Osmaniye'ye," p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Volkan*, No. 104, 14 April 1909/1 April /23 Rebiyülevvel 1325, "Halife-i İslam Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektub," p. 1; *Volkan*, No. 104, 14 April 1909/1 April /23 Rebiyülevvel 1325, "Dünkü Hal," pp. 1-2.

¹¹¹ *Volkan*, No. 105, 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325/24 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "İnkılab-ı Şer'i," p. 1.

¹¹² *Volkan*, No. 104, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325/23 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Halife-i İslam Abdülhamid Han Hazretlerine Açık Mektub," p. 1.

¹¹³ *Volkan*, No. 107, 17 April 1909/4 Nisan 1325 /26 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Kahraman Askerlerimize," pp. 3-4; *Volkan*, No. 108, 18 April 1909/5 Nisan 1325/27 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Umum Asker Kardeşlerimize Bir Nasihat," p. 1; *Volkan*, No. 108, 18 April 1909/5

In the coming days, the government grew wary of the provinces. It continued to release misinformation about the normality of the situation in Istanbul. It was forced to admit, however, that the provinces were in a state of conflict and unrest, especially Adana, which was experiencing infighting among the public, a common euphemism for ethnic conflict. The center advised the provinces to seek the assistance of clerics to provide counsel to the public, invite them to peace with one another, and restore calm.¹¹⁴

Not convinced by government assurances, the army, the CUP branches, and the public in provinces kept asking the Chamber about the safety of the deputies and the constitution. This prompted the Chamber to ask the government for a declaration about the deputies' safety, the Chamber's continued and uninterrupted meetings, and the falsity of rumors about the restoration of censures and the spy administration. The cabinet promptly agreed and outlined its activities but decided against an official declaration lest it made the public even more apprehensive.¹¹⁵

Easy Victory

The army that rode into Istanbul from Macedonia to defeat the counterrevolution, the self-declared Action Army, accomplished everything in less than two weeks. If the July revolution had been instigated by a clandestine network that succeeded in mobilizing large numbers, eight months of open activity had turned Rumelia into a CUP stronghold. This time around, however, the military commanders in Istanbul did not have to relive their earlier confusions and they offered immediate cooperation. What armed resistance there was, was independent, and not from the military command.

That this was not a CUP-led force was suggested by the Action Army itself, an assertion uncritically accepted by some scholars and supported further by pointing to its old-regime commander, Mahmud Şevket Pasha. Yet dissociation was a standard CUP ploy after early mobilization had taken place under its name. The dropping of the CUP's name and the election of a prominent old-regime commander happened rather late; both actions were taken in the hope of dispelling fears about the CUP's future role in the new administration. Counterrevolution had been, after all, an anti-CUP affair.

As proof, one may look at activities in the CUP strongholds. The mobilization in Rumelia began almost immediately and was reminiscent of the patterns in July. The most prominent heroes of revolutions, among them Niyazi and Enver, were back in the saddle; Enver left his post as military attaché in Berlin to join the gathering forces in Salonica, and Niyazi was doing what he did best in Monastir,

Nisan 1325/27 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Asker Kardeşlerimizden Selamet-i Vatan Namına Rica," pp. 1-2.

¹¹⁴ By crossing out the word *imha* (destruction), the communication attempted to lessen the gravity of the threat to constitutional administration. BEOVGD 265238, 19 April 1909/28 Rebiyülahir 1327.

¹¹⁵ MV 126: 63/1-2. 20 April 1909/7 Nisan 1325/29 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

soon announcing the readiness of eight thousand there alone. The Başkimi Albanian clubs, with their leadership in Salonica, also announced their preparedness to defend the constitution. To this end, arms and ammunition were distributed from local armories to active and inactive reservists and to the public. Only a few days after the Istanbul incident, on the afternoon of 16 April, the Action Army, composed of the forces of the Third and Second Armies (which were thoroughly dominated by the CUP), began to amass at Çatalca barracks in the vicinity of Istanbul, a location that had remained pro-constitutional. Despite the presence of some Albanian and city public, however, irregular forces were not organized as extensively as they had been in July.¹¹⁶ This signaled strength and the lack of need for an irregular militia. Instead, the use of gendarmes from the three provinces (the best-trained of their kind) this time around underscored the preference for, and better access to, forces of a formal nature.¹¹⁷

To convince the Action Army not to enter Istanbul, Commander of Artillery (*tophane*) Hurşid Pasha and other negotiators took a special train to an undisclosed negotiation site. Their later report to the cabinet underlined the non-hostile nature of the approaching army and its intention to protect Istanbul and the constitution and to restore peace. Hurşid Pasha also reported that despite efforts to the contrary, the Action Army was adamant about entering Istanbul, but he still thought a clash was avoidable if the two armies met and united and if the soldiers received the Action army with a show of goodwill. He insisted on using clerics to calm the soldiers in Istanbul, and tried to persuade the Action Army to merge its battalions with those of the Imperial Guards, in a peaceful encounter outside the city gates, under the latter's command.¹¹⁸

That the Action Army was not to accept a subservient role was evident from the two strongly worded announcements (19 April/6 Nisan) that blamed the incident on the lowly supporters of despotism; without mentioning Abdülhamid, the declarations alluded to his role as the major beneficiary of restoration of tyranny. It urged the soldiers and sailors not to resist the return of former officers, and to submit to their orders without question. In an apparently forgiving gesture, the Action Army also announced a planned single-day oath ceremony for the entire military, in which the military pledged to stay out of politics. The Action Army promised not to punish the misled soldiers, but its mercy did not extend to the instigators, whom the soldiers were ordered to expose, or to the sham, self-interested clerics whose false claims of desiring *şeriat* in reality undermined it. Finally, it promised restoration of the popularly sanctioned Chamber and cabinet.¹¹⁹ The declaration addressing the military was

¹¹⁶ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 110–112, 123–135; McCullagh, p. 170.

¹¹⁷ MV 129: 1. 20 June 1909/7 Haziran 1325/2 Jumada II 1327.

¹¹⁸ MV 126: 62/1–2. 18 April 1909/5 Nisan 1325/27 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

¹¹⁹ At the time, the head of the Action Army was still Hüseyin Hüsnü, and not Mahmud Şevket Pasha who was to become its commander shortly. *İkdam*, No. 5354, 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/30 Rebiyülevvel 1327, "Hareket Ordusu Kumandanı Tarafından Erkan-ı Harbiye-i Umumiye Riyasetine Telgrafname," p. 1; *İkdam*, No. 5354, 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/30 Rebiyülevvel 1327; Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 146–151; Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1187–1190.

dutifully distributed by the order of the minister of war in the barracks and warships, although it undermined the minister's own authority. The city knew about it almost immediately.¹²⁰ On that same day, to temper the inflammatory CUP correspondence with the provinces, the government ordered telegraph operators not to relay messages that agitated the public or incited an uprising.¹²¹

That the CUP announcement would implicate the Palace was expected. Of greater interest was the military's pledge to stay clear of politics, which amounted to a public promise that it would put an end to the previous abuses. The insistence that the religiously legitimate constitutional administration would not fall under the influence of any power other than the constitution and *şeriat* was meant as assurance that the CUP would play no role in the future administration.

No wonder that declarations gradually left out any reference to the CUP, even though it had been very much present in earlier days in telegrams to the sultan, the prime minister, the first secretary, and the new ministers. This development, curiously, took place fully in the three Macedonian provinces, where the CUP was most active; but in locations farther away in Anatolia, and not in the CUP's grip, references to the CUP name and its activities were commonplace.¹²²

On 20 April (7 Nisan), two telegrams signed by the acting general governor of Rumelia and the commander of the Third Army, Mahmud Şevket Pasha, laid out the plans of the battalions then heading for Istanbul. The first telegram, read aloud at the cabinet meeting the next day (a cabinet that now included the top military brass), began by stating that the Action Army intended to restore order, bring the deceived military forces under control, punish the instigators and participants, and finally to lay the ground to prevent future violations of the constitution. Furthermore, because the majority of soldiers in Istanbul had taken part in this event, they were to be sent to the three European provinces; the most heavily involved were to be punished with imprisonment and labor. The only exceptions were three or four unaffected battalions, which were to remain behind for the protection of the sultan. The city itself was to be protected by the Third Army, the Gendarmerie, and the police. Martial law was to be announced, a new cabinet formed, and new legislation for the press, societies,

¹²⁰ "Within an hour or two." Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 151–152.

¹²¹ MV 126: 59. 19 April 1909/6 Nisan 1325/28 Rebiyülevvel 1327.

¹²² According to Danişmend, Mahmud Şevket Pasha was appointed by the Unionists. For additional CUP telegrams see Danişmend, *31 Mart Vak'ası*, pp. 94–108. The CUP heavy mobilization effort may be evinced from its communication bill (18,254 kuruş), which it requested to be cancelled for telegrams originating from Salonica during the day of counterrevolution, as well as other centers in Gевgili, Yanya, Ödemiş, and the Albanian Başkimi Clubs. The government accepted after noting that they were directed toward calming disturbances and restoring order. MV 134: 36. 25 November 1909/12 Teşrin-i Sani 1325/12 Zilkade 1327. Similarly, when the subprovince of Serres was faced with shortage of funds, it asked Salonica for reimbursement of sums advanced under threat from the CUP center to provide for military mobilization. To organize an army, the CUP central committee in Salonica had sent threatening telegrams to Serres for funds. TFR-1-SL 21764, 10 June 1909/21 Jumada I, 1327.

clubs, meetings, and vagrancy passed. Finally, it was announced that as long as the sultan remained loyal to the constitution, the military remained loyal to him. The second telegram warned that if the constitution were not restored within 24 hours, the responsibility for future incidents lay entirely with the government, adding that the united forces remained independent and not under an outsider's command – another gesture at dissociation from the CUP.¹²³

The military commanders agreed with the patriotic and pro-constitutional message, but objected that declaring martial law required control over orderly and organized military detachments, which they did not yet have. They thus agreed only to the oath ceremony that was to begin the next day. As a preventive measure against renewed flareups, they again pleaded for a meeting between the head of the Imperial Guards and the incoming battalions – still headed by Hüsni Pasha – to arrange for the procession of the Second and Third Armies into the city.¹²⁴

On that day (21 April) the cabinet ordered the three highest-ranking religious leaders to perform public oath ceremonies for the rebels the next day. These included soldiers of the First and Second Army, military personnel scattered throughout the city, and navy personnel. The content of the oath corresponded closely to what the CUP had wanted it to be. The cabinet was insistent that such measures should put an end to all suspicion in the provinces that threatened peace and order, a reference to the battalions outside Istanbul that were on the verge of attacking the city.¹²⁵ The government, which had earlier banned *Volkan*, also banned the new religious newspaper *Hilal* and ordered the editor's prosecution because of its inflammatory articles.¹²⁶ Dervish Vahdeti himself was arrested shortly. Police had learned of his boarding a ship in Istanbul; they detained him at the ship's first stop, in Izmir.¹²⁷

On the next day, 22 April (9 Nisan), the cabinet again responded to yet another telegram from Serres. This one, dated 21 April (8 Nisan), came from Mahmud Şevket Pasha, who was now in full command and pressed for the implementation of orders within 24 hours. The panicky cabinet, after explaining that it had begun to release reservists from duty and move them out of Istanbul that very day, pleaded that these were not matters to be accomplished in one or two days, and that it was thus impossible to allow the Third and Second Armies in on that day. The commanders reiterated their lack of control over the army, but insisted that neither the government nor the public held any enmity toward the entering forces, and in fact shared the same goal. But if the Third and Second Armies entered the city, they ran the risk of agitating the soldiers and thus endangering the embassies and thousands of foreign residents, which was certain

¹²³ MV 127: 4/1–2. 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/1 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹²⁴ MV 127: 4/1–2. 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/1 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹²⁵ MV 127: 3. 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/1 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹²⁶ MV 127: 2. 21 April 1909/8 Nisan 1325/1 Rebiyülahır 1327. BEO 265300, 21 April 1909/1 Rebiyülahır 1327; 22 April 1909/2 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹²⁷ ZB 332/35, 22 April 1909/9 Nisan 1325.

to have dire consequences. The cabinet continued to insist on a meeting between the commanders, and held that they could not otherwise accept any responsibility for the grave dangers ahead.¹²⁸ However, the Action Army was unflinching. On that same day of 22 April (9 Nisan), Mahmud Şevket Pasha let the prime minister officially know that he had arrived at the St. Stefanos suburb of Istanbul to take over the Action Army. He blamed the disorder on the Imperial Guards, but commanded that those who showed remorse and requested amnesty were to be granted it. He also sought to put an end to the rumor that the sultan was to be deposed.¹²⁹

The following night, after the arrival of the entire force from Salonica, the Action Army dispatched an expeditionary force to the city. The main attack began the next day, 24 April. The Action Army entered Istanbul from four locations; they encountered some resistance at only two barracks, which were subsequently bombarded and destroyed. Overall, Istanbul, Beyoğlu, Galata, Şişli, and Nişantaşı came under the Action Army's control that day and only resistance at Üsküdar required work the next day. The Action Army could not help but betray its association with the CUP when it spoke of the good omen of the number 11 (24).¹³⁰ In July of the previous year, this was the day on which the army had intended to capture Istanbul;¹³¹ subsequently, this date was chosen for memorializing the victory over the counterrevolution. Fighting in the city stopped the next day; the scope of resistance beyond Istanbul was wider and took longer to die down than was acknowledged publicly.¹³²

By 25 April, the head of the Action Army, Mahmud Şevket Pasha, was at the Ministry of War to order martial law declared in three Macedonian provinces, Istanbul, and the suburbs. The minister of war meekly complied.¹³³ The official announcement gave the Second and Third Army Corps the right to occupy all police stations and barracks. All were ordered to conduct business as usual, including government employees.¹³⁴ The rumors of the association of the Action

¹²⁸ MV 127: 7/1–2. 22 April 1909/9 Nisan 1325/2 Rebiyülahır 1327. As to why an old-regime military man such as Mahmud Şevket Pasha may have assumed the leadership of a CUP-dominated army, one may look at a statement of his about a month earlier (16 March 1909/3 Mart, 1326) when he talked about working with “able collaborators on the reform of the Ottoman Army” to strengthen the state and save the Balkans, the Empire, and Europe from imminent war. McCullagh, *The Fall of Abdülhamid*, p. ix.

¹²⁹ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 184–185. ¹³⁰ The reference was to the Julian calendar.

¹³¹ *Tanin*, nn. No. 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325/6 Rebiyülahır 1327, “Üçüncü Ordu ve Hareket Ordusu Kumandanı Birinci Ferik Mahmud Şevket Paşa Hazretlerinden Bilumum Vilayat-ı Osmaniye’ye Yazılan 11 Nisan 325 Tarihli Telgrafname Suretidir,” p. 4. For a detailed account of the capture of Istanbul, see Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 193–224.

¹³² Resistance seems to have been wider than publicly acknowledged. Nuri reported that Yıldız and Selimiye were the last barracks to surrender the next day. Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani vol. 3*, pp. 1191–1194. The date of victory was set for 24 April 1909 (11 Nisan 1325). From this point the Chamber and cabinet cooperated much more closely to draw up legislative bills for approval by the Chamber. MV 127: 44. 13 May 1909/30 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹³³ BEO 267692, 25 April 1909/12 Nisan 1325.

¹³⁴ MV 127: 10–10A. 25 April 1909/12 Nisan 1325/5 Rebiyülahır 1327.

Army with the CUP would not die down, however, prompting additional announcements:

The majority of local and foreign press put forward the claim that the Action Army and the CUP are connected to each other. This opinion and thought is entirely false . . . None of the commanders, officers, and rank and file of this army are connected to any society, nor to any of the political parties; the Ottoman officers and soldiers whose interference in state politics is in principle absolutely forbidden, abide only by the orders of their superiors, will not be found under the influence of any other power, and in case the contrary is proven, they will be punished according to the law. Consequently, it is announced and warned that there is absolutely no basis or foundation for the claim that the Action Army is connected to a secret or open society, or in particular, that the army operates under some sort of influence.¹³⁵

In fact, in the public adulation of the Action Army after the capture of Istanbul, there was not a single mention of the CUP.¹³⁶ Such a blatant omission was curious at best.

The cabinet decided to resign on its own (25 April), before a vote of confidence could be taken by the Chamber. Protests by certain provincial administrators who refused to recognize the cabinet prompted this; it was thought that prolonging the situation would have seriously jeopardized government business.¹³⁷ It was of course the CUP that had questioned the government's legitimacy. By the next day, things had gained at least the appearance of normalcy, with businesses open and public transportation back in order.¹³⁸

The press spoke of the capture of Istanbul as of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 – the start of a new era in world history.¹³⁹ The ransacked CUP daily, *Tanin*, and its editor, Cahid, were back at work almost immediately. What appeared on 26 April from Cahid's pen contained some of the most penetrating remarks yet made about past mistakes because of rigid adherence to the constitutional legal framework. It also provided pointers about avoiding future blunders without ignoring the constitution, and it undid the concealment that CUP leadership had tried hard to maintain. Without naming the new force, it identified it as the CUP; it admitted that the reforms were the reason behind the counterrevolution; it revoked the promise that the army and politics were not to mix again, or that the revolutionary government was to be any less severe in the future. *Tanin* was suppressed for three weeks after a single issue.

Cahid expressed regret for the failure to remove all ministers, down to the lowliest scribes – that is, for not throwing open the windows of muggy offices to

¹³⁵ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 227–228. See also Danişmend, *31 Mart Vak'ası*, pp. 134–135; Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1194–1195.

¹³⁶ *İkdam*, No. 5363, 2 May 1909/19 Nisan 1325/12 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Yaşasın Ordu," p. 1.

¹³⁷ MV 127: 9. 25 April 1909/12 Nisan 1325. The official announcement seemed to have followed the next day on April 26. BEO 265374, 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325.

¹³⁸ Nadi, *İhtilal*, p. 230.

¹³⁹ *Tanin*, No. nn., 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325/6 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Geçmiş ve Gelecek," p. 1. *İkdam*, No. 5360, 29 April 1909/16 Nisan 1325/9 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Feth-i Sani-i Kostantiniye – Hatime-i İstibdat," p. 1.

let in fresh air and sunlight. Without mentioning the CUP, he blamed it for refusing to act decisively because of its exaggerated idealism and concern for accusations of self-interestedness: In place of directing public opinion, the CUP acted all too peacefully and allowed public opinion to be in control. Rather than engaging in purges, it allowed astonishing room for criminal operations, and in place of expropriating unjustly held properties, it left them intact for the sake of some articles of the constitution that spoke against expropriation. Under the new regime, law was a weapon used by criminals to hold on to titles and properties; but in Cahid's opinion, the new regime should have abided by the law only after identifying the deserving and excluding old-regime elements. Only after "settling accounts" (*tasfiye-i hesap*) was the constitution to be applied generally, but the passage of time diminished the means for legitimate implementation of revolutionary methods. Revolutions grant the right to break with the past, explained Cahid, but this temporary, short-lived right expired if not used in time. The CUP's exaggerated legalism, on the other hand, allowed all the old-regime operators to come back to life one by one and use the same weapons against the new regime. We (the CUP) forced the government to grant the right of press, and the press was turned into a weapon against us; we forced them to grant the right of association, and they turned the right of association against us; the old regime walked over religion and *şeriat*, and when we came to the rescue, religion and *şeriat* were turned against us, remarked Cahid. The constitutional government (that is, the CUP) choked itself with the word "law." Indecisive and impotent, it was reduced to a mere onlooker.

This was a call for revolutionary ferocity when they had their second, and short-lived, chance at the revolutionary moment. The new administration demanded new people. It demanded fresh and open minds and spirits that had not broken with the past. It demanded young, stern, and brave hands. The group that made the revolution should openly assume responsibility for the new administration, and within five of six hours of the declaration of martial law, should remove all old ties. Illegitimate fortunes, privileges, and ranks, should be expropriated, and all known spies gathered and given their just reward. Institutional and cadre reforms should show that liberty did not mean lawlessness and terror.¹⁴⁰ Allusions to Jacobinism were clear.

The next day Sultan Abdülhamid was deposed, accused of many wrongdoings, including direct involvement in the counterrevolution. He was replaced by his brother, Sultan Mehmet Reşad V.¹⁴¹ The group bringing Sultan Abdülhamid the news had heard him both deny any involvement and express a wish to relocate to the nearby Çırağan Palace.¹⁴² Instead, he was sent to Salonica under the escort of the Action Army. The Liberal press, which had applauded the ousting of the "secretive and tyrannical committee" a mere two weeks earlier, now condemned Abdülhamid as the mastermind of

¹⁴⁰ *Tanin*, nn., 26 April 1909/13 Nisan 1325/6 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Geçmiş ve Gelecek," p. 1.

¹⁴¹ Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 171–177, 236–238. ¹⁴² Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, p. 1196.

counterrevolution with the same excited voice: He was the ninth deposed sultan and the one who deserved it the most.¹⁴³

In fact the extent of the Palace's participation in the affair, if at all, was minimal. The high-ranking politicians who were close to Abdülhamid (e.g., Ali Cevat and Tevfik Pasha) or were not so close (e.g., Kamil Pasha), maintained his innocence at all points during the short-lived event.¹⁴⁴ Some, despite reservations about the extent of his initial backing, argued that he eventually supported it.¹⁴⁵ Less contested, perhaps, was the participation of the heir-apparent Vahdetin, whom the CUP had for a long time opposed.¹⁴⁶ More than a month after the incident, all the evidence the CUP could muster against Abdülhamid was feeble, indirect, and suspect.¹⁴⁷

The sultan could not be deposed without a *fetva* from the *Şeyhülislam*. The primary reasons, judging from the order of appearance, were the censorship, distortion, banning, and burning of religious books, followed by usurpation and squandering of the treasury; the killings, imprisonments, and banishments in violation of religious laws; and habituation to criminality. The *fetva* mentioned his participation in preparing a widespread uprising toward the end.¹⁴⁸ This was consistent with the clerics' earlier announcements but contrary to the public declarations of the CUP. Evidence of Abdülhamid's direct involvement was hard to come by.

Meanwhile, concessions continued to be made to the religious language of counterrevolution in all official proclamations.¹⁴⁹ Significantly, the new sultan

¹⁴³ *İkdam*, No. 5360, 29 April 1909/16 Nisan 1325/9 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Feth-i Sani-i Kostantiniye – Hatime-i İstibdat," p. 1. BEO 265476, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325/16 Rebiyülahır 1327. All future letters and documents addressed to him through the mail were to be handled by the Sublime Porte. BEO 2675954, 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹⁴⁴ Danişmend, *31 Mart Vak'ası*, pp. 18–21, 25–33; Akşin, *31 Mart Olayı*, pp. 364–365. Ali Cevat reported that the Palace's only concern was to restore peace. At the soldiers' barracks in the first day, a group sent from the Palace emphasized that the sultan saw no difference between the educated and rankers and that the killings should stop. Ali Cevat, *İkinci Meşrutiyet*, p. 58. Kamil Pasha, in an interview, also held that the sultan was not involved. McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 48–49.

¹⁴⁵ Tunaya, *Siyasal Partiler*, pp. 196–197; Shaw, *Reform*, p. 281. McCullagh, an eyewitness, was in agreement with Mahmud Şevket Pasha who, like the CUP, held the Sultan responsible. " *Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 49–50.

¹⁴⁶ Tunaya, *Siyasal Partiler*, p. 197. Others pointed to Prince Burhaneddin, working through the eunuch, Nadir Efendi. McCullagh, *Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 56, 207.

¹⁴⁷ *Tanin*, No. 256, 20 May 1909/7 Mayıs 1325/30 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Hadise-i İrticaiyede Abdülhamid – Ehemmiyetli bir Mülakat," pp. 1–2.

¹⁴⁸ *Düstur*, I, No. 57, 27 April 1909/14 Nisan 1325/7 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Sultan Abdülhamid Han-ı Saninin Hilafet ve Saltanat-ı Osmaniyeden İskatiyle . . .," p. 166. For the *fetva*, and the Chamber's decision see also Nadi, *İhtilal*, pp. 239–240. For a different format of the *fetva* (question and answer) in which an additional reason for deposing the sultan is stated as denouncement by the Muslim community which no longer considered him the caliph, see Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1195–1196. For the new Sultan's announcement, see *Düstur*, I, No. 58, pp. 167–168.

¹⁴⁹ *Düstur*, I, No. 58, 6 May 1909/15 Rebiyülahır, 1327 "Cülus-ı Hümayun Münasebetiyle Bab-ı Ali'de Karaat Olunan Hatt-ı Hümayun," pp. 167–168; *Düstur*, I, No. 63, 29 May 1909/9

performed the Islamic ceremony of investiture (*biat*) with the ministers and deputies to highlight the Islamic-contractual nature of his relationship with the nation.¹⁵⁰ It did not take the CUP very long to disparage the superficial religious aura of the counterrevolution.¹⁵¹

Counterrevolution in Provinces

Events in Istanbul reverberated strongly in the provinces. Disorder was rampant. True to its claim, the Society of Muhammad was a national organization with a reach well beyond Istanbul. Yet its control over branches was open to question. If this was an issue for the CUP, with a staff adept at military-bureaucratic organization, one can imagine the challenges faced by the Society of Muhammad.

With the news of disorder, the province of Aydın witnessed meetings and demonstrations in support of the constitutional administration. The local government quickly denied its disbandment; to relieve the developing anxiety, the deputy governor planned personal appearances in the two major cities.¹⁵² In Kastamonu province, the situation was more serious. The CUP supporters and officers in command of inactive reserves, upon receipt of orders from Salonica, proclaimed the government illegitimate and declared all provinces independent from the center. Upon hearing this news, the governor Omer Ali, recent replacement for the previously pro-CUP Ali Rıza, with the military commander and other high-ranking officials set out for a boisterous and agitated meeting at the Soldier's Club to which the general public had been invited. There they succeeded in dispersing the meeting after assurances that the constitution had not been disbanded. Knowing the calm was only temporary, the governor implored the prime minister for immediate telegrams from each deputy – authenticated with individual seals – that guaranteed the safety of the constitutional administration. He added that some officers were doing their best to agitate the public and the issue was of utmost urgency.¹⁵³ Later, he pleaded for appropriate measures to halt the incessant telegrams from the Unionist Club in Salonica to the local CUP and to the Anatolian public in general. He found their information about the two armies that were preparing to take over Istanbul disconcerting, not to mention their language, which spoke of the need for a general uprising that required sacrifices of blood and life.¹⁵⁴ The CUP was not to remember the governor's conduct in these days kindly.

Much the same could be heard from the Trabzon governor and its military commander. Despite all official assurances, they wrote, repeated rumors had

Cemaziyelevvel 1327, "Cülüs-ı Hümayun Münasebetiyle Ordu-yı Hümayun'a Hitaben . . .," pp. 189–191; Nadi, *İhtilal*, p. 225–233.

¹⁵⁰ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, p. 1199.

¹⁵¹ *Tanin*, No. 256, 21 May 1909/1 Cemaziyelevvel 1327, p. 1 "Meşrutiyetin Düşmanı."

¹⁵² Districts of Menemen, Kuşadası, Ödemiş (under Izmir) and Kula (under Saruhan), were a few of these. BEONGG 694, p. 11, 15 April 1909/2 Nisan 1325.

¹⁵³ BEONGG 694, pp. 11–12, 16 April 1909/3 Nisan 1325.

¹⁵⁴ BEONGG 694, p. 12, 16 April 1909/3 Nisan 1325.

incited the “public” in defense of the constitution; there were preparations under way for breaking with the central government. In case an immediate and convincing solution was not found, the officials warned, serious deterioration of the situation should be expected.¹⁵⁵ Telegrams continued to pour into the capital seeking assurances about the safety of the deputies and the constitution.

A stronghold of the “reactionary movement,” somewhat surprisingly, was Erzurum. There, the soldiers amassing in the government center had cried “we want *şeriat*, we do not want liberty,” or similarly, “long live the Sultan, we want *şeriat*.” Although *Tanin* could not be trusted for accurate rendering, it was true that Erzurum had gone anti-Unionist and was squarely on the side of the Society; soldiers were detaining fifty-three young educated officers in a secret location. The skirmish had taken on an ethnic coloring, with soldiers firing bullets into the air and breaking the windows of Armenian shops. The public and clerics taking part had purportedly condemned the Unionists who “had sold the fatherland to infidels.” The CUP later proclaimed that it knew that the smallest move could precipitate a large-scale massacre in this heavily fortified military location and thus it had adopted a wait-and-see approach from the sidelines.¹⁵⁶

Even with the defeat of the counterrevolution, Erzurum remained anti-Unionist, as were Erzincan, Van, and Diyarbakir. What they shared was the Fourth Army, a military corps whose soldiers and ranker officers were especially active.¹⁵⁷ In early May, the head of the Fourth Army warned of a group of notables and inhabitants in Erzurum who intended to restore the previous monarch or his son to the throne and to use the Hamidiye regiment for this purpose. He also complained that the governor was slow to move against these threats, which, if unchecked, were certain to dominate the entire province and penetrate those parts of the Fourth Army that were stationed close to the city. These reports forced the center to bypass the governor and open investigations of its own.¹⁵⁸ Clearly suspicious, the center asked the governor why he had failed to report the soldiers, enquired about the soldiers and the public mood, and asked what the local government had done to deal with them. It also expressed surprise as to how a location with such pro-constitutional credentials could turn against the CUP.¹⁵⁹ The governor admitted the animosity of the ordinary soldiers toward the educated officers, whose expulsion they continued to demand, and spoke of their extreme agitation whenever they were admonished about it. As for the educated, the governor showed deference by describing them as enlightened and insistent on peace between various ethnicities. The governor expressed confidence in his ability to resolve the clash but asked for additional

¹⁵⁵ BEONGG 694, p. 12, 19 April 1909/6 Nisan 1325.

¹⁵⁶ *Tanin*, No. 255, 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülâhır 1327, “Erzurum Hareket-i İrtica’iyesi,” p. 2.

¹⁵⁷ BEO 265791, 5 May 1909/22 Nisan 1325. BEO 265767, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325/16 Rebiyülâhır 1327.

¹⁵⁸ BEO 265769, 4 May 1909/21 Nisan 1325; 5 May 1909/22 Nisan 1325/15 Rebiyülâhır 1327; 9 May 1909/26 Nisan 1325/19 Rebiyülâhır 1327.

¹⁵⁹ BEONGG 704, 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/30 Nisan 1325, p. 35.

military reinforcement.¹⁶⁰ By the time of these assurances, the CUP had already called for the severe punishment of participants, for fear that inaction would have more dire consequences.¹⁶¹ Nonetheless, until at least late June inquiries about the instigators of reactionary acts and the extent of their influence among the public and army continued.¹⁶²

In Diyarbekir, it was the CUP that brought news of reactionaries. There, the militant soldier's club and the CUP accused the governor, a general, and the regional military commander of attempting to emulate the seditious events of Istanbul in Kurdistan by organizing the like-minded provincial elite and ignorant public. The officers stated that they had succeeded in calming the public without making arrests but had legally pursued the notables and put many in jail. They had purportedly pardoned the "simpleton public" for having been fooled by the instigators; the real reason was their very large numbers. The officers had also taken control of the telegraph office to cut communication with other provinces. Furthermore, when the head of the Fourth Army had ordered an oath ceremony in Diyarbekir, at the conclusion of the counterrevolution, the officers had confiscated his orders; they did not want a large-scale gathering of soldiers and the public convened by the city's military commander. In the end, the soldier's club and the CUP took credit for preventing large-scale sedition and demanded removal of the governor and military commander. The head of the Fourth Army, General İbrahim, on his part protested against the confiscation of orders and the officers' interference in affairs. The cabinet, confronted with conflicting demands, verbally reprimanded the soldier's club, but when the dust had settled, it was clear that the CUP had scored another victory. The government's appointed commission set before itself the task of uncovering reactionary activities and bringing the instigators to justice. Furthermore, the officers succeeded in removing the governor.¹⁶³

Adana was one location among many that experienced turbulence and riots in the days of counterrevolution. What set it apart was the fragile state of ethnic relations, which turned an anti-constitutional riot into an ugly massacre. Yet the event shared many characteristics with counterrevolution in all other locations, most significantly timing. Beginning on the night of 13 April and continuing in the morning of 14 April, its start coincided precisely with the counterrevolution in Istanbul and seemed to have been triggered by the coordinated efforts of the Society of Muhammed's supporters, though without Dervish Vahdeti's knowledge. The CUP was in retreat. The government in Istanbul was in a panicky mood as it dealt with this massive outpouring of hostility and sought to bring the

¹⁶⁰ BEONGG 694, 14 May 1909/1 Mayıs 1325, p. 22.

¹⁶¹ *Tanin*, No. 255, 19 May 1909/29 Rebiyülahır 1327/6 Mayıs 1325, "Erzurum Hareket-i İrtica'iyesi," p. 2.

¹⁶² BEONGG 704, 26 June 1909/13 Haziran 1325, p. 49.

¹⁶³ BEO 265975, 29 April 1909/16 Nisan 1325; 30 April 1909/17 Nisan 1325; 2 May 1909/19 Nisan 1325/12 Rebiyülahır 1327; MV 127: 59. 2 May 1909/19 Nisan 1325/12 Rebiyülahır 1327. BEO 266005, 8 May 1909/25 Nisan 1325; 11 May 1909/28 Nisan 1325/20 Rebiyülahır 1327. BEO 265972, 11 May 1909/28 Nisan 1327/21 Rebiyülahır 1327.

situation under control. It was especially nervous about the presence of foreign warships in the Adana port of Mersin, and apprehensive that the landing of foreign troops might turn into a political fiasco. In Adana, excitement and agitation against the constitutional government – which was believed to have granted too many rights and privileges to non-Muslims – was turned against the Armenians and other Christians. In fact the Adana incident was the very image of what the CUP had warned and worried about in the pre-revolutionary days, when it was so reluctant to encourage a mass uprising across the empire. The ethnic violence traveled as far away as Ankara and Sivas, but it was the province of Aleppo that came second to Adana in level of violence, where a subprovincial capital (Maraş), and many districts (Ayıntab, İskenderun, Antakya, Harim, Beylan, Cisir Şugur) were affected. This important incident requires separate treatment elsewhere.

In the Arab provinces, evidence of counterrevolutionary activities, aside from Aleppo, came from the cities of Damascus, Mecca, Hijaz, Baghdad, Mosul, Beirut, Nablus, Akka, and Haifa. In Syria, the governor reported that a branch of the “reactionary group,” the Society of Muhammad, existed in Damascus, but had remained ineffective thanks to the local administration’s precautions.¹⁶⁴ Governor Edhem of Beirut was quite optimistic about the counterrevolution’s lack of influence there and the overall positive outlook of Muslim-Christian relations. This was in spite of some minor incidents that took place in Beirut under the influence of Istanbul events.¹⁶⁵ As it turned out, his assessment was a bit too optimistic.¹⁶⁶ As for Mecca and Hijaz, the instigators had been arrested and were to be tried in Beirut; yet the activities were serious enough for the government to be issuing orders as late as August to put a stop to them and to send the detainees to Beirut as soon as possible.¹⁶⁷ Mosul and Baghdad, despite the presence of the Society of Muhammad, did not see any major activity on the days of counterrevolution. In Mosul, the Society was a recent development from within the clerical ranks and the government had watched its formation with alarm, wary of its probable influence over the “easily fooled public.”¹⁶⁸ In Baghdad, the pro-CUP governor attributed the lack of incidence to his administration’s precautions when the province was at the brink of explosion in the days of counterrevolution in Istanbul.¹⁶⁹

The Society of Muhammad also tried to extend its reach into Rumelia. A week or so before the outbreaks, the government arrested an agitator from Aleppo in Kosovo on charges of instigating the bands and the elite to revolt, by which was

¹⁶⁴ Punishment of the counterrevolutionaries in the capital was stated as an additional reason for fear and inactivity. BEONGG 697, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325, p. 36.

¹⁶⁵ BEONGG 697, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325, pp. 37–38.

¹⁶⁶ BEONGG 704, 16 July 1909/3 Temmuz 1325, p. 56. BEONGG 697, 16 July 1909/3 Temmuz 1325, p. 82.

¹⁶⁷ BEONGG 704, 2 August 1909/20 Temmuz 1325, p. 61.

¹⁶⁸ BEONGG 697, 2 April 1909/20 Mart 1325, pp. 11–12.

¹⁶⁹ BEONGG 697, 8 May 1909/25 Nisan 1325, pp. 45–48. BEONGG 704, 7 May 1909/24 Nisan 1325, p. 32.

meant the Muslim Albanians. On him were found letters that showed the backing of some Aleppo clerics, which prompted a more aggressive effort in Aleppo to uncover the seditious society and its intentions.¹⁷⁰

The Society's influence extended into the CUP stronghold of Monastir. Most noticeable was the subprovince of Debre, where nine days before the counterrevolution the Society had shown great influence among the soldiers, prompting the government to order swift action to avoid compounding difficulties.¹⁷¹ On the eve of counterrevolution, concerns about the subgovernor led the government to ask for his dismissal, with the added qualification that this take place only if the local circumstances allowed it.¹⁷² In spite of precautions, the government found itself unable to do anything when Debre rose up after Istanbul.¹⁷³ The similarities in various Monastir regions demonstrated not only sympathy, but also some level of coordination with Istanbul and cooperation of the public with the soldiers. The involvement of the Monastir district of Florina was also noteworthy.¹⁷⁴ Ultimately, the events were attributed to charlatans, Palace trainees, and ignorant clerics, who had fooled the simpleton inhabitants.¹⁷⁵

The counterrevolution, like the revolution, rallied behind a single general cause, but there was a variety of sometimes contradictory interests. The opposition was united by its enmity to the CUP, but their reasons were different. For example, the anti-constitutionalism of the soldiers in Debre, and apparently also at the city of Monastir, and their collusion with the Society of Muhammad, may have been partially fueled by reasons not shared by the Muslim public in Anatolia and in fact opposed by the Society. There was reason to believe these were signs of a protonationalist movement among the Albanians. That the government chose to censor, and then vehemently deny, news about the soldiers' uprising in Debre and Monastir raised suspicions that its concerns were not just with disorder. Similar actions everywhere, not least in Istanbul, were being reported openly.¹⁷⁶ There were also good reasons to believe that the counterrevolution in Arab provinces was not simply a religious critique of the constitution, but an anti-CUP affair that was turning into a protonationalist movement. In the Arab provinces, the government was watchful of nationalist societies from quite an early date. Even though the Society of Muhammad had explicitly rejected ethnic politics in the name of religion, religious opposition to the CUP among some Arabs and Albanians was partly a cover for nationalistic activities.

It is appropriate to end this discussion with observations made by the governor of Monastir, who wrote that after restoration of order in his province, especially in Debre, cautionary measures continued in the form of advice and

¹⁷⁰ BEONGG 704, 5 April 1909/23 Mart 1325. ¹⁷¹ BEONGG 704, 4 April 1909/22 Mart 1325.

¹⁷² BEONGG 704, 9 April 1909/27 Mart 1325.

¹⁷³ TFR.I.MN 18822, 14 April 1909/1 Nisan 1325.

¹⁷⁴ TFR.I.MN 18902, 20 April 1909/7 Nisan 1325. TFR.I.MN 18902, 16 May 1909/3 Mayıs 1325.

¹⁷⁵ TFR.I.MN 18894, 14 May 1909/23 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹⁷⁶ BEONGG 704, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325, p. 31.

admonitions by clerics to soldiers in mosques and barracks. He believed that “public ignorance” went a long way in explaining the outbreak, but even more important was that the public had not yet seen or received any tangible benefits from the constitutional administration. He thus suggested extensive undertakings in cities and villages, such as construction and paving of roads, providing drinking water, repairing mosques, establishing schools, taking precautions against floods and other natural calamities, drainage and waterway construction, expansion of post and telegraph services and commerce, improvement of industry and agriculture, lighting of streets and alleys, protection of life and property, putting an end to church disputes, payment in full for military provisions, regular payment of civil administrators, and improving and standardizing the soldiers’ appearance and living conditions in the barracks.¹⁷⁷ If this thinking about the constitutional administration had always been present, the counter-revolution gave it an even stronger push.

Three weeks after the conclusion of events, *Tanin* announced that revolts were extinguished in Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Eastern Anatolia, Adana, Yemen, Hicaz, and a few locations in Rumelia. Now the CUP called for the creation of a new provincial administration modeled after the government in Istanbul. It even called for the military reconquest of the entire country and defended the establishment of martial law whenever and wherever necessary. Referring to Adana, the most serious incident of counterrevolution, it concluded that laws alone did not answer the nation’s dire needs and that problems could only be solved with the law in one hand and the sword of justice in the other.¹⁷⁸

Assessment of need for additional military reinforcements in the areas affected by counterrevolution was in fact what the government was engaged in. According to government estimates, the provinces of Syria, Konya, Edirne, İškodra, Kastamonu, Erzurum, Kosovo, Van, Salonica, Trabzon, Mediterranean Islands, and Mamuretülaziz, and the independent subprovinces of Jerusalem, Çatalca, Zor, Biga, and İzmit, were in no need of additional military reinforcements. Others in clear need of more military or greater care were Diyarbekir, Baghdad, Yemen, Monastir, Aydın, Bitlis, Ankara (especially Kayseri), Sivas (especially Karahisar, Tokad, Merzifon, Zile, Koçkiri), and Beirut provinces, as well as Bingazi, an independent subprovince.¹⁷⁹ The extent of provincial disorders, by the government’s own admission, had indeed been wide. Yet, as the discussion above showed, the breadth of counterrevolution was even wider. Further, it became obvious that the government had taken some regions off of its list of troubled regions too quickly, such as Erzurum, or even Istanbul and vicinity where the spirit of opposition to the CUP was still alive.¹⁸⁰ In more serious cases, the law

¹⁷⁷ TFR.I.MN 18894, 14 May 1909/23 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹⁷⁸ *Tanin*, No. 253, 17 May 1909/4 Mayıs 1325/27 Rebiyülahır 1327, “Memleket Yeniden Feth Olunmağa Muhtacdır,” pp. 1–2. The author was Babanzade İsmail Hakkı.

¹⁷⁹ MV 128: 8/1–2. 26 May 1909/13 Mayıs 1325/6 Cemaziyelevvel 1327.

¹⁸⁰ DH.EUM.THR 7–26, 7 October 1909/24 Eylül 1325. Murmurings continued for some time thereafter, even from Istanbul and areas in its vicinity. DH.EUM.THR 9–11, 20 September 1909/

of revolution was invoked to banish the leaders of emerging networks from Istanbul in the name of wiping out the last remnants of the old regime.¹⁸¹ In some instances, however, all it could do was to watch with apprehension formation of groups such as the “Victimized Ottomans” (*Mağdurin-i Osmaniye*), a collection of politicized civil servants who had been fired.¹⁸²

THE AFTERMATH

Illiberal CUP

The CUP declared martial law at its first opportunity after entering Istanbul on 24 April. This was extended and reinstated for some years thereafter.¹⁸³ In a grotesque display of brutality, some two hundred movement participants were hanged en masse, on row after row of scaffolds erected in public space by the order of military courts. Predominantly soldiers, these also included members of religious organizations, most significantly the Society of Muhammad, including its leader Dervish Vahdeti. Some ten thousand soldiers were punished and the “hunting down of *softas* [students of religion] and mutinous soldiers and suspects continued with unabated vigor.”¹⁸⁴ The soldiers of the light infantry battalions were banished and made simple laborers on public projects in the three Macedonian provinces.¹⁸⁵ In turn, some went from Salonica to Istanbul to face trial and punishment.¹⁸⁶ Many participants, of both high and low ranks, were convicted on a variety of charges: belonging to, supporting, or establishing the Society of Muhammad, assaulting the CUP, or insulting the Action Army. Those convicted were punished in a variety of ways, most commonly by deportation to far-off places.¹⁸⁷

7 Eylül 1325. BEO 266288, 17 May 1909/4 Mayıs 1325/27 Rebiyülahır 1327. DH.EUM.THR 11-21, 19 October 1909/6 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325.

¹⁸¹ DH.EUM.THR 9-66, 30 September 1909/17 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325.

¹⁸² DH.EUM.THR 11-18, 20 October 1909/7 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325.

¹⁸³ *Tanin*, No. 319, 23 July 1909/5 Recep 1327, “İdare-i Örfiye,” p. 1; *Tanin*, No. 324, 29 July 1909/11 Recep 1327, “İdare-i Örfiye,” p. 3; *Tanin*, No. 911, 6 March 1911/5 Rebiyülevvel 1329, “İdare-i Örfiye,” p. 1.

¹⁸⁴ *BDFa*, Vol. 20, Doc 26, 31 Jan 1910, p. 112. Tunaya put the figure for the publicly hanged at 196, *Siyasal Partiler*, p. 190; McCullagh, *The Fall of Abdülhamid*, pp. 247, 272-273; Knight, *Awakening of Turkey*, p. 348. The death sentence for those who had illegally commandeered battalions was in some cases commuted to banishment when proof of resistance against the Action Army could not be found. DH.EUM.THR 13-18, 10 October 1909/27 Eylül 1325.

¹⁸⁵ Soldiers were sent to Salonica, Monastir, and Kosovo to build roads. *Düstur*, I, No. 64, p. 191, 30 May 1909/10 Cemaziyevvel 1327. At least in one instance, 1,700 nonmilitary participants were deported to the province of Salonica. TFR-1-SL 20784, 9 May 1909/18 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹⁸⁶ TFR-1-SL 21175, 7 July 1909/18 Cemaziyevvel 1327. TFR-1-SL 20785, 9 May 1909/26 Nisan 1325. TFR-1-SL 21051, 23 June 1909/10 Haziran 1325.

¹⁸⁷ DH.EUM.THR 2-29, 24 August 1909/11 Ağustos 1325; DH.EUM.THR 3-16, 29 August 1909/16 Ağustos 1325; DH.MUI 11-1/13, 14 September 1909/1 Eylül 1325; DH.EUM.THR 24-36, 20 September 1909/7 Eylül 1325; DH.EUM.THR 8-20, 12 October 1909/29 Eylül 1325; DH.EUM.THR 133-40, 11 November 1909/29 Teşrin-i Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 20-47, 6

Deportation to distant provincial prisons was a common punishment for high military and civil officials, including former ministers. In addition, the state confiscated their property; stripped them of titles, ranks, and medals; and revoked their retirement pay. These officials were those accused of spying, murder, and financial swindling. Included among them were the sultan's First Secretary Tahsin Pasha, Interior Minister Mahmud H., Mayor Reşit Pasha, Minister of War (*Serasker*) Rıza Pasha, and a number of other military commanders and high officials.¹⁸⁸ In late June, *Tanin* justified the confiscation of property on two grounds: the punishment settled accounts predating the constitution (thus not covered by it), and the reclaiming of stolen property was part of their fundamental laws.¹⁸⁹ Within one week, all purported participants were subject to property confiscation (*hacız*), whether in jail, awaiting banishment, or sentenced in absentia.¹⁹⁰

Not everyone was arrested and punished, at least not immediately. Many, accused or not, escaped to Europe, among them the Liberals, who had done the same under Abdülhamid. Some students of religion and many soldiers also managed to escape. The soldiers' primary destination was the province of Kastamonu, and secondarily Ankara, Hüdavendigâr, and İzmit. Given the shortage of military forces and the reluctance to arm inactive reservists – likely out of fear of collusion between these and trained soldiers – the government made a pretense of reconciliation, inviting the soldiers to disarm and return to their villages with the promise of amnesty. This, however, was not a sincere pledge. When giving out assurances, the government was planning to arrest soldiers individually on appropriate occasions.¹⁹¹ The plan appeared successful. Yet many seemed also to have escaped, such as the group of two hundred *softas* that arrived in the Bulgarian cities of Varna and Burgaz, whence the Ottoman authorities could not extradite them for crimes of a political nature.¹⁹²

Severe limits on civil liberties followed the counterrevolution. These included the right to hold gatherings, freedom of association, the right to form societies, parties, and clubs, and the freedom of the press. By invoking these laws, the opposition complained, the CUP dismantled all political groupings and shut

January 1910/24 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 26–41, 18 January 1910/5 Kanun-ı Sani 1325.

¹⁸⁸ MV 128: 14. 26 May 1909/13 Mayıs 1325/6 Cemaziyelvelvel 1327.

¹⁸⁹ *Tanin*, No. 289, 23 June 1909/4 Cemaziyelahir 1327, "Tasfiye-i Hesap," p. 1.

¹⁹⁰ MV 129: 28. 30 June 1909/17 Haziran 1325/12 Cemaziyelahir 327. In line with the new government's obsession with administrative rationality, the ministers' families were compensated fully up to 13 April. MV 129: 39. 30 June 1909/17 Haziran 1325/12 Cemaziyelahir 327. Later, some minor assistance was provided to the families of those sentenced to prison, banishment, or death. MV 130: 26. 28 July 1909/15 Temmuz 1325/11 Recep 1327. MV 131: 35. 8 September 1909/26 Ağustos 1325/23 Şaban 1327. MV 132: 14. 2 September 1909/20 Ağustos 1325/16 Şaban 1327.

¹⁹¹ BEO 265785, 2 May 1909/19 Nisan 1325/12 Rebiyülahır 1327. BEO 265751, 6 May 1909/23 Nisan 1325/15 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹⁹² BEO 265753, 29 April 1909/16 Nisan 1325.

down any newspaper not associated with it.¹⁹³ To recognize that these actions were not simply a reaction to the counterrevolution, but a general tendency within the CUP, one needed only to recall its earlier defense of restrictions. Now, the opposition could no longer challenge such measures.¹⁹⁴

According to the new law on public gatherings,¹⁹⁵ all Ottomans had the right to hold meetings without warrant if they were unarmed. Despite this inviting start, further qualifications made it quite difficult to hold a meeting.¹⁹⁶ The restrictions on societies, parties, and clubs were even more stringent. Naturally, the government shut down all groups inspired by the Society of Muhammad. Participation in such societies became a serious political crime. In areas under martial law, violators were tried in military courts; in areas not under martial law, military courts reviewed civil courts' investigative results and evidence.¹⁹⁷ In early August, the Action Army, after citing the proven harm of groups such as the Society of Muhammad, hastily ordered a bill that was approved immediately by the Chamber without discussion.¹⁹⁸ These regulations encompassed all political associations, placing them under strict government scrutiny by requiring permits, rosters, and funds, and inspection by the police. A glaring feature of this legislation was a single clause that forbade the formation of political societies along ethnic lines (*kavmiyet ve cinsiyet*), as expressed either in the society's name or its internal regulations (article 4). This move clearly indicated concern with nationalist activities.¹⁹⁹ Failure to apply for legal recognition by already established societies was another convenient tool to suppress political opposition.²⁰⁰

Opposition publications were banned immediately, but the first press law did not appear until late July 1909. It stated that if daily publications and periodicals failed to deliver the required or correct information, they were to be

¹⁹³ Kuran, *Jön Türkler*, pp. 281–282; Kuran, *İttihad ve Terakki*, p. 255.

¹⁹⁴ *Tanin*, No. 207, 26 February 1909/5 Sefer 1327, "İctimalar," p. 1.

¹⁹⁵ The bill was drawn up by the State Council and sent to the cabinet, which approved it in principle with minor modification and presented it to the Chamber. MV 127: 38. 13 May 1909/30 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

¹⁹⁶ Under heavy penalties, the organizers were required to provide detailed information two days beforehand and at least one organizer was to have residence in the gathering location (articles 2, 3, 4). A severe measure forbade holding meetings in open places within a three-kilometer radius of the lower and upper houses when in session, as well as the palace (article 6). In effect Istanbul was ruled out as a location for large meetings, legal demonstrations, or protests. A committee from the participants was responsible for general security, forbidding illegal activities, avoiding digression from the preapproved topic, and deterring speeches that jeopardized security or the public order and customs, or encouraged criminal activity. Furthermore, the state had the right to assign a civil or judicial official with the authority to adjourn the meeting in case of serious quarrels or fights, or at the organizers' request (article 8, 9). *Düstur*, I, No. 72, 9 June 1909/27 Mayıs 1325/20 Cemaziyelevvel 1327, pp. 227–229.

¹⁹⁷ MV 128: 42/1–2. 6 June 1909/24 Mayıs 1325/17 Cemaziyelevvel 1327.

¹⁹⁸ BEONGG 704, p. 61, 1 August 1909/19 Temmuz 1325.

¹⁹⁹ *Düstur*, I, No. 121, 16 August 1909/3 Ağustos 1325/29 Recep 1327, "Cemiyetler Kanunu," pp. 604–608.

²⁰⁰ DH.EUM.THR 20–25, 4 January 1910/22 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325.

shut down and their owners penalized with heavy fines or prison time, with the amount of the fines and duration of imprisonment increasing with repeated offenses. The state reserved the right to go beyond maximum penalties if a publication's content called for it (article 4). Under threat of heavy fines, editors were obliged to send signed copies of the printed matter to the highest-ranking civil official in the locality and to the public prosecutor (article 8). Publications that did not carry the editor's name were penalized, and in such cases the editor was held responsible for the content (article 9). Vendors were forbidden from attracting attention other than by announcing the publication's name, author, editor, or price (article 10). False or altered reporting of any event that jeopardized the public peace could earn a jail sentence of six months to two years and a heavy financial penalty (article 19).²⁰¹ Similarly restrictive laws were imposed on publishers.²⁰²

That August, it was by invoking the new law that the government could ban the purportedly anti-constitutionalist newspaper *Serbesti*, which had moved to Paris from Istanbul, and prevent the importation of the newspaper *Yıldırım* from Egypt.²⁰³ As time went by, more newspapers (*Meşrutiyet*, *Yeni Yol*, *Güneş*, and others) were added to the list and precautions were taken against their distribution at post offices and booksellers. The opposition, however, could simply smuggle them in an envelope, which the constitutional government had no right to inspect. The government was thus forced to content itself with keeping track of the recipients, and closely following their activities and those of the editorial boards' members in Paris.²⁰⁴ In desperation, the government even recalled the manager/chief editor of *Serbesti* in Paris with threats.²⁰⁵ Despite all efforts, as late as October, the newspapers were read in public places, even in government bureaus. When *Serbesti* moved to Egypt, the Ottoman authorities seemed to have been able to halt its publication in 1910.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ *Düstur*, I, No. 108, 29 July 1909/11 Recep 1327, "Matbuat Kanunu," pp. 395-403.

²⁰² *Düstur*, I, No. 109, 29 July 1909/11 Recep 1327, "Matbaalar Kanunu," pp. 404-410.

²⁰³ MV 130: 61. 8 August 1909/26 Temmuz 1325/22 Recep 1327. MV 131: 61. 8 September 1909/26 Ağustos 1325/23 Şaban 1327.

²⁰⁴ DH.MUI 11-3/24, 1 September 1909/19 Ağustos 1325; 18 September 1909/5 Eylül 1325; 3 October 1909/20 Eylül 1325. DH.EUM.THR 9-28, 21 October 1909/8 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325. DH.EUM.THR 14-5, 30 November 1909/17 Teşrin-i Sani 1325. It certainly confiscated newspapers that arrived openly and punished the post office heads (sd in Yozgad) who ignored its orders; DH.MUI 11-3/24, 21 September 1909/8 Eylül 1325.

²⁰⁵ Şerif Pasha, a former ambassador to Stockholm who had suffered a demotion of military rank, was reminded that he did not have permission to stay abroad and would be discharged in case he refused to return. DH.MUI 11-3/24, 22 September 1909/9 Eylül 1325.

²⁰⁶ DH.EUM.THR. 9-9, 19 September 1909/6 Eylül 1325. DH.EUM.THR 9-10, 21 October 1909/8 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325. DH.EUM.THR 11-18, 20 October 1909/7 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325. DH.MUI 11-3/24, 3 February 1910/21 Kanun-ı Sani 1325. Mevlanzade continued to be the owner of the newspaper, apparently the main target of attack over the Galata Bridge. For complaints from Adana's governor about the unsolicited mailing of *Serbesti* and the effort to stop it, see also DH. MUI 12-2/22, 17 September 1909/4 Eylül 1909.

Also rapidly approved was a law on “vagrants and suspicious individuals” and the methods of dealing with them. The law was significant and should receive extensive commentary at another time. Suffice it to say that this law differed from its predecessor by being more socially regulative and concerned with rehabilitation rather than punishment.²⁰⁷ On the other hand, its immediate (but not long run) enforcement undermined this character; the law was used to serve explicit political ends, such as restoring order and punishing participants in the counterrevolution, or deporting non-Ottoman nationalists active in Macedonia. Two days after approval, it was communicated to the Third Army and Action Army Corps for immediate enforcement.²⁰⁸ In the words of an eyewitness, “any slight action might have branded one as a ‘vagrant,’ be it running in the street during the daytime or walking there at night.”²⁰⁹ Later, the prosecution of “suspects” was made even easier, and anyone labeled as such could be put on trial without the need for a warrant, regardless of social rank.²¹⁰

As the Young Turks pointed out to their “intellectual” critics only a year after the victory of revolution, the notions of freedom of opinion and self expression were not ends in themselves; they were means for achieving the loftier goal of the well-being of the nation. Furthermore, material well-being and improvement in the conditions of life was how the majority of the public judged the success and superiority of the constitutional system over the previous administration.²¹¹ Hence, freedoms were expendable on the road to achieving the greater good of the nation, which was now equated with material well-being.

Constitutional Modification

After the uprising was extinguished, the Chamber got on with the anticipated constitutional changes. The results were that the Chamber and the Porte became more powerful relative to the sultanate (Palace), and the latter lost significantly. The Porte was freed from the tutelage of the sultan in its decision-making, and its institutional independence from the sultanate was affirmed much more clearly. The same went for the Chamber, which asserted its institutional independence from the sultan. Between the Porte and Chamber the rules of interaction were clearly spelled out and the sultan receded into the background. Greater clarity also came with more power for the Chamber, which reined in the newly acquired institutional autonomy of the Porte and made it subservient to the Chamber. In

²⁰⁷ *Düstur I*, No. 59, 9 May 1909/26 Nisan 1325/19 Rebiyülahır 1327, “Serseri ve Mazanne-i Su Eşhas Hakkında Kanun,” pp. 169–173.

²⁰⁸ BEO 265856, 11 May 1909/28 Nisan 1324/21 Rebiyülahır 1327.

²⁰⁹ Abbott, *Turkey in Transition*, p. 256.

²¹⁰ The supplement to martial law made exceptions only for members of the Upper and Lower Houses. *Düstur I*, No. 90, 4 July 1909/15 Cemaziyelahr 1327, “24 Ramazan Tarihli İdare-i Örfiye . . .,” pp. 333–334.

²¹¹ *Tanin*, No. 275, 8 June 1909/19 Cemaziyelahr 1327, “Meşrutiyetten Ne Anlaşıldı,” p. 1. *Tanin*, No. 684, 29 July 1910/21 Recep 1328, “İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti’nin Beyannamesi,” p. 1. *Tanin*, No. 688, 2 August 1910/25 Recep 1328, “Meşrutiyetten Ne Gördük,” p. 1.

short, the sultan lost many of his powers; the Porte and Chamber became far more independent; and the Chamber gained the upper hand against the Porte. In other words, the Palace was deprived of all legislative and executive power. The Porte emerged as the sole locus of the executive, and it was clearly subservient to the legislature. Finally, the Islamic rhetoric of counterrevolution left its mark on the constitution, with *şer'* inserted in various places. So extensive were these changes that the 1909 constitution could rightfully be considered one befitting the claims of revolutionaries.²¹²

²¹² The sultan's rights and responsibilities, and his relation with his prime ministers, were specified as follows. Upon assuming the throne, the sultan was to declare loyalty to the constitution and *şer'* through an oath in the joint session of Parliament (article 3). Surprisingly, the controversial article 5 that could mean the sultan was above the law was left intact. On the surface, the sultan also continued to be the commander of the army and navy (article 7). Yet, within the context of the constitution as a whole, it was apparent they were simply symbolic expressions of deference. Now, it was the prime minister who unequivocally formed the cabinet, including selecting the ministers of army and navy (article 27). This left the sultan as the commander of armed forces only in spirit. Perhaps the most important prerogative that remained was the sultan's right to appoint the prime minister (article 7). Yet the prime minister now had greater authority, allowed to act independently and make critical decisions on matters that previously needed the sultan's permission, but now required formal approval only (articles 28, 29). Finally, the sultan no longer retained the right to deport or banish proven security risks (article 113), and could only grant ranks, positions and decorations based on a special law and not as he pleased (article 7).

Concerning the Chamber and the cabinet, the constitution went into much greater detail about the responsibilities of the ministers against the Chamber, both individually and collectively (article 30). Significantly, if previously the sultan adjudicated serious conflicts between the Chamber and the cabinet, and decided which party was to step down in case it remained unresolved, now he no longer had any role in that decision. In case of an irreconcilable difference between the Chamber and the cabinet, the cabinet resigned first. However, if the same conflict continued with a newly appointed cabinet, it was the Chamber's turn to dissolve. Yet, if the issue remained unresolved still, the Chamber's opinion finally prevailed over the cabinet (article 35). Clearly, the Chamber was given the upper hand throughout the whole process. Furthermore, new additions held that if the results of interpellations were negative for individual ministers or the prime minister, they were to resign immediately. In case of the Prime Minister that meant resignation of the entire cabinet (article 38).

The Chamber gained new grounds against the sultan when the two houses convened on a set day of the year without being summoned (*bila davet*), which was underlined for emphasis. Now they formally opened and ended the session with his decree (article 43). Although the sultan could still convene the Chamber sooner or extend its session if necessary, he could no longer shorten it. Furthermore, now the Chamber majority had the right to ask for these motions as well (article 44). In light of the above, the sultan could no longer dissolve the Chamber, although this contradicted what was stated elsewhere in the constitution, as dissolution was still maintained as his sacred right (article 7). This apparent inconsistency disappears when it is recognized that the Chamber could be dissolved on one occasion alone: In case of interminable conflict with the cabinet (article 35). Constitution was explicit that the sultan could dissolve the Chamber on that condition alone and only upon the Upper House's approval. This meant that his "sacred right" was reduced to a formal one of issuing a decree on a very specific occasion that was in any event outside his control. Even now this could be done only on the condition that elections were held and the Chamber reconvened within an exceedingly short period of three-months (article 7).

This good beginning gave way to modifications in later years that made the constitution more autocratic. Once in 1912, and again in 1916, new additions bolstered the powers of the sultan, enabling him to dismiss the Chamber and call for new elections with little excuse.²¹³ These changes gave the CUP a more efficient means to institute favorable reforms through “temporary” laws (when Chamber was not in session) and through the sultan. The means often served the CUP better than relying on an unpredictable Chamber. Contemporaries described the court of the new sultan as composed of men in total sympathy with the Committee²¹⁴ and the sultan as a puppet in the Committee’s hands,²¹⁵ a state of affairs that continued until the end of the CUP’s reign.

Streamlining the State

Purges in the Civil Administration

When *Tanin* was fully back in business (17 May), its tone was only slightly less combative. It reiterated the need for purges and the replacement of older administrators with young ones. Even the older Chamber deputies were chastised for their cynical “Eastern peoples” attitude and

Before, the annulment period could last as long as four years as the constitution had no provisions for early elections. This newly added condition was an over-reaction to the thirty-three year abrogation of the Chamber by Abdülhamid. As before, both houses of the parliament, and the cabinet, retained the right to request new legislation or modification of existing legislation. The legislative bills, however, were now drawn up and approved between the two houses and then presented for formal ratification to the Sultan before they became the law. This was a radically streamlined process that eliminated potential interferences by the prime minister, the sultan and the State Council. Previously, requests for legislation were first presented to the prime minister and then through him to the sultan. Upon the sultan’s consent, the job of drawing up the bill went to State Council that then presented it to both houses for approval (article 53, 54). Elimination of the State Council, a nonelective, potentially conservative body was an important precautionary measure. During the same years, the Russian tsar had used a series of similar nonelective bodies to wage a legal counterrevolution that had rendered the Duma powerless. A final addition worth mentioning is that the press could no longer be subjected to prepublication censors (article 12). For the text of 1876 constitution see *Salname-i Devlet* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ahmet İhsan ve Şurekası, 1322 (1904)), or any of the Ottoman state yearbooks between 1877 to 1908. For the changes in the constitutional laws in 1909 see *Düstur*, I, 21 August 1909/8 Ağustos 1325/5 Şaban 1327, No. 130, pp. 638–644. For alternative interpretations see Ahmad, *Young Turks*, pp. 58–61 and Shaw, *Reform*, pp. 283–285.

²¹³ After modification of article 35 in 1912, it read that in case of a disagreement between the cabinet and the Chamber of Deputies, it was up to the sultan to dismiss either one (and hold elections in 3 months). In 1916 article 35 was abolished altogether to give the sultan the right to dissolve the Chamber if necessary (with elections in 4 months). He did so without need for a disagreement with the cabinet or approval of the Upper House. Recai G. Okandan *Amme Hukukumuzda İkinci Meşrutiyet Devri* (Istanbul: Kenan Matbaası, 1947) p. 111. *Düstur*, VIII, 9 March 1916/4 Cemaziyelevvel 1334, No. 308, p. 484.

²¹⁴ *BDFA*, Vol. 20, Doc 26, 31 January 1910, p. 111.

²¹⁵ Danişmend, *31 Mart Vak'ası*, pp. 166–168.

their disparaging of the younger deputies as “disrespectful kids.”²¹⁶ *Tanin* asked which revolution had ever committed the mistake of not removing the old administrators. They were naïve to remain within the law, unaware that laws were good only after accounts had been settled (*tasfiye-i hisap*).²¹⁷ Had the old administrators been fired right away, the counterrevolution could have been avoided altogether, but now the bloody “reactionary incident” had provided them with a new mandate to use force.

The Chamber legislation on purges appeared a few days later. The CUP typically did not await the completion of the legislation and reports of extensive staff reductions were already appearing in the newspapers.²¹⁸ The executive agreed to enforce it more forcefully, regularizing payments by taking away unjustified job titles, reducing salaries that were incommensurate with job titles, and augmenting the salaries of, and promoting, the deserving.²¹⁹

A long-time CUP demand was finally realized: reform commissions (*tensikat komisyonu*) were established in every ministry and major office. These were to judge the competence and investigate the past and present circumstances of all officials, judges, clerks, and teachers who were currently employed by the state or had been removed from their posts before or after the new regime. The information was used to decide the number of officials needed and what their duties would be. The law specified in excruciating detail the various categories of officials, their compensation based on years of service and most recent salary,²²⁰ whether they had reached the retirement age, and similar relevant issues. Those engaged in “wrongdoing” were dismissed permanently and without compensation, regardless of prior service. The mandatory retirement age of 65, with a few minor exceptions, went into effect in every office, and only the “deserving” could benefit from full retirement pay.²²¹

Now more caution was exercised in communicating with the officials. Instead of being termed parasites, the fired administrators were now called old-regime victims and were assured that they were not subject to punishment

²¹⁶ *Tanin*, No. 253, 17 May 1909/4 Mayıs 1325/27 Rebiyülahır 1327, “Hilmi Paşa Kabinesi,” pp. 2–3.

²¹⁷ *Tanin*, No. 254, 18 May 1909/5 Mayıs 1325/28 Rebiyülahır 1327, “Yeni Devir,” p. 1.

²¹⁸ *Tanin*, No. 257, 21 May 1909/1 Cemaziyevvel 1327, “Tensikat ve Teşkilat,” p. 3.

²¹⁹ Citing familiar examples of salary irregularities for scribes, quite similar to the CUP’s, the Ministry of Finance reported that the Chamber’s finance committee was about to approve a table of ranks that would finally make them consistent. MV 128: 41/1–2. 6 June 1909/24 Mayıs 1325/17 Cemaziyevvel 1327.

²²⁰ Because of the disproportional salary system under the old regime, the officials’ salaries were adjusted first to a pay scale and reforms carried out accordingly. *Tanin*, No. 255, p. 2.

²²¹ Finally, the law stated that individuals purged without compensation could refer their complaints to the Chamber of Deputies only (rather than the courts or respective ministries). *Düstur*, I, No. 89, 1 July 1909/12 Cemaziyelahir 1327, “Tensikat Kanunu,” pp. 326–333. A later law specified in greater detail the individuals eligible for retirement benefits. *Düstur*, I, No. 128, 21 August 1909/4 Şaban 1327, “Memurin-i Mülkiye Mazuliyet . . .,” pp. 634–636. The new general retirement law may not be confused with retirement laws for the purged officials. *Düstur*, I, No. 141, 25 August 1909/8 Şaban 1327, “Memurin-i Mülkiye’nin Tekaüdüne Dair Kanun,” pp. 666–673.

or revenge.²²² Scribes and clerks were even told to be happy, for they had suffered the most under the old regime: unless a scribe or clerk was protected by a magnate, advancement came with great difficulty, and for a trifling salary, he would be required to kiss many hands and robes. In addition, as a general rule, the state did not pay for the first six months. Now salaries were not delayed and started at higher rates, and advancement was based on merit. Implicitly, those lucky enough to retain jobs could take advantage of the benefits. The rest were assured that they would not be left out in the cold to starve and that some form of assistance would be in place. At the same time, they were advised to stop viewing the state as a protector and to take the idea of personal initiative more seriously.²²³

Justification also came by appeal to impersonal scientific criteria. Breaking with the old-regime principle of “whoever is recommended should stay and whoever is without connections should go,” officials were classified according to age, length of employment, current position, and, unfailingly, level of education. In the light of recent events, the unfairness of indiscriminately granting privileges to the educated was acknowledged: the goal was to distinguish between the “informed” and “uninformed,” and the best method for doing so was to administer an examination, not rely on a diploma.²²⁴ This did not mask the campaign against experienced staffers who lacked academic credentials. Only four days later, the Ministry of Finance was hailed as a model of administration: It had granted all top posts to the School of Civil Administration and law-school graduates.²²⁵

In late August 1909, the most serious push for purges and forced retirements began. Various commissions were set up to pay, as quickly as possible, the sums owed to those fired and to retirees;²²⁶ one commission was given the responsibility to rehire purged but deserving officials as new positions became open.²²⁷ *Tanin* published a selective account of examination results and attempted to soften the blow by mentioning that some of the failed had been assigned retirement pay and should therefore not consider themselves fired.²²⁸ It should also be remembered that the majority of purges were carried out without exams.

²²² *Tanin*, No. 264, 28 May 1909/8 Cemaziyevvel 1327, “Tensikat ve Memurin,” p. 1; *Tanin*, nn., 12 November 1909/28 Şevval 1327, “Kadro Haricleri,” p. 1.

²²³ *Tanin*, No. 264, 28 May 1909/8 Cemaziyevvel 1327, “Tensikat ve Memurin,” p. 1; *Tanin*, nn., No. 19 July 1909/1 Recep 1327, “Mesail-i Dahiliyemiz Ne Halde,” p. 1.

²²⁴ *Tanin*, No. 260, 24 May 1909/4 Cemaziyevvel 1327, “Tensikat,” p. 1.

²²⁵ *Tanin*, No. 373, 15 September 1909/29 Şaban 1327, “Tensikattan Sonra,” p. 1.

²²⁶ MV 132: 44. 22 August 1909/9 Ağustos 1325/5 Şaban 1327.

²²⁷ MV 132: 37. 26 August 1909/13 Ağustos 1325/9 Şaban 1327.

²²⁸ For the reporting of the results see *Tanin*, No. 364, 7 September 1909/21 Şaban 1327, “Tensikat, Orman ve Maden ve Ziraat Nezareti’nde,” p. 3. *Tanin*, No. 366, 8 September 1909/22 Şaban 1327, “Orman ve Maden Nezareti Tensikatu,” pp. 2–3, Şura-yı Devlet’de Yapılan Tensikat,” p. 3, “Maliye Müfettişleri İmtihanı,” p. 3. *Tanin*, No. 367, 10 September 1909/24 Şaban 1327, “Hariciye Nezareti Tensikatu,” pp. 2–3 and “Harbiye Nezareti Tensikatu,” p. 3. The above also gave highly valuable information about the decision making for purging various officials.

Occasionally, tests were used simply as a “fair” means to assess the capability and the rank of the staff that were retained after the purges.²²⁹

In general, many problems did persist with staff reforms. By the CUP’s own admission, connections did continue to play a role in appointments, and the criteria for advancement in rank— whether it was based on examinations, seniority, or a combination of both — were not exactly clear for all positions.²³⁰ The cabinet also reported cases of corruption in several provincial reform commissions where outsiders were hired and promoted arbitrarily.²³¹ The provincial commissions were reprimanded for CUP-like behavior. Further, the decision to investigate the Yıldız Palace archives in search of spies²³² was an embarrassing episode for the CUP that led to the burning of petitions and the decision to identify spies through other means.²³³

Examples shed some light on the reform commission’s conduct, attitude, and connection to the CUP. The commission began the large-scale purges in a typically high-handed fashion; many officials, including governors, heard their fate not in person but through official publications, word of mouth, and rumors. A case in point was the governor of Mamuretülaziz, who had a hard time coming to terms with it. In early April, he had warned the center of the consequences of remaining idle and encouraged it to bring to an end the destructive old-regime habits of favoritism and protection of officials. He also indirectly asked for the appointment of knowledgeable and deserving officials to the provincial administration.²³⁴ This CUP-like request was actually a jab at the preferential treatment the CUP accorded to members and a plea for support from the center to confront the favoritism. This background certainly served as reason enough for the reform commission to dismiss him. After hearing the news the governor immediately shot back that firing the governor of such an important province amounted to caving in to the illegitimate interests of abusers of the constitutional administration and a return to the old regime, when power had been in corrupt hands. Highlighting his perfect record of service, he maintained there was not a trace of evidence to justify dismissal. He also warned of dangerous repercussions of the abruptness of his dismissal and the damaging effect on public morale. Using the opponents’ own favored term of abuse, “insects,” he argued that his hard-earned success meant nothing to them and that he and others were being sacrificed for the shallow wishes of a notorious bunch. He attributed the complaints to a few corrupt officials, a seditious

²²⁹ *Tanin*, No. No.366, 9 September 1909/23 Şaban 1327, “Maliye Nezareti Tensikati,” p. 2.

²³⁰ Several other problems were discussed in the following issues. *Tanin*, No. 754, 9 October 1910/4 Şevval 1328, “Ketebe ve Memurin,” p. 1; *Tanin*, No. 768, 23 October 1910/18 Şevval 1328, “Memurin ve Ketebenin Hali,” p. 1; *Tanin*, No. 871, 5 February 1911/5 Sefer 1329, “Nezaretlerde,” p. 1 *Tanin*, No. 891, 26 February 1911/25 Sefer 1329, “Memurinin Terfi ve Tayini,” p. 1.

²³¹ MV 134: 14/1–2. 21 November 1909/8 Teşrin-i Sani 1325/8 Zilkade 1327.

²³² *Tanin*, No. 289, 23 June 1909/4 Cemaziyelahir 1327, “Tasfiye-i Hesap,” p. 1.

²³³ See Hanioglu, *Young Turks in Opposition*, p. 25.

²³⁴ BEONGG 694, 7 May 1909/24 Nisan 1325, p. 16.

Committee, and the public whose anger they incited, stating that, “the storms of baseless, strange, and capricious complaints of the inhabitants and administrators is not specific to, or confined to this region alone. The storm has engulfed the entire Ottoman lands and left the ship of the state stranded in the midst of all type of dangers.” The governor was resigned to his fate, but expressed anger at the Minister of Interior for remaining unresponsive to his suffering when briefed earlier. At the least, he maintained, his dismissal could be denied in an open telegram, after which he could be retired through a personal letter. This deprived his opponents of a total victory. Implicit here was the public airing of non-secretive state communication. The center’s initial response came in a secret telegram stating that the persistence of complaints, from the lowest to the highest officials, and the public, as well as the results of the Chamber’s inquiry, left it no choice but to let him go, but gave him a choice between retirement or severance pay. Upon accepting the latter and hearing back in an open telegram that he was not fired, he thanked the Prime Minister Hilmi profusely. He recounted Hilmi’s stormy tenure as the minister of interior during which he had saved the country from certain chaos by standing up to the committees and the transgression of a band of tyrannical cheats who operated under the mask of the constitution. He blamed the state of affairs on the unconscionable, barely twenty-year-old officials who confused the Sublime Porte and gave the appearance of general unhappiness by sending telegrams to all corners and spreading discontent in all locations. He asked for their severe punishment after exposing their communications as evidence of guilt. In this, he did not spare some deputies either. Lastly, the governor added that the constitutional administration did not take root in provinces with speeches by a fantasizing juvenile group, but with the justice and impartiality of local administrations and officials.²³⁵ This was one of the most explicit revelations about the link between the “public,” the administrators, and the CUP, their method of operation, the center’s powerlessness in confronting them, and the empire-wide scope of the problem.

Similarly shocked was the governor of the Mediterranean Islands, who had heard about the reform commission’s decision through the newspapers. Wondering why he should be treated in this way after years of devoted service, he asked the prime minister for an explanation. Finding the answer unconvincing, he decided to go to Istanbul to defend his rights and honor and to see for himself if the words “constitution” and “justice” meant anything. The officials unanimously considered Prime Minister Hilmi to be without fault and believed that these affairs were out of his hands. In their eyes the blame lay with the minister of interior and the reform

²³⁵ BEONGG 694, 23 July 1909/10 Temmuz 1325, p. 35. BEONGG 694, 26 July 1909/13 Temmuz 1325, pp. 35–36. BEONGG 694, 29 July 1909/16 Temmuz 1325, p. 36. BEONGG 694, 27 July 1909/14 Temmuz 1325, pp. 36–37. BEONGG 694, 29 July 1909/16 Temmuz 1325, pp. 37–38 (quote from p. 37). BEONGG 694, 31 July 1909/18 Temmuz 1325, pp. 38–40. BEONGG 694, 4 August 1909/22 Temmuz 1325, p. 40. BEONGG 704, 29 July 1909/16 Temmuz 1325, p. 60.

commission.²³⁶ Arab high officials, in particular, suffered many dismissals in the counterrevolution's aftermath, again with important implications for the growth of nationalism that should be dealt with elsewhere.

These examples are not meant to convey that the reform commission or the CUP had a free hand everywhere. As the case of the Kastamonu governor showed, the CUP continued to have conflict with the state. When the CUP sought revenge on the governor Omer Ali for confronting it during the counter-revolution, it did so through the mayor, a CUP supporter who filed a complaint against Omer Ali's "reactionary" tendencies. The complaint alleged that the governor was quite concerned about the court investigations of the counter-revolutionary episode, and had made false accusations against the true supporters of the constitution to save his job. The minister of interior, who came to the governor's defense, requested a personal report from the governor, in which he explained that during three days of counterrevolution he had been obliged to remain subservient to the Sublime Porte, but as the CUP had denounced the cabinet as illegitimate, this had branded him as reactionary. In the governor's opinion, the unsubstantiated accusations were the work of a band in pursuit of rank, salary, and class. The real reason for the band's enmity was the governor's success at extinguishing the hostility that had been nurtured between the clerics and the notables in anticipation of a conflict that would allow them to reach their aims. In an unusual move, the governor requested an independent investigation and offered his willingness to undergo severe punishment in case the allegations were proven true. With this explanation, the already sympathetic minister of interior became convinced of the governor's innocence and related his judgment to the prime minister.²³⁷

Despite continued conflict with the government, the CUP substantially improved its stature and political legitimacy. The tone with which it was now addressed – even upon disagreement – signaled a changed relationship. When a group of notables and clerics from Malatya protested to the Chamber against a group of simpletons who had abused the Committee's good name for their own ends and blemished the reputations of many with unfounded accusations, the government maintained that neither the Committee nor members had the right to interfere and were to be dealt with like everyone else. Yet its respectful tone praised the CUP as a party established to empower the fatherland economically and educationally and to create brotherly love among various elements.²³⁸

In Çatalca, the subprovincial governor had tried to fire the CUP mayor over embezzlement, and had gone to great lengths to prove the charge. His letter to the Ministry of Interior spoke of the "respected society" and expressed surprise

²³⁶ BEONGG 694, 8 September 1909/26 Ağustos 1325, p. 41. BEONGG 694, 10 September 1909/28 Ağustos 1325, p. 42.

²³⁷ BEO 266507, 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325; 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülahır 1327; 23 May 1909/10 Mayıs 1325; 24 May 1909/11 Mayıs 1325; 25 May 1909/12 Mayıs 1325/5 Cemaziyelevvel 1327.

²³⁸ DH.MUI 10-1/64, 15 September 1909/2 Eylül 1325.

that such a character who violated all modern rules could still claim membership. He asked the ministry to gain the Istanbul CUP's approval for dismissing the mayor from its Çatalca cadre. On curious display here was the impotence of the provincial administration, which could not fire a proven fraudster, and the governor's belief that the Ministry of Interior was in need of permission from the CUP to do so.²³⁹

By mid-1910, even the hard-to-please CUP could boast about the rapid progress of purges and reorganizations.²⁴⁰ Earlier, the British annual report had maintained that as the result of purges, 27,000 officials had lost their jobs. The report, however, failed to clearly specify whether this figure was inclusive of the army as well. Without such information the number appears inflated; the best estimate of the number of civilian staff under the old regime puts the total between 35,000 and 70,000.²⁴¹ The prolonged state of siege checked any possible reactions. However, in the Macedonian and Arab provinces, reforms were not looked upon as simply administrative and were felt to be "Turkifying," with troubling consequences that cannot be explored here.

As seen in [Chapter 4](#), between 1908 and 1910 the top three tiers of provincial administration were changed throughout the empire. A deeper look into the appointments in selective provinces under the old and new regimes not only brings their differences into sharper relief, but reinforces the great magnitude of transformations. For the purpose, I have chosen the Arab, Rumelian, and Central Anatolian provinces of Syria, Kosovo, and Ankara, and the appointments of top to mid-level officials in the provincial capitals of Damascus, Skopje, and Ankara. This offers not only some semblance of representativeness of the empire's regional variation but also has relevance to nationalism, which is set aside for now. The mid- and lower-level positions in the subprovinces or districts are not reflected in the yearbooks, and are thus not treated here; but given the scale of changes, it is hard to imagine that their fate was any different than that of the staff in the provincial centers. Between 1902 and 1904, the officials in provincial capitals worked in a more stable environment than did the governors they worked for. Typically forty to sixty in number, these officials experienced turnovers as well. Of the sixty-two officials at the Syrian capital of Damascus in 1904, a mere twenty-four were new to their posts (after taking into account the positions newly created in 1904). Compare this with the period from 1908 to 1910. In 1910 Damascus, of the forty-one positions that survived the reforms, only five names could be associated with those found among holders of the seventy-four positions of the 1908 roster. Similarly, in Skopje, of thirty-five positions in 1904, twenty were newly appointed officials compared with 1902, a high number that may have had something to do with Rumelian reforms after the İllinden revolts of 1903. Yet this was still not a match for 1910; of its forty-three officials, only seven had been in

²³⁹ DH.MUI 10-2/14, 31 August 1909/18 Ağustos 1324/15 Şaban 1327.

²⁴⁰ *Tanin*, No. 610, 15 May 1910/5 Cemaziyevvel 1328, "Bütçe-Ahali ve Memurin," p. 1.

²⁴¹ *B DFA*, Vol. 20, Doc 26, 31 January 1910, p. 113. A careful research of the Foreign Ministry after the purges shows a drastic decrease. Findley, *Civil Officialdom*, p. 95.

Skopje in 1908. Finally, in Ankara between 1902 and 1904, of thirty-six officials in 1904, nineteen were new at the job. Yet again, between 1908 and 1910, not only were positions reduced from forty-two to forty, but only a single official in 1910, the *mufti* of Ankara, was a survivor from 1908.

By the time of revolution, the three Rumelian provinces had already streamlined their administrations and served as something of a model for the rest of the empire. Furthermore, by the 1910 yearbook, there was a systematic strengthening of three ranks of officials, even in the midst of reductions. These are the police chiefs, census officials, and inspectors for education. The first indicated the new regime's overhaul of police administration and desire for order; the second its zeal for the latest scientific methods of population management; the last was an important addition across the board for stricter enforcement of the language policy, which did not bode well for those desiring a greater freedom in language instruction.

The police received considerable attention in the aftermath of counterrevolution when it was reorganized from a ministry to a bureau. Concern for internal security was the reason for the rapid transformation of this neglected and unpopular institution under the old regime (like the Gendarmes). Its uneducated, incapable, and disreputable staff; their low salaries and hence corruption and distraction from their jobs; and the lack of differentiation of function from the Gendarmes and the municipal police (*çavuş*), were all reasons to break from the ways of the old regime and adopt the advances made in the police administrations of Europe in the previous quarter century. A main principle here was division into appropriate departments based on the centralization principle and Istanbul took the lead in the matter, with good success, in the hope that it set an example for the rest of the empire to follow.²⁴² The overwhelming importance of education and diplomas was in full display in the operation of the reform commission when it divided the police in Rumelia into two forces and explicitly rendered those without formal training in the police academy ineligible for promotion; this, in the name of fairness and progress.²⁴³ The same attitude and style of operation throughout the empire occasioned extensive written protests from every imaginable corner, and especially from the purged commissioners. More often than not, they spoke of the unfairness of the decision after their years of dedicated service, recounted their dedication to the constitution, and asked for equity, which in many cases meant reappointment, or for those resigned to their fate, some larger compensation than had been received. For most, purges were based on education, exams, and trials,²⁴⁴ but sometimes

²⁴² For a detailed proposition for changes see DH.EUM.THR 21-47, January 1910; DH.EUM.THR 8-23, late 1909; DH.EUM.THR 17-49, 18 December 1909/5 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325. For success in Istanbul see DH.EUM.THR 25-43, 17 February 1910/3 Şubat 1325.

²⁴³ DH.EUM.THR 13-19, 30 October 1909/17 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325; DH.MUI 2-4/6, 3 November 1909/21 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325/19 Şevval 1327.

²⁴⁴ The center urged against firings based on reputation and without trial. DH.EUM.THR 18-37, 21 December 1909/8 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325. There was, however, clear reluctance to rehire the

confirmed reports of unbecoming behavior while in uniform served as grounds for dismissal. On occasion they spoke of the extreme poverty of small-town policemen, of families who had become homeless and were reduced to begging as the result of the protested decision. On the whole, these could not be distinguished from other petitioners within the civil administration. The Public Security Bureau, which received many such petitions, repeatedly pointed out its inability to interfere with the reform commission's authority. Eventually, the petitioners were directed to the commission that was established in the Chamber expressly for the purpose. Cases of serious reconsideration, however, were rare.²⁴⁵

A Chamber commission that acted as the sole body of appeal for officials who had been purged was in fact flooded with letters asking for redress, not only from the police, but from the entire administration.²⁴⁶ Even this appeals process was eventually ended, depriving officials of their only recourse.²⁴⁷

Purges in the Army

The army and navy had the chance to distinguish themselves from the old regime for the first time in June 1909, by an important symbol: new uniforms.²⁴⁸ Immediately, new mandatory retirement ages for all ranks of army and navy officers was put in place. Starting from second lieutenant and ending with field marshal and admiral, the maximum age for the one was forty and for the other sixty-eight, with intervening ranks' mandatory retirement ages falling in between. This ensured that officers would not languish in a rank for too long;

acquitted. DH.EUM.THR 13 October 1909/30 Eylül 1325. DH.EUM.THR 8-6, 5 September 1909/23 Ağustos 1325.

²⁴⁵ For some of these from Istanbul, and various locations in İzmit, Van, Kal'a-ı Sultaniye, Mamuretülaziz, Hüdavendigâr, Erzurum, Beirut, Adana, Diyarbakir, and Sivas see DH.EUM.THR 13-23, 24 November 1909/11 Teşrin-i Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 9-30, 24 October 1909/11 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 9-59, 30 October 1909/17 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 18-28, 21 December 1909/8 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 18-31, 21 December 1909/8 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 18-43, 22 December 1909/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 18-45, 22 December 1909/9 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 18-48, 16 December 1909/3 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 18-43, 7 January 1910/25 Kanun-ı Evvel 1325; DH.EUM.THR 21-9, 10 Zilhicce 1327; DH.EUM.THR 22-41, 20 January 1910/7 Kanun-ı Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 23-5, 25 January 1910/12 Kanun-ı Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 23-25, 27 January 1910/14 Kanun-ı Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 24-40, 9 February 1910/27 Kanun-ı Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 23-31, 29 January 1910/16 Kanun-ı Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 25-10, 13 February 1910/31 Kanun-ı Sani 1325; DH.EUM.THR 25-30, 14 February 1910/1 Şubat 1325; DH.EUM.THR 25-42, 17 February 1910/3 Şubat 1325; DH.EUM.THR 26-34, 23 February 1910/10 Şubat 1325.

²⁴⁶ Perhaps it was in response to these appeals that new legislation assigned an "appropriate" pension to the permanently dismissed who had at least ten years of service and were in dire need. *Düstur*, II, No. 84, 17 May 1910/7 Cemaziyelevvel 1328, "12 Cemaziyelelahır 1327 Tarihli Tensikat Kanuna Müzeyyel Kanun," pp. 264-266.

²⁴⁷ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, pp. 296-297.

²⁴⁸ *Düstur*, I, No. 81, 18 June 1909/29 Cemaziyelevvel 1327, "Elbise-i Askeriye Nizamnamesi," pp. 276-296. *Düstur*, I, No. 85, 23 June 1909/4 Cemaziyelelahır 1327, "Bahriye-i Şahane Zabitanın Elbise-i Resmîyesi Hakkında Nizamname," pp. 309-322.

they would either advance by a certain age or face retirement. More immediately, it was a way of retiring the ranker officers who, as a rule, had slower promotion rates and tended to be older in each category. The capable and fit among the retired were to enter active reserve officer corps.²⁴⁹ As a side effect, some older educated officers were also forced into retirement, which the CUP protested as irrational.²⁵⁰

In August, new administrative laws for the military introduced significant changes. Military men who were proven to have worked for the spy network and those known for immorality were to be dismissed without pay (article 2). With minor exceptions, those with military titles who had not entered the ranks or military schools and had not performed military service were to be dismissed (article 4). A law that targeted the children of the influential officials in military schools annulled the promotions they had received while in school, requiring them to graduate in the same rank as their classmates (article 6). A new military table of ranks and promotion rules in effect set back the ranker officers for six years to account for the years the educated officers had spent in military college – normally a four-year period. Furthermore, the new table favored the educated officers by making the advancement requirement for many ranks much shorter for them. For example, an educated officer who had graduated highest in his cohort normally needed thirty-six years to become a field marshal in the military. A ranker officer with the same aspiration needed fifty-four years of service, in effect putting this, and many other, top positions effectively out of this group's grasp (article 7).²⁵¹

The CUP boasted of its achievements in the army and consistently called it the most successful area of reform. As an example, *Tanin* mentioned that in the First Army Corps, notorious for its patrimonial appointments, they had reduced the rank of its commander to colonel. Such was the fate of a large number of officers who had acquired exceedingly high rank because of corruption or insider connections.²⁵² Swift action was confirmed by the British consular report, which stated that with forceful application of new laws “some startling changes have resulted. There are cases of major-generals who have become subalterns, and lieutenant-colonels who are generals of divisions are quite common.”²⁵³

²⁴⁹ Of the retired officers, the capable ones were given the opportunity to register as reserve officers in the army and navy. *Düstur*, I, No. 87, 27 June 1909/8 Cemaziyelahir 1327, “Berri ve Bahri Erkan ve Ümera ve Zabitanın Tekaüdü İçin . . .,” pp. 324–325.

²⁵⁰ *Tanin*, No. 395, 7 October 1909/22 Ramazan 1327, “Mantıksızlar,” p. 1.

²⁵¹ *Düstur*, I, No. 114, 7 August 1909/20 Recep 1327, “Tasfiye-i Rutub-ı Askeriye Kanunu,” pp. 421–427. Further regulations reduced the number and ranks of the army's civil staff and abolished some military positions. *Düstur*, I, No. 137, 23 August 1909/6 Şaban 1327, “Devair-i Merkeziye-i . . .,” pp. 656–658. *Düstur*, II, No. 111, 26 June 1910/17 Cemaziyelahir 1328, “Sunuf-i Muhtelif-i Askeriyede . . .,” pp. 382–383.

²⁵² The commander of the First Army was Mahmut Muhtar Pasha. Another undertaking was the acceptance of non-Turkish elements to the army. *Tanin*, No. 389, 4 October 1909/19 Ramazan 1327, “Türkiye’de İdare-i Cedid,” p. 2.

²⁵³ *BDFA*, Vol. 20, Doc 26, 31 January 1910, pp. 127–128 (quote from p. 128).

The Gendarmerie was another institution that received attention from the CUP very early.²⁵⁴ In September 1908, the CUP welcomed the news of cabinet-planned reforms in the infamous Gendarme administration of Istanbul.²⁵⁵ By November, however, the CUP central committee was expressing dissatisfaction with the far-too-limited scope of changes, which was confined to Istanbul. They asked the cabinet to emulate the Rumelian reforms in the rest of the empire, and identified in precise fashion the locales in need of reform and the administrative districts under whose guidance they were to be carried out. Given the success of European officers in Rumelia, the CUP requested perpetuation of their services and suggested their head, Count de Robilan, for the new directorship of the Istanbul reform bureau.²⁵⁶

Not surprisingly, the government plans came to resemble very closely the CUP's suggestions. The reduction in the Gendarme staff and the planned overhaul was to start with Istanbul and the adjacent areas, especially the three provinces of Rumelia.²⁵⁷ In this context, the government went along with the army recommendation against reappointing previous gendarme high commanders.²⁵⁸ The cabinet also agreed with the recommendation of the army to renew the contracts of the most capable and qualified European officers,²⁵⁹ and for this purpose decided to retain twenty-four of the original officers, hire an additional ten European officers, and place all under the leadership of Lieutenant General Robilan Pasha. He was to be responsible for expanding the Rumelian achievements first to Istanbul and Aydın, and then to the rest of the empire.²⁶⁰

As well organized as the Rumelian Gendarmes had become under the European officers, it was clear that the new reform measures were much stricter. Its general direction was clear when of the nine officers in the Monastir regiment of Gendarmes pointed out for promotion, eight were graduates of military academies and only one a ranker. Of further interest were the military personnel

²⁵⁴ For an early call for strengthening of the Gendarmes but according to very general guidelines see *Tanin*, No. 80, 19 October 1908/6 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324/23 Ramazan 1326, "Jandarma Tensikati," pp. 6–7.

²⁵⁵ MV 121: 1. 27 September 1908/14 Eylül 1324/1 Ramazan 1326.

²⁵⁶ Y.EE.Kamil 86/33–3260, 5 November 1908.

²⁵⁷ MV 121: 59. 23 November 1908/27 Şevval 1326.

²⁵⁸ The government was to retire the "deserving" and assign the rest to positions within the Civil Administration. MV 121: 73. 26 November 1908/30 Şevval 1326.

²⁵⁹ These were originally hired to reform the Gendarmes in the three provinces of Kosovo, Salonica, and Monastir, but because of their success and the recent initiatives in the Gendarmerie, they were to continue with reform in Istanbul and other provinces. MV 124: 77/1–2. 16 February 1909/3 Şubat 1324/24 Muharrem 1327.

²⁶⁰ MV 127: 37. 13 May 1909/30 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327. This was an expansion of an earlier decision. MV 125: 29/1–2. 4 March 1909/19 Şubat 1324/11 Sefer 1327. The police chief and other police staff were sent to Europe to gain familiarity with the police organization there but high-ranking gendarmes were not allowed to do so as a sufficiently large number of European gendarmes was at hand. MV 133: 87. 10 November 1909/28 Teşrin-i Evvel 1325/26 Şevval 1327.

who were transferred for not being impartial, like an officer who was said to be in conflict with the national interest because of his anti-Committee proclivities and membership in the Liberal Party (Ahrar).²⁶¹ Around the same time, a large number of petitions arrived at the general inspector's office in Salonica from the fired gendarmes. These had responded to a government announcement about back pay, and in the name of justice pleaded for nothing more than equitable treatment with peers who had been compensated. They spoke mostly of abject poverty; one lamented being reduced to begging to support his large family; another complained of his health and the money needed for a critical surgery; another related that he was home-bound, without dependents to care for him and in dire need of the money that was owed to him.²⁶² Another appealed to the principle of equality, a pillar of the constitution, while a widow of a recently deceased gendarme, after describing the large burden of caring for three minor children, her mother-in-law, and other relatives single-handedly, highlighted the immigrant status of her dead husband in search of sympathy.²⁶³ The government agreed to most of these, but only after careful investigation. Request for back pay on behalf of the deceased was not uncommon either, as evinced by a Bulgarian Ottoman who appealed as an heir to a father deceased three years earlier; or a fired elderly gendarme who appealed to the Kosovo Gendarmerie for money for himself and his dead son.²⁶⁴

By December 1909, the government went as far as to abolish the old gendarme administration to prevent overlap, competition, and confusion with the new Gendarmes reform office. The new Gendarmes Corps was to be established within the army under the command of a lieutenant general, which for now meant Robilan Pasha.²⁶⁵ The decision to place the Gendarmes Corps under the solid command of the army seemed to end its wavering status between the civil and military administrations, which was a source of tension between governors and military commanders. The reforms were followed by a change in uniforms, privileging the educated and making new stringent requirements for entry; additional institutional transformation managed to uplift the neglected institution with a serious image problem.²⁶⁶ These changes, however, did not have the same priority as the army and as a rule were postponed to the period between 1911 and 1914.

²⁶¹ TFR.I.MN 1889I, 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/30 Nisan 1325.

²⁶² TFR.I.SL 20890, 27 May 1909/14 Mayıs 1325, 25 May 1909/12 Mayıs 1325.

²⁶³ TFR.I.SL 20890, 14 May 1909/1 Mayıs 1325, 18 May 1909/5 Mayıs 1325.

²⁶⁴ TFR.I.SL 20890, 15 May 1909/2 Mayıs 1325. TFR.I.KV 20757, 23 August 1908/10 Ağustos 1324. TFR.I.SL 20890, 16 May 1909/3 Mayıs 1325, 18 May 1909/5 Mayıs 1325.

²⁶⁵ MV 134: 83. 9 December 1909/26 Teşrin-i Sani 1325/26 Zilkade 1327. By next year's April, the Gendarmes appeared to be under complete command of the military. *Tanin*, No. 568, 2 April 1910/21 Rebiyülevvel 1328, "Jandarma," p. 1.

²⁶⁶ *Tanin*, No. 568, 2 April 1910/21 Rebiyülevvel 1328, "Jandarma," p. 1. *Tanin*, No. 822, 19 December 1910/16 Zilhicce 1328, "Mühim Bir Mesele-i İdare," p. 3. *Tanin*, No. 890, 24 February 1911/24 Sefer 1329, "Bütçe," p. 1.

The Palace Transformed

The dismantling of the Palace secretariat's extensive administrative structure was now pursued with greater speed. This was also true of Palace finances. Less than two months after the July revolution, the revenue from all lands and estates under the Privy Purse (*hazine-i hassa*) with annual income of four hundred thousand liras were diverted to the general treasury.²⁶⁷ In May 1909, the government went further and redirected all Privy Purse income from every source to the general treasury. This was done partially with the excuse that the previous sultan had incurred many debts to merchants and moneylenders, and the treasury had assumed his debts.²⁶⁸ Furthermore, since the Privy Purse could no longer administer the Yıldız Palace, a commission was to be formed to discuss turning it into a public garden, a zoo, and a guest residence for foreign leaders.²⁶⁹ Of the Privy Purse employees, only the expert and "upright" graduates of higher education schools were to be employed in appropriate positions and the rest were to be purged or retired.²⁷⁰ The Palace secretariat's scribes, translators, and other employees left without jobs petitioned for redress. Although the government acknowledged that most were upright, it reiterated that only graduates of higher education schools with a good reputation – that is "those not convicted by the public opinion" – were promised future employment. The lower ranks, despite acknowledged innocence, were not promised anything.²⁷¹

Also reduced were the budget for the upkeep of the family and dependents of Abdülhamid.²⁷² Furthermore, the Chamber rationalized payments by assigning a salary to each member of the household in place of a lump sum to be distributed privately.²⁷³ Affected also were the Palace's private quarters (*enderun-i hümayun*), with a new, detailed classificatory system that reduced the titles, ranks, salaries, and numbers of its employees and abolished the Palace school.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁷ *Düstur*, I, No. 29, 14 September 1908/1 Eylül 1324/18 Şaban 1326, "400,000 Liralık İrade-i Senevisi Bulunan Emlak-ı Şahanelinin ..." pp. 76–77.

²⁶⁸ MV 127: 39. 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/29 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

²⁶⁹ MV 127: 40. 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327. For the reduced power of the Palace and Privy Purse see its conflict with the CUP over a possessed piece of property in Salonica that ended in CUP favor. MV 132: 8. 1 September 1909/19 Ağustos 1325/16 Şaban 1327.

²⁷⁰ MV 127: 15. 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülahır 1327.

²⁷¹ MV 128: 31. 6 June 1909/24 Mayıs 1325/17 Cemaziyevvel 1327.

²⁷² MV 127: 43. 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

²⁷³ MV 127: 45. 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

²⁷⁴ *Düstur*, I, No. 98, 15 July 1909/26 Cemaziyelahir 1327, "Enderun-ı Hümayun Müstahdeminin Tensik-i Vezaif ve Maaşatına Dair Kararname," pp. 357–363. *Düstur*, I, No. 99, 15 July 1909/26 Cemaziyelahir 1327, "Enderun-ı Hümayun Talimat-ı Dahiliyesi," pp. 363–368. *Düstur*, II, No. 94, 17 May 1910/7 Cemaziyevvel 1328, "Enderun-ı Hümayun Müstahdeminin ..." pp. 299–300. *Düstur*, II, No. 123, 4 July 1910/25 Cemaziyelahir 1328, "Tebeddül-i Saltanat Hasebiyle Saraydan Çıkarılıp ..." p. 419.

In 1910 Abdülhamid's harem suffered a severe budget cut and the princes' allowances were scrapped entirely.²⁷⁵

A commission was formed to audit and classify the documents and objects in the Yıldız Palace and to reduce the number of employees and unnecessary expenditures in all palaces.²⁷⁶ Close to 1,100,000 liras of foreign bank notes were soon found in Yıldız, along with a large sum of guaranteed checks and jewelry of substantial value (though, as it turned out, these were worth much less than earlier estimates by the revolutionary press).²⁷⁷ The government also set out to detain (*hac*) Abdülhamid's property in Germany and France. The German government, which half-heartedly asked for proof of embezzlement, accepted the sworn testimonies of the minister of finance and the accounting bureau chief that Abdülhamid had paid himself substantial sums from state taxes.²⁷⁸

CONCLUSION

This chapter and the preceding one demonstrated in narrative detail and number the CUP's single-minded resolve to overhaul the military and bureaucratic staffs. The ambitious undertaking was only part of the larger project of state transformation, but it was one of the first, and the one that spoke most directly to the frustrations of the emerging class, addressing its blocked mobility. I have argued the latter to be the most direct cause of the Young Turk revolution. Through its staff policies, the CUP further consolidated its position within the state. Although strong complaints were aired and continued to be heard around the empire, counterrevolution provided a powerful mandate to ignore them and pursue personnel reorganization more aggressively. This the CUP did, seeking and receiving immediate legislative support to expedite and broaden the scope of reforms.

Unhappiness with these policies became the major reason for the counterrevolution. Carried out by the ranker soldiers, religion was the counterrevolution's language. This requires some explanation. It certainly was true that, beyond the purges, the CUP and the revolution in general managed to antagonize many among the Muslim public. Equality, a central message of revolution, endowed the Ottoman public, Muslim and non-Muslim, with law-making

²⁷⁵ The amount deducted from *harem's* budget was the substantial sum of 18,403,107.5 kuruş. *Düstur*, II, No. 133, 4 July 1910/25 Cemaziyelahir 1328, "Hakan-ı Sabıkın Harem Mensubatu..." pp. 433-434.

²⁷⁶ MV 127: 18. 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülahır 1327.

²⁷⁷ *Tanin*, No. 257, 21 May 1909/8 Mayıs 1325/1 Cemaziyevvel 1327, "Abdülhamid Servetini Terk Ediyor," p. 3. Sultan's wealth was estimated at 15,000,000 liras aside from the royal jewels. See *Tanin*, No. 255, 19 May 1909/6 Mayıs 1325/29 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Abdülhamid'in Serveti," pp. 2-3 and *Tanin*, No. 256, 20 May 1909/7 Mayıs 1325/30 Rebiyülahır 1327, "Abdülhamid'in Serveti," p. 3. The sultan's jewelry was sold off. MV 131: 50. 8 September 1909/26 Ağustos 1325/23 Şaban 1327.

²⁷⁸ MV 127: 46/1-2. 12 May 1909/29 Nisan 1325/22 Rebiyülahır 1327.

ability; this contributed to rising tensions with parts of the Muslim public that felt their last remaining privileges fading away. The conservative clerics' focus on the Islamic penal code expressed that anxiety. In the name of equality, the lower religious ranks also witnessed vanishing traditional privileges (e.g., exemption from conscription), not to mention the limits placed on their numbers through the newly required examinations. In addition, the decidedly Westernist appearance and behavior (e.g., dress, theater attendance) and policies of the new regime (e.g., emphasis on women's education) deepened the existing cultural divide by demarcating those who belonged and those who did not under the new system, the winners and the losers. The cultural and social affinities of ordinary soldiers and conservative religious ranks brought them together despite their somewhat divergent concerns. The language of religion provided a vantage point from which to challenge the seemingly sophisticated discourse of constitutionalists, with the backing of science and the weight of the latest European (and Japanese) achievements behind it. Yet it should be emphasized that the critique offered by the Society of Islam's leadership was in no way a wholesale rejection of constitutionalism; it was a search for a way to reconcile it with Islam and the traditions of the empire. Nonetheless, among some supporters, constitutionalism had become an intolerable doctrine that deserved to be eradicated.

The reach of counterrevolution was empire wide. Caution should be exercised, however, in treating them all as the same. At one extreme stood Adana, where the conflict degenerated into the popular outpouring of ethnic hostilities; Erzurum stood in the middle; Istanbul was at the other extreme from Adana. In Istanbul, non-Muslims were not endangered and the general public as a rule was not involved in clashes.

The counterrevolution vindicated the CUP against the opposition by justifying its role as the guardian of the constitution and the legal violations it had committed in the constitution's name. If anyone had doubted the CUP's ability to ride into the capital in July 1908, nine months later that claim was proven beyond doubt when the CUP overtook Istanbul under the assumed name of the Action Army. That it had taken less than two weeks to retake the capital in face of a surprise outbreak, and without the need to mobilize irregulars, indicated the CUP's growing influence. The claim that in the previous ten months the CUP had not overtaken the executive out of respect for the constitution was also proved. After the counterrevolution, the CUP confirmed its commitment again by restoring the Chamber and empowering the legislature through major constitutional modifications. Yet the changes provided more obstacles for its state and nation-building endeavors; the CUP felt ill at ease with the political arrangements it advocated, and sought ways, legally or otherwise, to weaken or bypass their strictures. Nonetheless, the global master-frame demanded commitment to constitutionalism as the singular model of modernity and the empire's only chance of survival; but the CUP found this arrangement too burdensome and in constant need of violation. Caught in that contradiction, the CUP remained committed to formal constitutionalism despite itself. The Turkish republic was born under the sign of this antinomy.

IRAN

Reform and Patrimonialism in Comparative Perspective

When making the transition from the Ottoman Empire to Iran, what is immediately striking is the comparatively low level of institutional development. Iran faced strong geopolitical pressures, similar to those faced by the Ottoman Empire, that came from Russia and Britain, especially. Like its neighbor's, Iran's difficulties prompted attempts at self-strengthening through European-inspired reforms. These were usually filtered through the Ottoman experience and transmitted by major Iranian reformers who could claim familiarity with its reformist undertakings after an elongated period of stay in the Ottoman domains. Yet the reform era did not result in centralization, a modern bureaucracy, or an independent executive comparable with the Sublime Porte. State penetration into society remained meager, leaving the clerical institutional framework intact, largely independent, and with great influence over Iranians' daily lives. The state, although partially transformed in the nineteenth century, remained for the most part an extension of the shah's patrimonial household.

It was not surprising then that the educational scene differed greatly. Modern Iranian schools were primarily private initiatives with minimal commitment from the state, moral or financial. Without state sponsorship, Iran did not see the emergence of a modern middle class in the nineteenth century. The graduates that trickled into the bureaucracy were small in number; even fewer entered the army. If the fault line in the centralized Ottoman civil bureaucracy and military ran between those with modern education and the rest, the divisions in the decentralized Iranian bureaucracy and military were factional, regional, and tribal.

Despite their institutional differences, Ottomans and Iranians had many ideological affinities. Iranian reformers too constructed a religious lineage for constitutionalism to broaden its popular appeal; their attempt bore strong marks of Ottoman influence. Given the clout of the clerical establishment, the Iranian intelligentsia needed to persuade the powerful Iranian clerics to participate. This they did by offering them the movement's leadership, which was a productive strategy when the clerics were the most powerful challengers to the state with claims to community leadership. But having as powerful a political ally as the clerics complicated the picture for the constitutionalist reformers.

Like their Ottoman counterparts, the Iranian intelligentsia harbored a statist interpretation of constitutionalism. They placed strong emphasis on its uniformizing abilities and attributed to it almost magical powers to improve Iran's geopolitical standing and strengthen the state internally. The Russo-Japanese war validated this thinking and served further to make constitutional states and rationalized states synonymous. For the clerics, on the other hand, constitutionalism was a means of instituting justice and limiting the transgressions of the state and the monarch. There were affinities between the two over the desire for greater justice, but also major differences. If one desired a more intrusive, rational, strong modern state modeled after European states, the other was in favor of a less intrusive state, without particular concern for its institutional makeup. The clerics, the intelligentsia, and the public had different understandings of what was wrong with their circumstances and how and why constitutionalism could improve it.

Another ideological affinity between the two societies was the traditional monarch-centered notion of politics, the Circle of Justice or Circle of Equity, which was a meaningful reference for both publics. But the concept was of greater relevance in Iran, where its combination with religion and Western constitutionalism produced a hybrid with powerful mobilization capacity. In the Ottoman context, the notion did not find extensive outlets for expression. The Young Turks as a rule did not strive for mass mobilization, and they remained unsympathetic to traditional, monarch-centered ideals.

A glaring ideological difference existed between the two, however: there was nothing analogous to the ideology of Ottomanism in Iran. Iran had a small non-Muslim population. Furthermore, religion and ethnicity had not become nearly as politicized and had not turned into major arenas for domestic and international strife and rivalries in Iran, as they had in the Ottoman Empire. Constitutionalism was thus not packaged as an integrative ideology for ending religious and ethnic strife. Instead, in Iran one encounters a much greater concern for lawlessness, injustice, insecurity, and lack of protection against the powerful elite, including various provincial notables, as well as a state that not only failed to protect, but actively engaged in predatory practices against its subjects.

The institutional weakness of Iran was also reflected in pre-revolutionary political mobilization. Although clandestine radical societies existed here and there, these were intellectual gatherings and were not oriented toward action. There was nothing close to the extensive Young Turk organization prior to revolution. The potential for spontaneous and large-scale, even national, rebellion did certainly exist – as proven by the Tobacco Rebellion. But no revolutionary movement or an organization working toward that end analogous to the pre-revolutionary CUP existed.

The minimally reformed Iran could be characterized as having a weak state that existed with a strong society¹ where the clerics, merchants, statesmen, and

¹ Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

other social groups were serious challengers to the state's authority. The ambiguities in the reformist political discourse of the early twentieth century provided a chance for broad mobilization. As with the Young Turk Revolution, many actors with varying interests and contrasting interpretations rallied behind a revolution that they later felt at odds with.

In Iran, the state was certainly feeling the strain of perpetual financial crisis; like the Ottomans, the Iranian state had stepped into the bottomless pit of foreign debt. This financial weakness made the Iranian state vulnerable to revolution. Yet the revolution's occurrence still hinged upon contingencies, that placed constitutional revolution on the agenda of politics. This and other contingencies will be explored in the [next chapter](#). For now, I would like to turn to the pre-revolutionary setting in Iran.

THE LANGUAGE OF STATE AND KINGSHIP

As Amanat has perceptively observed, in nineteenth-century Iran, the ideology and practice of government emanated from four sources: Iranian pre-Islamic notions of kingship, Islam, Turco-Mongolian tradition, and Western institutions and ideals of statecraft.² These made the similarity with the Ottoman context striking; the culture of politics there at the time of revolution was also a hybrid product of the interaction, clash, and intermingling of these four dominant elements.³ Yet, if the basic elements were the same, their synthesis was not. Iran and the Ottoman Empire had myriad structural, demographic, religious, and geographic differences, including different histories of interaction with the West. Consequently, the composition of the groups that participated in revolution was also quite different in each. These differences left their mark on the synthesis that prevailed in each setting.

The following section is devoted to highlighting the culture of politics that played a crucial role in mediating interactions between the government and the opposition. In Iran, the Circle of Justice made the question of monarch and monarchy a key element of the revolutionary drama.

The Circle of Justice

A major strand of Islamic theory of government was constructed from the synthesis of Islam with the Iranian ideology of kingship.⁴ There is thus a striking degree of continuity between the "mirrors for princes" of the Sassanids (224–651? A.D.) and the model Islamic mirrors of later eras. Our discussion here need

² Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–1896* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 7.

³ One could also note the Greek influence.

⁴ For an extended version of this argument see Nader Sohrabi, "Revolution and State Culture: The Circle of Justice and Constitutionalism in 1906 Iran," in *State/Culture: State Formation After the Cultural Turn*, edited by George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999) pp. 253–288.

not dwell on influences that have been the subject of lucid commentary elsewhere.⁵ Instead, we will turn to topics that surfaced in the course of revolution, such as order and justice, the methods of upholding them, and the role of the shah as their guardian; the shah's relation to his vizier, and his sanctity; and the concept of consultation.

A central element of the theory of kingship was the division of society into four estates based on social role and occupation. Despite much variation among mirrors in the occupational categories they name or those they group together under one estate, the essential organizing logic remained the same: a hierarchical ordering from powerful estates down to those in need of special protection. If the pre-Islamic "mirror for princes" *`Ahd Ardashir* divided the four estates into military leaders; men of religion; teachers, astronomers, and doctors; and agriculturalists, artisans, and merchants,⁶ its contemporary *Letter of Tansar* named the clergy, the military, scribes, and artisans as its estates. The estate of artisans comprised tillers of the land, cattle herders, merchants, and all those who lived by trade.⁷ In the celebrated Islamic classification by Nasir al-Din Tusi, the estates became men of the pen (water), men of the sword (fire), men of negotiation, such as merchants, tradesmen, masters of crafts, and tax collectors (air), and men of husbandry, such as sowers, farmers, ploughmen, and agriculturalists (earth).⁸

The king, graced with kingship by God,⁹ stood at the summit of the Circle of Justice and accorded everyone their station in life.¹⁰ The pre-Islamic mirrors depicted religion and state as equal partners, each necessary for the survival of the other. As the king explicated in the *Letter of Tansar*: "Do not marvel at my

⁵ A. K. S. Lambton, "Quis custodiet custodes: Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government," *Studia Islamica*, V, Paris, 1956; A. K. S. Lambton, "Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship," *Studia Islamica*, XVII, Paris, 1962; A. K. S. Lambton, "Islamic Political Thought," in *The Legacy of Islam*, 2nd edition, eds. by Joseph Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); Richard N. Frye, *The Heritage of Persia* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1963), pp. 224–244. For a concise review of "advice on how to rule" literature in the Islamic lands and the various influences of greater relevance to the Ottoman context, see the Introduction in Yusuf Khass Hajib, *Wisdom of Royal Glory (Kutadgu Bilig): A Turko-Islamic Mirror for Princes*, translated with an introduction and notes by Robert Dankoff (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 1–35; Halil İnalçık, *Osmanlı'da Devlet, Hukuk, Adalet* (Istanbul: Eren, 2000).

⁶ *`Ahd Ardashir*, edited by Ihsan `Abbas, translated to Persian with introduction and notes by Muhammad `Ali Shushitari (Tehran: Silsilah-i Intisharat-i Anjuman-i Asar-i Milli, 1348/1969), pp. 78–79; note 2, p. 24.

⁷ "Know that according to our religion, men are divided into four estates. This is set down in many places in the holy book and established beyond controversy and interpretation, contradiction and speculation. They are known as estates, and at their head is the king." *The Letter of Tansar*, trans. M. Boyce (Rome: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1968), pp. 37–39 (quote from p. 37). For earlier dating of the manuscript than the purported sixth century, see pp. 15–16.

⁸ Nasir al-Din Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G. M. Wickens (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1964), p. 230. The date of the original writing is 633/1235.

⁹ The king would accept the covenant by saying, "Please God I shall be given grace to secure the welfare of my people." *Letter of Tansar*, pp. 54–63 (quote from p. 63).

¹⁰ Two versions of *`Ahd Ardashir* attest to this (note 1, p. 79). See also *Letter of Tansar*, p. 39.

zeal and ardour for promoting order in the world so that the foundations of the laws of Faith may be made firm. For Church and State were born from one womb, joined together, never to be sundered. Virtue and corruption, health and sickness, are of the same nature for both.”¹¹

The Islamic mirrors too considered the king sacred and placed kingship and religion, and accordingly, the shahs and prophets, in the same rank. The king, who stood at the summit, accorded everyone their stations in life, and derived his aura or charisma from his association with divinity. From among the subjects, the mirrors relate, God chose one to be the king and with His grace endowed him with divine light (*farr-i izadi*). As such, the shah was considered the Shadow of God Upon Earth.¹² In continuity with the pre-Islamic tradition, the mirrors also regarded religion and kingship as mutually dependent brothers. Furthermore, the king and the prophet were both considered to have been chosen by God – the prophets to direct people toward God and the kings to protect them from one another.¹³ Although in the Islamic mirrors there is far greater attention to religion, the priority of politics over religion is shared with the pre-Islamic mirrors. As *Siyasatnamah* counsels the king, “Kingship survives with irreligion but not with injustice.”¹⁴ The ideology of kingship as reflected in mirrors was the most critical source for establishing notions of governance and legitimacy throughout the ages including in the early twentieth century; the synthesis, however, had compelled the rulers to contend with the challenges and tensions of the merged traditions.¹⁵

The shah’s duty to maintain balance among the estates was equated with justice. “The emperor is obliged to consider the state of his subjects, and to devote himself to maintaining the laws of justice,” related Tusi, “for in justice lies the order of the realm.”¹⁶ The ruler’s justice led to prosperity in his realm, a recurrent theme of the mirrors. As *Nasihāt al-Muluk* recounted: religion is dependent upon kingship, kingship on army, army on wealth, wealth on flourishing (*abadani*), and flourishing on justice; conversely, injustice leads to ruin.¹⁷

¹¹ *Letter of Tansar*, pp. 33–34.

¹² Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, edited by `Abbas Iqbal (Tehran: Intisharat-i Asatir, [485/1092] 1372/1993, 2nd ed.), pp. 1–2, 36–37, 44, (for the divine light, *farr-i ilabi* see p. 72). Muhammad Ghazzali Tusi, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, edited with an introduction and notes by Jalal Huma’i (Tehran: Chapkhanah-’i Majlis, [1109–1110] (1938), pp. 39–41 (for the divine light, *farr-i Izadi* see p. 40). Tusi, *The Nasirean Ethics*, p. 230.

¹³ Ghazzali, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, pp. 39–41, 53–57. Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, p. 71.

¹⁴ Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, p. 6. For subservience or religion to the state in pre-Islamic mirrors, see *Ahd Ardashir*, pp. 70–71.

¹⁵ For the tension between the divinity of the King and orthodox Islam, see Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, Vol. I, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), pp. 280–284, 347–349. For the rigid conception of hierarchy of the pre-Islamic mirrors, which coexisted uneasily with the egalitarianism of Islam, see Louise Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997), p. 10.

¹⁶ Tusi, *Nasirean Ethics*, p. 230.

¹⁷ Ghazzali, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, pp. 47–48; Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, p. 3.

Lengthy parables of just kings with secure subjects and orderly and prosperous domains were contrasted with tyrannical kings with chaos and destitution in their realms.¹⁸ It is the methods of disseminating justice, and the links between injustice, destitution, and chaos, that concern us here.

The shah was to preserve balance by first inhibiting the movement from one estate into another¹⁹ and by preventing extortion and mistreatment of the less powerful estates. Failure to do so was the reason for the ills that followed with the halt in the flow of taxes from the lowest social rung. For Nasir al-Din Tusi, all compounds held the four natural elements in equilibrium, with none dominating the others, and hence the estates should be held as such; for just as natural compounds that deviated from equilibrium dissolved, so did social order.²⁰

To disseminate justice, the mirrors were insistent that the shah should hear grievances without mediation, and as related by the subjects. The ruler was to mistrust all, but especially the elite around him.²¹ The ruler was advised to meet with the aggrieved on one or more days of the week, in open fields rather than closed quarters, while either astride a horse that stood on a platform or on the back of an elephant. A host of ways for relieving the subjects was suggested that would prevent the interested parties from holding back the aggrieved.²²

Although it was ultimately the shah who was responsible for injustice and its consequences (crisis, chaos, and downturns in prosperity), a consistent rhetoric and practice allowed others to be blamed for it. Initially, the elite, and in particular the grand viziers, were considered culpable while the shah was presented as unaware and innocent. This point was elaborated with the help of many memorable parables, such as that of Bahram-i Gur (421–439 A.D.), who delegated all responsibility to a trusted vizier to indulge his love of hunting. The ordinary folk became wretched and the prominent escaped the realm; revenue stopped flowing to the center, the army left without armor, and the country was brought to ruin. The shah, after an accidental encounter, became aware of the betrayal, and of the dangers of delegation and allowing himself to be cut off from

¹⁸ Just and tyrannical kings, mythical kings (e.g., Faridun, Zahhak, and Afrasiyab) and real kings were discussed without distinction. Ghazzali, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, pp. 39–41, 47–48, 53–57.

¹⁹ Such movement, the rulers were warned, shook the foundation of rule and could lead to the killing of the king or at least his overthrow. Movement from one's position, whether upward or downward, would always provoke aspiration to a higher estate. 'Ahd Ardashir, pp. 78–79. Thus, there is a sense of absolute social conservatism and the need to prevent social mobility and disturbance of order at all costs. As we read in the *Letter of Tansar*, "[The king] kept each man in his own station, and forbade any to meddle with a calling other than that for which it had pleased God (great his glory) to create him," or similarly, the author alerted the king, "Nothing needs such guarding as degree among men." *Letter of Tansar*, quotes from pp. 39, 45. Only a person of outstanding qualities, after review of his case by the shah and examination by religious leaders, was to be allowed to pass from one estate into another. *Letter of Tansar*, pp. 37–39.

²⁰ Tusi, *Nasirean Ethics*, p. 230.

²¹ 'Ahd Ardashir, pp. 69–71, 76–77. Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, pp. 75–76, 90. For a discussion of this theme see the various contributions by Lambton.

²² Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, pp. 9–10, 35–47. See also Ghazzali, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, p. 16.

his subjects.²³ Upon giving audience to the aggrieved, the shah restored justice, hanging the vizier and his coconspirators.²⁴ It was thus quite common for the Iranian and Ottoman rulers to preserve their charismatic legitimacy by blaming crisis or unpopular policies on their viziers, a practice that, in addition to positions, could cost lives.²⁵

Before exploring the centrality of kingship for the nineteenth century, a note should be made of “consultation.” This was not an outstanding feature of the traditional mirrors – only a few take up the topic, and not at any great length. However, their method of introducing the topic by legitimizing it based on tradition is interesting and a commonly recurring practice afterwards. *Siyasatnamah* and *Nasihāt al-Muluk* both considered it incumbent upon the shahs to consult with supporters and sages concerning all affairs, and called neglectful shahs tyrants and possessors of weak judgment. The recommendation was legitimized by recourse to religious tradition, for example, by citing a Quranic verse on consultation²⁶ or drawing upon the prophetic tradition. The verse became one of the two most celebrated during the Islamic constitutional movements, and the prophetic traditions were repeatedly used to argue that if the Prophet was not exempt from consultation, then neither was any ruler.²⁷

The Circle of Justice in the Nineteenth Century

The official ideology of kingship may best be broached through Scott’s notion of “public transcript” – the state’s self-presentation to others.²⁸ It is fair to question the degree to which this ideology survived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Judging from the mirrors of the nineteenth century, the continuity in themes and language was indeed striking.²⁹ The relation between state and religion was best expressed by Damavandi, who wrote that “Sultanate

²³ The shah, during a hunting excursion, came across a dog hanged next to a flock of sheep. Upon enquiring about the curious scene, the shepherd explained that his faithful dog, to whom he had entrusted his entire flock, had allowed a wolf to prey on it in return for sexual favors. The dwindling number of sheep prompted him to keep a close eye on the dog, which he had done from in hiding, to discover the treason. The shah became conscious of his duty as shepherd to the flock of subjects after this incident.

²⁴ Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, pp. 23–34. Ghazzali, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, pp. 82–84.

²⁵ Max Weber, without knowledge of the elaborate scheme, was quite aware of the practice to preserve the charismatic legitimacy of the Iranian shahs and Ottoman Sultans. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. II, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), p. 1147.

²⁶ *wa-shawirihim fi ‘l-amr* (and seek their counsel in all affairs).

²⁷ Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasatnamah*, pp. 112–113. Tusi, *Nasihāt al-Muluk*, p. 95.

²⁸ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

²⁹ Faridun Adamiyat and Huma Natiq, *Afkar-i Ijtima‘i va Siyasi va Iqtisadi dar Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab-i Dawran-i Qajar* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Agah, 1977). See in particular Mirza Musa Savaji, *Siyasat-i Madan* [1269/1853] as cited in Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 12, 17–19.

and Prophethood are two gems on one ring; Imamate and Rulership (*imarat*) are twins born of one womb.” Thus, added Damavandi, know that “the sayings of the prophet and those of the sultan are the same” and, “without doubt, the just ruler should be obeyed, for he is the Shadow of God [U]pon Earth.” Like many before him, he was quick to make kingship paramount by stating that while the shah, like religious leaders, had the right to infer religious opinions (*tasarruf va ijthad*), the religious leaders did not have the right to rule.³⁰ Others repeated the old dictum that a “Sultanate, however irreligious, lasts with justice, but will not last with injustice, however religious[ly upright] it may be.”³¹ To obtain justice, explained Damavandi, people should take refuge in the shah, for he is the intermediary between his subjects and God.³² That such a vision of kingship and justice dominated late nineteenth-century Iran is confirmed by two prominent historians of the Qajar era, who tone down exaggerated visions of the doctrinal opposition of shi’i clerics to worldly authority.³³ Although tension and conflict did exist between the state and religion at this time, much of this had to do with the expanding role of the state. The clerics accepted the state’s role as the protector of religion and accepted their subservience to the ruler.

The more Westernized and critical mirrors combined their heavy reliance on the general lessons of the classics with specific advice on contemporary problems and reform. Of two such mirrors written immediately after the defeat by Russia in 1827, one encouraged learning from Europe, while the other insisted on a more rational administration in which a single individual was not appointed to several positions, depriving capable people of the opportunity to serve in appropriate jobs. Additional solutions were found in the dissemination of justice by the shah in consultation with the viziers and the sages.³⁴

If the nineteenth-century mirrors lacked the luster of the classics and appeared trite and formulaic, the late Qajar statesmen’s employment of their logic to fend off criticism was certainly interesting. Regardless of the real reasons for the financial and political crisis of the Qajars, the statesmen unflinchingly sought the blame in individual shortcomings. Yet, the first order of blame lay not with the shah. It was rather the elite statesmen and royal associates’ greed for wealth and status that had threatened the survival of a monarchy thousands of years old.

³⁰ Haj Muhammad Husayn Nasr Allah Damavandi, *Tuhfat al-Nasiriyyah* [1264/1848], as cited in Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 13–14.

³¹ Ja’far ibn Ishaq, *Mizan al-Muluk* [1246 (1830/1831)] as cited in Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, p. 33. He further added, the just ruler, whether heathen or religious, would go to heaven, for the just ruler is loved by God.

³² Damavandi, *Tuhfat al-Nasiriyyah*, as cited in Natiq and Adamiyat, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 13–14.

³³ A. Reza Sheikholeslami, *The Structure of Central Authority in Qajar Iran, 1871–1896* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1997), pp. 1–8, 76–83; Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, pp. 58–88.

³⁴ Rustam al-Hukama Asif Safavi, *Abkam va Ash’ar* [1244/1829], as cited in Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 27–32. Ja’far ibn Ishaq, *Mizan al-Muluk*, as cited in Adamiyat and Natiq, pp. 32–40. The combination of two discourses of government, was characteristic of the period of change and repeated throughout the era of reform.

These are the dominant themes in the narrative of Nasir al-Din Shah's (1848–1896) vizier, Majd al-Mulk (Muhammad Khan Sinaki). His book *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, written in 1870, presented a gloomy picture of a monarchy in rapid decline. In it, the shah was portrayed as an uninterested ruler overcome by pessimism, a pitiful character who, in place of conducting affairs, spent his time hunting while surrounded by “beastly hunters” who distracted him from rule and manipulated him for their own ends. They “so repulsed the royal temperament from the kingdom’s capital – the place where governmental affairs are attended to – that the imperial retinue’s departure is with ultimate joy and speed, and its return, with utmost languor and reluctance.”³⁵ Even greater blame was heaped upon the minister of finance and his staff – the “tax robbers.” Whenever they concluded that the shah had stayed in the capital for too long, the author related, the “tax robbers” would, in conspiracy with the “beastly hunters,” send him out willy-nilly on another hunting expedition and postpone the affairs of the realm so that chaos might reign and profiteers prevail.³⁶

The arguments about the shah’s unawareness and his subjects’ belief in his innocence abounded:

The poor and the weak of Iran who shoulder the bigger part of the government’s burden cry out from the provinces and ask the chief (*ra’is-i kull*) [i.e., the Minister of Finance]: By whose orders are the governors’ (*hukkam*) year-end [taxes] or the so-called “*tafavut-i `amal*”³⁷ extorted? With so much justice and fairness of a shah who dispatches orders and decrees everywhere, what has led the rulers to transgress?

The chief does not respond.

The poor and weak answer themselves: The chief’s silence is a sign of consent; all the oppression, heresy, and ruin are according to his desires and with his permission. At the year’s end, we have witnessed ourselves that the governors and trustees (*mubashir*), with utmost boldness, claim all their extortions as part of the sums and taxes owed to the chief himself. The chief, in turn, rather than threatening them for breaching the shah’s decree and turning the shah’s justice into oppression, flatters them, and entrusts them with a loftier domain.³⁸

Other ministers did not escape blame:

None of the sultans of the age have exerted so much effort for the progress of the state and cultivation of subjects as the [present] shah of Iran. But out of his exertions and efforts not even the smallest bit of desired progress has come about, and in fact strength and power have declined, bearing opposite results. The reason is that the above-mentioned viziers would never allow their status, income, and independence to be jeopardized by the enactment of law. Even when they obeyed the law according to the shah’s insistence and wishes, they never adapted the principles of law [which consist of] separating the legislative from the executive. Instead they focused all their attention on mimicking

³⁵ Muhammad Khan Majd al-Mulk (Sinaki), *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, edited with an introduction by Fazl Allah Gurkani (Tehran: Iqbal, [1287/1870] 1979), pp. 18–19 (quote from p. 19).

³⁶ Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, pp. 19–21.

³⁷ For a discussion of *tafavut-i `amal* tax category, see Chapter 10.

³⁸ Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, pp. 28–29.

particulars and ignoring principles, confusing the two so that they might prove to the shah that the nation of Iran is by nature incapable of accepting laws and unable of enforcing them.³⁹

The viziers were warned that the shah would soon enact just laws, jail the traitor ministers, and prove that the Iranians were not by nature incapable of accepting laws.⁴⁰

Although the subjects were in general depicted as staunchly loyal, the subtly defiant tone could not be missed. The author, for example, warned of an imminent uprising and the subjects' developing hatred for the shah, although the sins that caused it were not the shah's. In his typically wavering rhetoric, the author admitted the shah's abeyance and attributed his quiescence to causes beyond control: "Because the shah's resignation and silence has surpassed its limits, the people are afraid that the shah, God forbid, is bewitched and bound by a spell."⁴¹ The shah's helplessness was likened to the inheritor of an ancestral house who was forced into tenancy and thus relinquished making repairs as a duty: "All the inhabitants of Iran are either oppressors or oppressed, and the most oppressed of all is the shah of Iran, who has acquiesced to be a tenant in his own house while all the strong-fisted tyrants under a special pact collaborate to evict him before the end of his [lease]."⁴² Other viziers agreed with this view.⁴³ Such assertions were not feeble rhetoric but derived power from the shared cultural context of Qajar politics. This does not mean the public accepted it as entirely credible, a topic that will be explored in the [next chapter](#).

Majd al-Mulk also expressed desire for modern laws, and for the separation of the legislative and executive, which signaled the desire to revamp the state through the introduction of European legal, administrative methods. Like many tracts written in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this book incorporated European political and administrative ideals into the framework of the local culture of politics. The inclinations within the bureaucracy to synthesize the two traditions were crucial for the history of constitutionalism.

³⁹ Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, p. 90. ⁴⁰ Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, p. 98.

⁴¹ Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, pp. 19–20.

⁴² Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyyah*, pp. 95–96 (quote from p. 96).

⁴³ That Nasir al-Din Shah was in fact spending a good deal of time hunting outside the capital was borne out by the memoirs (1875–1895) of another vizier, Ītimad al-Saltanah, who was by his side almost on a daily basis. Muhammad Hasan Khan Ītimad al-Saltanah, *Ruznamah-i Khatirat-i Ītimad al-Saltanah*, edited with an introduction by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Intisharat-i Amir Kabir, 1966). In another critical, semifictional work written in the last decade of the nineteenth century, by Ītimad al-Saltanah, he asked angrily asked "Who is responsible for this ruin and destruction? What are the reasons for this hardship and distress? [and] Who has committed such obscenities?" Typically, the entire blame was placed on the shoulders of his "traitor," Grand Vizier Atabak, whose intrigues and tricks against the shah, in collaboration with other courtiers and powerful individuals, captured center stage. Muhammad Hasan Khan Ītimad al-Saltanah, *Khalsab*, ed. Mahmud Katira'i (Tehran: Intisharat-i Tuka, 1969), pp. 125–250 (quote from p. 125). The book was apparently written in 1893. See "Dibachah," pp. 9–10.

Coming back to the ideology of kingship, some institutions of the late nineteenth century indicated its vibrancy in more than writing. The shahs did introduce some institutional means to facilitate unmediated contact with their subjects.

Kingly Justice and Its Institutions

The notion that all subjects may have access to the shah in all places is hyperbole. Yet, the state did provide some actual means for airing grievances to the shah.⁴⁴ In 1860, it was announced that the shah had set aside Sundays exclusively for giving audience to the aggrieved. On that day all state business ceased and all officials (save those whose presence was required, such as the minister of justice and his deputy) were banned from meeting with the shah. Subjects in the provinces who could not readily travel to the capital were instructed to hand their sealed letters to the postmaster, who delivered them to the shah in special sealed bags.⁴⁵

The holding of audiences for the aggrieved on a regular basis must not have lasted very long. More conspicuous were two innovations, the Box of Justice and the Council for the Investigation of Grievances (or the Council of Grievances). In March 1874, the official newspaper related that the Shadow of God Upon Earth considered it his duty to provide comfort to his subjects and to disseminate justice. He was to deal with his subjects directly, rather than risk relying on intermediaries whose verbal conveyance might leave out essential details, or worse yet, distort the message intentionally. A locked and sealed box with a narrow opening (hence tamper-proof) was to be placed in a busy city square. The public was assured that it could drop petitions in the Box of Justice with utmost comfort and trust, and without the need for middlemen or for paying bribes for delivery. Its key remained with the shah, and its guard suffered death if he denied anyone access to the box or was covetous toward petitioners. Twice every week, a trustee emptied the box and delivered its contents in sealed bags to the shah, who responded to the petitions in person.⁴⁶ The box was also meant to prevent the aggrieved from the provinces from becoming stranded in the capital. Later in the year, the governors were ordered to follow Tehran's example and place

⁴⁴ For predecessors to the Council of Grievances in earlier centuries, such as the office of ombudsman under the Safavids, Zand, and the Qajars, see John Perry, "Justice for the Underprivileged: The Ombudsman Tradition of Iran," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3, 1978: pp. 203–215 (quote from p. 203).

⁴⁵ The decree is dated early 1277. `Abdullah Mustawfi, *Sharh-i Zindagani-i Man ya Tarikh-i Ijtima'i va Idari-i Dawrah-i Qajariyah*, Vol I (Tehran: Ilmi, 1945), p. 126.

⁴⁶ Dated late Muharram 1291, and reproduced in *Avvalin Qavanin-i Iran Qabl az Mashrutiyat*, edited with commentary by Muhammad Taqi Damghani (Tehran: Markaz-i Pakhsh-i Intisharat-i Bihzad, 1357/1978), pp. 99–101. Adamiyat refers to the same decree and also reports its publication in the official newspaper. Faridun Adamiyat, *Andishah-i Taraqqi va Hukumat-i Qanun: 'Asr-i Sipahsalar* (Tehran: Khvarazmi, 1972); *Andishah*, pp. 414–415, fn #34. In my survey of the newspaper *Iran*, the official newspaper for that period, I could not locate this decree.

similar boxes in the provinces, the contents of which were to be removed, sealed, and sent to the capital twice every month.⁴⁷

From all indications, the public responded enthusiastically, stuffing the Box of Justice with everything from genuine requests for assistance to satires and obscenities aimed at officials.⁴⁸ A governmental announcement admonished the seditious and urged the public to confine their petitions to relevant issues.⁴⁹ It is not clear why the Box of Justice was discontinued after a few years.⁵⁰

The later-established Council of Grievances (ca. 1882) was more successful. Again we know that the public responded eagerly and petitioned from all around. The contents of many of these petitions have been analyzed, indicating that the shah did respond in person, yet his orders, as already acknowledged by some petitioners, seem to have been without consequence and not binding.⁵¹

The nineteenth-century mirrors, the political consciousness of the statesmen, and certain institutional developments all pointed to the survival of the ideology of kingship. As meager as institutional innovations were, they acted as important precedents. The revolution began with the demand for the establishment of a House of Justice, not a parliament. Furthermore, in its demands, the public used “Council of Grievances” interchangeably with “House of Justice,” bespeaking their similar identities and functions. These were significant.⁵²

Attention to kingship is important for several reasons. The paradigm of kingship was as influential as constitutionalism and religion, if not more so, in informing public action and exerting symbolic weight on certain episodes, such as the assassination of the grand vizier. Yet, although the notion of loyalty to the shah was a recurrent theme, such expressions should not be taken at face value.

⁴⁷ A decree dated 16 January 1875/8 Dhu al-Hijja 1291 mentions the already operating Box of Justice in the provinces. Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol. I, pp. 185–188. The same decree is reproduced in *Avvalin Qavanin*, pp. 103–106. In the 1876 (1293) protocol for the governors, the latter were asked to allow the public to drop their petitions in boxes without regard for the petitioners' identity and grievance. It was also mentioned that a separate instruction regarding the Box of Justice had been sent. Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudah*, p. 451. For the Box of Justice in Rasht see Ibrahim Fakhra'i *Gilan dar Junbash-i Mashrutiyat* (Tehran: Intisharat va Amuzash-i Inqalab-i Islami, 1992,) p. 14.

⁴⁸ Mahdi Quli Hidayat (Mukhbir al-Saltanah), *Khatirat va Khatarat* (Tehran: Zuvvar, 1982), p. 75. *Avvalin Qavanin*, p. 101. Adamiyat, *Andishah*, pp. 414–415. Guity Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870–1880* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 52.

⁴⁹ *Avvalin Qavanin*, p. 101–103.

⁵⁰ While some have considered the public abuse as the reason for its discontinuance, others have cited the governors' reluctance to cooperate. Further, it seems to have survived for a longer period than is usually acknowledged. For the above see Hidayat, *Khatirat va Khatarat*, p. 75. *Avvalin Qavanin*, p. 107–108. Adamiyat, *Andishah*, pp. 414–415. Nashat, *Modern Reform*, p. 52. For its symbolic significance, see also Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 69–70.

⁵¹ For an analysis of the petitions, see Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir-Nashudah* pp. 375–413. Mansoureh Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi, “The Council for the Investigation of Grievances: A Case Study of Nineteenth Century Iranian Social History,” *Iranian Studies*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1989: pp. 51–61.

⁵² As Ettehadieh notes, the Council for the Investigation of Grievances formed the theoretical underpinning for the demanded House of Justice in 1905. Ettehadieh, “Council,” p. 52.

Evidence suggests that the kingship idiom was employed by some as a shield against reprisals: by using it, the actors could credibly argue that they were not rebelling against the state – even though this was precisely what they were doing – but were instead ridding the monarch of traitors surrounding him to renew the public bond and reenact the shah’s justice. If this was not completely credible, then neither was it entirely outrageous; in fact it was in that indeterminate space of partial belief and half disbelief that actors staked their claims.

During the Young Turk revolution, the Circle of Equity was sidelined as a discourse of justice with its own keywords and distinctive cosmology, although it was present and justice did crop up alongside liberty, fraternity, and equality. The center had certainly not forgotten about it. An important institution within the Palace (*mabeyn müşirliği dairesi*) directed petitions (*arzuhaller*) addressed to the sultan to relevant ministries. Significantly, these were stamped with the emblem “*maruzat-ı rikabiye dairesi*” – the office for petitions received by the sultan on horseback, a throwback to earlier times. A good part of such petitions (*maruzat-ı rikabiye*) were in fact collected during the weekly Friday prayer processions or on other public celebrations when the sultan rode in the royal carriage. At these times, the head of the above petition office sat next to the sultan, and special functionaries approached the crowds with bags around their necks into which petitions were placed.⁵³ This arrangement thus combined the weekly public Friday prayers of the caliph with audience with the sultan, where the aggrieved could hand in their petitions and symbolically bypass intermediaries and impediments. I will have more to say about this in the [next chapter](#).

THE EARLY REFORMIST LITERATURE: AN ISLAMIC CONSTITUTIONAL TRADITION

A large part of the impetus for the nineteenth-century reforms came from the younger generation of statesmen with significant diplomatic portfolios. Below I consider a few central tracts that shaped the constitutional discourse in Iran.⁵⁴ A main feature of these was legitimizing constitutionalism by Islamicizing it, a strategy owed in no small part to the Young Ottomans. Another feature shared with the Young Ottomans and more directly with the Young Turks was the association made between constitutionalism and a strong, legal-rational state.

The years 1858–1861 mark the start of activities by Malkum Khan, an illustrious and intriguing bureaucrat with enormous intellectual influence. In 1858–1859, with the assistance of his father, Malkum established a reform-seeking secret society based on the model of European Masonic lodges but

⁵³ Tahsin Paşa, *Yıldız Hatıraları*, pp. 21–23.

⁵⁴ This approach is far from comprehensive. The critical pre-revolutionary literature comprises more than 70 core books and pamphlets. I have been extremely selective and concentrated on the few sources that were consistently identified as central by participants. For a more comprehensive list, see the valuable Introduction by Afshar in Muhammad Shafī` Qazvini, *Qanun-i Qazvini*, edited with introduction and notes by Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Talayah, 1991).

without any connection to them. Inspired by Auguste Comte, Malkum espoused social and individual rights under the banner of the religion of humanity. Although the society was shut down in October 1861 and its leaders exiled, it set a precedent for the later constitutional secret societies in both organization and spirit.⁵⁵ It was succeeded by a better-organized committee called the Society of Humanity (*majma`-i adamiyat*), which reportedly had branches beyond Tehran and 350 members from a broad social spectrum.⁵⁶

In these years Malkum completed *Kitabchah`-i Ghaybi* (written in 1858 or 1859), one of the earliest critical reformist tracts; it would influence constitutionalist thought in Iran for the next fifty years. In it he argued that the main source of European progress was not in science, commerce, or industry but in the more fundamental sphere of laws and administration.⁵⁷ Iran's backwardness was particularly evident in these areas, which had gone entirely unchanged for the past three thousand years, whereas "the Europeans, like their discovery of the principles of the telegraph, have discovered the path of progress and principles of order in the past two to three thousand years and have codified them in a series of laws."⁵⁸ Against what he considered the bleak outlook of his cynical older colleagues, Malkum did not see reason for despair and thought it possible to catch up if only Iran imitated the European administration and laws in every detail: "Just as telegraph may be imported from Europe and effortlessly installed in Tehran, their principles of order may be acquired and instituted in Iran without delay. But as I have repeatedly said and will say again, inventing the principles of order on your own would be tantamount to inventing the science of telegraph by yourselves."⁵⁹ In other words, without foreseeing any obstacles, he advocated a simple and wholehearted "installation" of the European state machinery.

Malkum then went on to discuss a fundamental of European states, namely the separation of the legislative and executive branches. What set this early pamphlet apart from the later writings that appeared in his influential newspaper *Qanun* (*The Law*, 1890–1900) was a youthful obliviousness to the need to integrate Islam into his discourse on laws, rationality, and administration. Furthermore, at this date Malkum was explicit about his lack of desire for constitutional systems where "legislation was the duty of the nation and

⁵⁵ Adamiyat, *Andishab*, pp. 63–66. Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 19–24. Isma`il Ra`in, *Anjumanha-yi Sirri dar Inqilab-i Mashrutiyyat-i Iran* (Tehran: Javidan, 1976), p. 41. Ann K. S. Lambton, "Secret Societies and the Persian Revolution of 1905–1906," *St. Antony's Papers*, No. 4, *Middle Eastern Affairs*, No. 1, 1958, pp. 47–48.

⁵⁶ Ra`in, *Anjumanha-yi Sirri*, pp. 55–59. Lambton and Ra`in disagree as to whether *majma`-i adamiyat* was headed by Malkum or that it was a direct continuation of the earlier secret society headed by Malkum's father. Ra`in states that Malkum was not its head and in some ways, the later society was a new and independent organization. Ra`in, *Anjumanha-yi Sirri*, pp. 55–58. Lambton, "Secret Societies," p. 48.

⁵⁷ Mirza Malkum Khan "Kitabchah`-i Ghaybi ya Daftar-i Tanzimat," in *Majmu`ab`-i Asar-i Mirza Malkum Khan*, ed. Muhit Tabataba`i (Tehran: Intisharat-i `Ilmi, n.d.). pp. 1–52.

⁵⁸ Malkum, "Kitabchah`-i Ghaybi," p. 13. ⁵⁹ Malkum, "Kitabchah`-i Ghaybi," p. 13.

enforcement that of the monarch”]; he believed that the autocratic, yet legalistic governments of Russia and Austria were better models for Iran to follow. Even though their monarchs were in absolute command of both the executive and legislative, unlike in Iran, their monarchs prevented the ministers from mixing the two and undermining government strength and orderliness.⁶⁰ Indeed, at this early date Malkum did not advocate a parliament but the simpler task of separation of powers, a matter that he thought the recently established councils (*majlis-i shawra-yi dawlati* and *maslahat-khanah*) had confounded by taking over both executive and legislative functions.⁶¹

As elsewhere, the call for separation of the legislative and executive branches became a staple of constitutional thought in Iran. Yet, what united the Iranian and Ottoman opposition was a near equation of legal-rationalism with constitutionalism, to the point that the quest for a centralized and efficient administration took precedence over almost all concerns. In fact Malkum’s pamphlet was written in the style of an administrative manual and devoted most of its pages to outlining in minute detail the organization of a new state and the division of duties among various ministries and offices in the governmental center and the provinces.⁶² The turn to constitutionalism and integration of Islamic principles during the next decades by Malkum and others completed the regional localization of Iranian constitutionalism and increased its similarity to the neighboring Ottomans’ constitutionalism.

These tasks were accomplished more thoroughly by a friend of Malkum, Mirza Yusuf Khan Mustashar al-Dawlah, who was serving as chargé d’affaires in Paris from 1867 to 1871. In the opening pages of his book, *Yak Kalimah* (single word), the author disclosed his acquaintance with the high level of Western European progress, orderliness, prosperity (*abadi*), and justice (*‘adl*); he had observed life in Paris closely during years of diplomatic mission, traveled to London on four occasions, and attended the 1867 World Fair in Paris.⁶³ The author, after citing a formulaic precept of the mirrors on the link between kingship, prosperity, and justice, concluded that the high level of prosperity he observed in Europe was only possible through justice.⁶⁴ He then wondered why, despite the central place of justice in Islam and the rightful past and present

⁶⁰ Malkum, “Kitabchah-‘i Ghaybi,” pp. 15–16.

⁶¹ Malkum “Kitabchah-‘i Ghaybi,” pp. 19–20. Criticism of *maslahat-khanah* appeared in an unpublished pamphlet written in 1277 (1860/1861), a year after the council’s establishment and while it was still in operation. Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudah*, pp. 215–220. For a slightly different interpretation of Malkum’s ideas which is based on a wider range of writings considered here see Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 4–19.

⁶² Malkum, “Kitabchah-‘i Ghaybi,” pp. 24–52.

⁶³ The author completed this manuscript on 11 February 1871/20 Zi al-Qa’de 1287 while residing in Paris at the end of his mission. Mirza Yusuf Khan Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, ed. Sadiq Sajjadi (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1985). It is interesting to note that the same exhibition had also inspired an Egyptian bureaucrat, Ali Mubarak, to write on the secrets and benefits of European civilization and had laid great stress on spatial order and personal discipline. See Timothy Mitchell, *Colonizing Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 63–94.

⁶⁴ Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, pp. 8–9.

Islamic leaders, Iran (and in fact the entire Islamic world) had fallen so far behind, and was indolent and disorderly. Such wondering led him to the discovery of the principal source of European progress, which amounted to no more than a "single word": law.⁶⁵ Like Malkum, he held that material manifestations of European industrial progress were only secondary to, and a result of, the European system of administration. This was a point that had gone unnoticed by the well-intentioned Muslim observers of European progress; impressed by appearances, they wrote of European industry rather than the methods by which they were managed. Consequently their writings on Europe did not bear positive results while the law codes of Islamic nations fell to disuse.⁶⁶

This discussion opened the way for Mirza Yusuf Khan to comparatively assess the French law codes and *shari`ah* to convince his readers of their essential similarity. Nonetheless, five differences made the French laws more advantageous, differences that were amendable to *shari`ah*, but were yet absent in the Islamic legal tradition. First, unlike *shari`ah*, the French laws were written by the consent of the nation and state (*millat va dawlat*). Second, unlike the contradictory and inconsistent *shari`ah*, they were consistent, concise, and entirely relevant to current conditions. Third, they were written in a simple language comprehensible by all. Fourth, they did not mix religious and temporal matters; they dealt only with the latter and as such were applicable to every religion and nationality. Fifth, they included the common and customary laws (*`urfiyah* and *`adiyah*), whereas among the Muslims many such laws were part of an oral tradition and unwritten, allowing breaches of justice in their enforcement.⁶⁷

To set things aright, Mirza Yusuf Khan advised the clerics to convene and codify *shari`ah* in simple language, and after the approval of the government and the representatives of the nation (*vukala-yi millat*), that the code be published as the law of the land so that no one might act contrary to the *shari`ah*. Furthermore, as in the past, the Islamic laws pertaining to prayer and afterlife (*ma`ad*) should be written separately from those pertaining to politics and subsistence (*ma`ash*). Finally, he suggested the creation of an upper senate assembly (*divan-i sana* or *mashvarat-khanah-'i a`zam*, the Great Consultative Assembly) and a lower representative assembly (*divan-i vukala-yi millat*) that would assist the Shah in law making.

To legitimize these legislative houses and representatives of the nation he cited the two celebrated passages from the *Qur'an* and prophetic traditions (*hadith*) that recommended consultation.⁶⁸ These were invoked as proof that early Islam

⁶⁵ Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, pp. 9–12, 17.

⁶⁶ Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, p. 11. ⁶⁷ Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, pp. 12–15.

⁶⁸ "[W]hose affairs are settled by mutual consultation" and "seek their counsel in all affairs." He was explicit about the meaning of *vakil* and *majlis*, calling the first equivalent to the French deputies and legislative assembly. He also called consultation (*mashvarat*) a grand law of Islam. Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, pp. 12–15, 36–37. See p. 40, fn 27.

had a representative, indeed a parliamentarian, tradition and supported the revival of these abandoned institutions.

Mustashar al-Dawlah then explained that he did not advocate simply copying the French code, but that he desired the writing of a book of laws by distinguished scholars, masters of learning and of politics; laws that overcame the five main differences between the Islamic and French codes and were based on the study of all the authoritative Islamic books and laws of civilized nations (*millal-i mutamaddanah*).⁶⁹ These laws, written by the most learned representatives of the nation, after approval by the shah, were to be placed under the jurisdiction of a special council for protection. Henceforth, the duties of nation and state would be inevitably based on laws. “This is what I meant by the *single word*, and compiling such a book according to the aforementioned manner, that is based on negotiation and consultation, is not without precedent in Islam.”⁷⁰ By this he must have meant the partial codification of (primarily Hanafi school) Islamic law that had been carried out in the Ottoman Empire in 1869 under the *Madjalla (mecelle)* code, of which Mirza Yusuf Khan must have been aware.⁷¹ This rather cautious statement notwithstanding, the next paragraph boldly asserted that the French and other civilized nations’ law codes were in conformity with Islamic law, and that all sound European laws (which were the reason for the European nations’ great progress), had been declared by the Prophet for the nation of Islam twelve hundred and eighty years earlier.⁷² The bulk of the volume, then, was devoted to the translation of, and commentary on, the 1789 French constitution. This was complemented with a condemnation of the lack of social, individual, and property rights, general lawlessness, and cruel punishments common to Iran; and recommendations for advancement on merit rather than connections, among other criticisms of local conditions.⁷³ Not surprisingly, the commentary contained a large number of passages from the Qur’an and prophetic traditions to demonstrate the French constitution’s compatibility with, or even its precedent in, the Islamic legal tradition, ending on the note that the Europeans had greater appreciation for the Quranic verses than the Easterners.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ In the constitutional discourse of the time, “civilized nations” is in reference to Western European nations, and to America when explicitly stated. Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, p. 17. The above passage made no direct reference to the clergy, leaving this issue unspecified.

⁷⁰ Italics mine. Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, p. 17.

⁷¹ See Findley, “Medjelle,” in EI². ⁷² Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, p. 18.

⁷³ Note that *musavat*, another contentious word during the constitutional movement, is a translation of “equality” from the French constitution. Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, pp. 18–58.

⁷⁴ Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalimah*, pp. 60–61. For another commentary on *Yak Kalimah*, see Bakhash, *Iran*, pp. 38–41.

Mustashar al-Dawlah's tract has been the subject of much discussion by contemporaries and later scholars. His friend Mirza Fath Ali Akhundzadah from Tiflis rejected his Islamic constitutionalism and what he had hoped would clear the way for rapid progress.⁷⁵ Yet, Akhundzadah's early critique seriously underestimated the success that indigenizing constitutionalism was to have. It had served well in the Ottoman Empire and the strategy went unchallenged for a long time in Iran; it was only after the revolution that the conservative clerics took issue with it. As we saw, when the same issue surfaced in the course of the Young Turk revolution the controversies were confined to the criminal law; the purist doctrinal opposition to it was mild. Others have questioned Mustashar al-Dawlah's Islamic learning and hence point to more consistent theological and philosophic attempts at reconciling religion and constitutionalism, such as that of Na'ini some forty years later.⁷⁶ The criticism of superficiality is even more pertinent for the later Malkum; yet these political writings aimed at popularizing constitutionalism and were not philosophical treatises. They succeeded in their task by bringing many, including many clerics, under their sway for a long time.⁷⁷

Much happened in the twenty-five years after the publication of Mustashar al-Dawlah's book. In 1876, the Young Ottomans' Islamicized parliamentarianism was reported in the reformist Persian language newspaper of the Iranian community in Istanbul (*Akhtar*), which translated and published the Ottoman constitution. Despite its short life, the Young Ottoman movement set an important precedent. Furthermore, the Iranian clerics led a large-scale national rebellion in the years 1891–1892 that succeeded in canceling the tobacco monopoly and thus demonstrated the clerics' ability to mobilize the public.

The reformers, increasingly attuned to the clerics' potentially vital role, worked hard to convince them to participate in a movement with a dominant constitutional component. As such, they elaborated the Islamic-constitutional language and made direct appeals to the clergy. This attempt was most

⁷⁵ Toward completion of the book, he wrote to his friend Akhundzadah to inform him of the significance of the *Yak Kalimah*: "I have found verses and the proofs from the glorious *Qur'an* and the correct *hadith* for all the instruments of progress and civilization, so that they should no longer say that such a thing is contrary to the precepts of Islam, or that the precepts of Islam prevent progress and civilization." Akhundzadah responded as follows: "You believe that with the support of the commandments of *shari'ah* it is possible to implement the French constitution in the East. No and never! It is impossible and impracticable." Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 40–41.

⁷⁶ "The use of traditional Islamic idioms, no doubt, played a part in the popularity of the book, one of the results of which was the clerical misunderstanding of the idea of constitutionalism." Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran: A Study of the Role Played by the Persian Residents of Iraq in Iranian Politics* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), pp. 30–39 (quote from p. 39).

⁷⁷ Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism*, p. 37. For a similar view on the political and instrumental use of the strategy, see also Mehrdad Kia, "Constitutionalism, Economic Modernization and Islam in the Writings of Mirza Yusef Khan Mostashar od-Dowle," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4, October 1994, pp. 751–777.

systematically pursued by the prominent statesman, Malkum, in his newspaper *Qanun* (*The Law*), published in London between 1890 and 1900.⁷⁸

As before, Malkum savored the idea that a constitution (*qanun-i a`zam*) was the chief source of prosperity in countries that had it. Although he believed that the cooperation of nationalist reformists was the most essential ingredient for building a constitutional system,⁷⁹ Malkum did not think the goal attainable without securing the clerics' leadership. In his words, they were the only ones who could "awaken" the nation,⁸⁰ and he spoke hyperbolically of their ability to turn a tyrannical government into an object of hatred in a matter of days.⁸¹ He provided the readers with specific advice on how to organize around the enlightened clergy and incite them into action by pressuring them for protecting the public rights.⁸²

To convince the clerics, Malkum gave assurances about the compatibility of the constitutional system with the laws of Islam.⁸³ When presenting proof for his argument, however, he often lapsed into inconsistencies and resorted to a kind of doubletalk that became his hallmark. In a manner typical of constitutional movements in Muslim countries, Malkum declared that the principles of European constitutionalism corresponded so closely to the laws of Islam that one could claim the Europeans had imitated their constitution from the principles of Islam.⁸⁴ He further assured the clerics that the reformists had no desire for the laws of Paris, Russia, or India because the basis of all just laws everywhere was the same, and the best of just laws were the laws of *shari`ah*.⁸⁵

In the third issue of his journal, Malkum raised a most controversial topic, an issue that continued to be disputed until the last day of the first constitutional period. The newspaper stated that the National Consultative Assembly (*majlis-i shura-yi milli*) should be entrusted with the task of *tartib-i qavanin*, which could alternatively mean arranging, codifying, preparing, or composing laws

⁷⁸ Taqizadah, a prominent representative and revolutionary actor, described *Qanun* as the most influential publication prior to the revolution. Hasan Taqizadah, *Zaminah-'i Inqilab-i Mashrutiyyat-i Iran: Sih Khitabah* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Gam, 1957, 2nd edition), p. 40. Keddie maintains that Afqani and Malkum were the principal architects of "religious-radical alliance." Nikkie R. Keddie, "The Origins of Religious-Radical Alliance in Iran," in *Iran: Religion, Politics and Society* (London: Frank Cass, 1980) (see p. 56).

⁷⁹ After the first six issues, *Qanun* stops carrying publication date. Reference will henceforth be to the issue numbers and page. *Qanun*, No. 5, 18 June 1890/1 Dhu al-Qa`de 1307, p. 2.

⁸⁰ *Qanun*, No. 7, p. 4. *Qanun*, No. 21, p. 2.

⁸¹ *Qanun*, No. 20, p. 3. Exaggerations of revolutionary discourse should be kept in mind.

⁸² *Qanun*, No. 11, p. 4.

⁸³ For a highly critical assessment of Malkum's instrumentalist position, see Hamid Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 13-18, 78-100.

⁸⁴ *Qanun*, No. 5, 18 June 1890/1 Zi al-Qa`de 1307, p. 2.

⁸⁵ *Qanun*, No. 1, 20 February 1890/1 Rajab 1307, p. 4.

and hence legislation.⁸⁶ This argument aroused suspicion about a possible challenge to *shari'ah*. In response, Malkum stated:

Some imagine that by means of this publication, we intend to propagate new laws in Iran. This is absolutely false. We have no intention of creating new laws for the Iranian people. We consider the laws and principles that God, and the prophet, have categorically (*hukman*)⁸⁷ taught the Islamic clergy to be correct and sufficient.⁸⁸

Furthermore, in this future legal order the principal role was assigned to the clerics and Malkum argued that the reformists' only desire was for the clerics to assemble and put into effect the laws of Islam.⁸⁹ A short while later the membership of his envisioned council was to include the lay public as well. Now deliverance was found in "gathering the clergy and the learned (*fuzala*) in a National Consultative [Assembly] (*shura-yi milli*) to put in order the governmental affairs in accordance with the laws of Islam . . ."⁹⁰

Of course, all this still left one wondering whether the envisioned assembly was to be representative, and whether it had any legislative functions. These lingering ambiguities gave rise to varied interpretations that were vital to secure the alliance of the clergy with radical constitutionalists. Many acknowledged that the great majority of clerics who initially participated on the reformists' side did not have a clear understanding of the reformists' ultimate goals and knew about constitutionalism only through a few associations made with the word consultation (*mashvarat*).

Two other celebrated texts were penned, not by bureaucrats, but merchants residing abroad. The first, *Kitab-i Ahmad*, written by Talibof, an Iranian resident of Daghistan in the Southern Caucasus, was unique in its scant social critique and political observations.⁹¹ To be sure, there were discussions of Japan, its justice and prosperity, and the adoption of constitutionalism by its nationalist emperor; admiring comments about progress in America; and a critique of hereditary military posts and the adolescence of commanders.⁹²

⁸⁶ *Qanun*, No. 3, 20 April 1890/3 Ramazan 1307, p. 2. The choice of the word *tartib-i qavanin* may be deliberate. Note that the appellation National Consultative Assembly which Malkum used for this institution became the adopted name of the Iranian parliament, a choice that was by no means free of controversy.

⁸⁷ The conjunction "*va*" (and) before *hukman* is omitted in my translation. If included, it would read as "the laws and principles that God, the prophet and philosophers (*hukama*) have taught the Islamic clergy. . . ."

⁸⁸ *Qanun*, No. 6, 18 July 1890/1 Zi al-Haja 1307, p. 1.

⁸⁹ *Qanun*, No. 8, p. 3; *Qanun*, No. 7, p. 2. For further assertions about the superiority of laws of Islam and the reformists' lack of desire to introduce new laws, see the above.

⁹⁰ *Qanun*, No. 9, p. 3.

⁹¹ Abdulrahim Talibof, *Kitab-i Ahmad ya Safinah-i Talibi* [(Tehran: Intisharat-i Gam [1319/1901], 1977 (2nd impression)]. The present printing is based on the 1911 (1319) Istanbul edition, which seems to have consolidated the two original volumes published in 1893–1894 (1311–1312). This is not to detract from Talibof's credentials as a prominent social critic, particularly in his *Masalik al-Muhsinin* (Cairo, 1323/1905), *Izhat dar Khusus-i Azadi* (Tehran 1325/1907), or *Siyasat-i Talibi* (Tehran, 1329/1911). Yet, in the pre-revolutionary era, his fame was owed more to *Kitab-i Ahmad*.

⁹² Talibof, *Kitab-i Ahmad*, pp. 138–141, 146.

Furthermore, the underlying theme of the book was the despicable educational and schooling conditions in Iran compared with “the civilized countries,” so much so that the father of Ahmad, the seven-year-old whose education was the focus of the book (after Rousseau’s *Emile*), decided to home-school his child for at least three years rather than entrust him to schools with ignorant teachers, an unreformed alphabet, outdated curricula, and no discipline or time-consciousness.⁹³ Yet the book as a whole was more an excuse for a primer in biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, medicine, architecture, military sciences, meteorology, and in general the technological and scientific marvels of the West – the other secret of Western progress.⁹⁴ That the contemporaries unanimously considered this rather apolitical book among the few most influential texts of the constitutional movement – with popularity far beyond the school-children for which it was supposedly intended – is a commentary on the concerns of the participants themselves.

Another merchant, the nationalist author Zayn al-`Abidin Maraghah`i, launched a devastating social and political critique in his *Siyahatnamah-i Ibrahim Bayg* from Istanbul where he resided. He did so from an explicitly comparative vantage point in reference to the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and the newly discovered but still abstract Japan. The fictional travelogue of a wealthy expatriate merchant’s son in Iran was as an “eyewitness” story of the injustices and ruin that plagued the land; it became, by some accounts, the most influential text of the constitutional period.⁹⁵ Explicitly nationalistic, decrying the missing public-spiritedness of officials or private individuals, the protagonist suffered for his patriotism mentally and materially. For unlike his wealthy expatriate merchant friends, he refused to take up the readily available French or British citizenship to protect his heirs from covetous Iranian officials in the Ottoman Empire and Caucasus, who were certain to pocket his fortune after death.⁹⁶ In a sustained critique, he blamed the government for a complete lack of justice and an absence of law and order and equality before the law (*musavat*), as well as for horrifying punishments that did not fit the crime.⁹⁷ Higher provincial rulers behaved as autocrats in their domains and mistreated subjects, and their demeanor was imitated everywhere by local rulers whose pomp and large entourages were matched by their extortion and abuse of subjects. At the very top, the ministers interfered with each others’ jobs and thought only of increasing taxes and accumulating wealth, rank, and titles; at the same time, military command posts were left to fourteen-year-old boys.⁹⁸ Poor infrastructure, dilapidated schools and hospitals, unhygienic conditions, and the absence of

⁹³ Talibof, *Kitab-i Ahmad*, pp. 10–11, 24.

⁹⁴ One could also find detailed discussions of archeology, ethnography, and customs and ancient history, but not nearly to the same extent as the hard sciences.

⁹⁵ Zayn al-`Abidin Maraghah`i *Siyahatnamah-i Ibrahim Bayg* (Tehran: Nashr-i Sipidah, [1312/1895] 1983, 2nd edition).

⁹⁶ Maraghah`i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 30–33, 85.

⁹⁷ Maraghah`i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 60, 68, 74, 125.

⁹⁸ Maraghah`i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 71, 134–138, 160, 185, 209–210, 237–239, 246.

quarantine led to the spread of diseases everywhere.⁹⁹ Lack of commercial and industrial development, coupled with the invasion of goods from abroad, led to foreign commercial domination and decay of the local industry, while the insistence on – even pride in – adhering to outdated ancestral commercial and agricultural methods exacerbated the problem.¹⁰⁰ The yearly migration of fifty thousand Iranians to work in menial jobs and as laborers in the oil fields of the Caucasus were further embarrassments for an ancient empire whose light of early civilization had mesmerized the world.¹⁰¹

As for his recommendations for the injustices pervading Iran, he called the laws of Islam the means of salvation and the basis of all that is good in European laws. In fact, all of Western progress was supposed to have taken place because of the teachings of Islam, which had been abandoned by Muslims but embraced by Europe – justice, equality, love of nation and brotherly love within it, unity, and obedience to the ruler, to name a few.¹⁰² He also spoke of having legislative and executive branches subservient to the ruler.¹⁰³ Yet, typical of the reformist literature of the time, the legislature's duties and its membership remained murky. On the one hand he recommended the creation of an assembly composed only of the most learned clerics whose numbers were in proportion to the population in each locality; this body would look after the public needs and the rendering of justice according to *shari`ah*. It was also implied that the assembly was to have executive functions and be responsible for implementing the law.¹⁰⁴ This proposal came despite his highly negative view of the majority of clerics and their ignorance.¹⁰⁵ Yet (in an addendum apparently tacked on in later editions), Zayn al-`Abidin Maraghah'i wrote that rescuing the ship of the Iranian nation (the language resembled *Qanun*) required not only modern schools, factories, and equitable and systemically implemented laws, but also a consultative assembly that convened in an equitable and brotherly fashion. Without explaining its composition or duties, he insisted on obedience to the shah as one of its general principles.¹⁰⁶

The author flavored his suggestions with a traditional understanding of politics. As every schoolchild knew, related the narrator, “the Sultanate may not be stable without the army, and the army may not be raised but with money, and money may not be gathered but with security of subjects, and the comfort of subjects may not be secured but with implementing just and equitable laws,” and

⁹⁹ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 60–61, 71–73, 224–226.

¹⁰⁰ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 85, 232–233, 236.

¹⁰¹ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 48–54, 116, 161, 235–236. By some estimates, 300,000 Iranians had a yearly presence in the Caucasus as laborers, which is substantial considering that the total population was estimated at 10,000,000.

¹⁰² Yet he spoke highly of Ottoman laws, which he argued to be based entirely on shari`ah. Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 118–121, 234–235.

¹⁰³ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, p. 115. ¹⁰⁴ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 256–257.

¹⁰⁵ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 193–194, 234–235.

¹⁰⁶ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, p. 264.

it was a pity that in his country everything was contrary to this prescription.¹⁰⁷ In his discussion of the Circle of Equity, various elements such as the military, viziers, clerics, merchants, and subjects were likened to humors that benefited each other but only if there was not too much or too little of any, so that none could overwhelm the others. Whenever one element was weak and another too strong, the body would become unhealthy and taxes stop flowing.¹⁰⁸ It was the government's job to look after the well-being of subjects at the lowest rungs (*ra'yat*) of society, which was the secret of the success of previous sultans. But what about the present shah? On the one hand, the shah was for the most part away on summer vacation, hunting, or at his harem for weeks on end, hearing about affairs from the ministers who, with their sycophantic poetry, led him astray.¹⁰⁹ Yet between the lines (this was typical of reformist tracts), we also hear that the shah was the reason for failure. For example, on the occasion of the dedication of a statue, he was deemed undeserving with no conquest to his name, and without secure and comfortable subjects.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, the shah needed to be reminded not only about kindness to his subjects, but also about the disloyal ones who needed encouragement in return for fidelity.¹¹¹ In a lawless land, the subjects saw tyranny and injustice in the rule of the shah, blamed him for incarcerations and executions, and even viewed him as a murderer. Unity and compassion could be achieved between the subjects and the shah only in light of legal conduct and only then would the subjects recognize the shah as their kind father, and the shah recognize them as his dear children.¹¹² Thus even though the greater part of the book insisted on loyalty and obedience to the shah, damning assertions were slipped in.

The most avid readers of the reformist literature were members of the quasi-Masonic societies that operated in pre-revolutionary Iran and played an important part in preparing the ground for a constitutional movement. These secret societies convened for the broadly defined purpose of advocating reform in society and governmental institutions. Their members were drawn from the ranks of the reform-minded clerics, merchants, and circles of educated elites, including bureaucrats. Beyond Tehran, the most active locations were Tabriz, Isfahan, and Kirman. In Tehran, the most prominent was the group associated with the National Library; in 1904, this group formed the Revolutionary Committee, composed of fifty-seven intellectuals. Another group formed in 1905, with some overlap in membership, was the Secret Society.¹¹³ Individuals associated with the Azali-Babi religious reformist movement were active in all of

¹⁰⁷ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, p. 142.

¹⁰⁸ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 128–132. The classical theory of four humors is closely related to the four constitutive elements. For a healthy body they were to be held in balance.

¹⁰⁹ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 122–124. ¹¹⁰ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 144–145.

¹¹¹ Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 142–143. ¹¹² Maraghah'i, *Ibrahim Bayg*, pp. 209–210.

¹¹³ Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 39–43. See also Lambton, "Secret Societies."

these and some authors attribute a good deal of influence to their reformist outlook.¹¹⁴

A prominent member of the Tabriz societies, Taqizadah mentioned that in addition to all of the above readings, Persian community newspapers, such as *Thuraya*, *Paravarish*, and *Hikmat* in Cairo, *Habl al-Matin* in Calcutta, and *Akhtar* of Istanbul, were on the societies' reading lists. These were quite well known to reformers of every persuasion, and there was nothing surprising here. What stood out in his recollection was the emphasis on Malkum's writings as the greatest source of early influence on his thinking (80 percent, he recalled). In addition, that he and his group of "progressive" co-thinkers in Tabriz (e.g. Tarbiyat) studied Young Turk publications in Paris closely, particularly *Şuray-ı Ümmet*, was quite revealing.¹¹⁵

The Secret Society, the most conservative of the three active in Tehran, had a clerical bent, and was run by Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, a protégé of Tabataba'i and one of the most prominent clerics with reformist ideas. The proceedings of twelve meetings provide vital information on the members' view of social defects, their plan for reform, and political strategies on the eve of revolution between February and May 1905.¹¹⁶ The group's ideological outlook was in effect a combination of constitutionalism and the political theory of kingship and Islam.

The discussions disclosed the participants' strategic decision to solicit the help of the clerical leaders for the reform movement; previously failed attempts were attributed to the reformers' shortsightedness in attracting clerics.¹¹⁷ Ties were to be forged among various clerical leaders, especially the two most active in opposition politics.¹¹⁸ At the suggestion that some might not cooperate, a

¹¹⁴ Mangol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 53–75; Afary, *Grassroots Democracy* pp. 39–48.

¹¹⁵ Hasan Taqizadah, *Zindagi-i Tufani, Khatirat*, ed. `A. Alizadah (Tehran: Intisharat-i Firdaws, 2000), pp. 37–38, 178–179, 408.

¹¹⁶ For the proceedings of these meetings see Muhammad Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Bidari-i Iraniyan*, Vol.I, ed. `Ali Akbar Saidi Sirjani (Tehran: Intisharat-i Agah, Intisharat-i Nuvin, 1983), pp. 246–308. The recorded accounts of Nazim al-Islam, in his celebrated multi-volume *Tarikh-i Bidari-i Iraniyan*, has gone down as perhaps the most important source of its kind. Unfortunately, it has often been used too uncritically as the author's close association with Tabataba'i and systematic attempt to bolster his role is overlooked. As it concerns the proceedings of the secret committee or the narrative account of revolution in general, they were without a doubt reworked later. Occasionally, the author is forthcoming about this, but not always. This is apparent when the exact course of events and the precise nature of the controversies were predicted long before their occurrence, which the author attributed to his foresight.

¹¹⁷ The author pointed out that with respect to Tabataba'i, one of the three most prominent clerical leaders and a close personal associate, this should not constitute a serious problem because Tabataba'i was already sympathetic to the cause of reform. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol.I, pp. 252, 265. For statements of praise for Tabataba'i and proof of his sympathies to the reform movement see pp. 61–63, 247. The author goes so far as to call Tabataba'i a republican. This was indeed a radical idea that does not find support in any other source.

¹¹⁸ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol.I, pp. 269, 272–273.

committee member recommended promising them the movement's leadership.¹¹⁹

The discussions on reform revolved around the nationalist desire to revive Iran, an ancient empire that had declined below its poorest neighbors. They spoke of dreadful dietary and hygienic conditions; the high price of food, especially bread; the danger of colonization and its threat to Islam;¹²⁰ the corruption of officials, particularly ministers; and the prevalence of tyranny and oppression in the absence of laws.¹²¹

Nazim al-Islam was at pains to prove that constitutionalism, or even republicanism, was the solution to all the above ills. The invocation of republicanism at this juncture and by this author, while a possible topic for the radicals, may be dismissed as a latter-day incorporation. What concerns us is their interpretation of constitutionalism, which was sometimes presented in a populist language. Its comparison with absolutism (*istibdad*) in one of the meetings was quite telling: Absolutism made the public "ignorant, blind, timid, cowardly, weak, unfortunate, servile, degraded, and dastardly, while constitutionalism made them learned, aware, courageous, bold, strong, enthusiastic, proud, and enlightened."¹²²

The persistent concern with the laws went beyond simplistic assertions. In fact, one can readily discern the influence of Mustashar al-Dawlah, Malkum and Maraghah'i on these exchanges, three reformist writers who were singled out for praise. The group advocated laws to spread justice, remove tyranny, and establish a rational-legal order. These concerns coincided with those of radicals, yet, while the latter were first and foremost concerned with state rationalization, for the more traditionalist groups tyranny and injustice took precedence. In the words of a prominent member of this circle, "Our purpose is to remove oppression and tyranny and it does not matter whether it is done under republicanism or constitutional titles."¹²³ The language in which tyranny was criticized marked off the two.

¹¹⁹ This was discussed in relation to the possible opposition of Shaykh Fazl Allah Nuri and his thirst for power. Even though Nuri was accused of these traits after he opposed the constitutional movement much later, I do not think such a criticism was possible or foreseeable at the time, although discussions for offering leadership to clerics sound credible. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol.I, p. 252. It was further mentioned that by exploiting the enmity between Bihbahani (another important clerical leader) and 'Ayn al-Dawlah (the Prime Minister), a committee member had managed to draw Bihbahani closer to the movement for reform. Another clerical leader who was purportedly approached and his support secured by a committee member was Ashtiyani. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol.I, p. 265. The discussions also revealed the committee's semi-masonic structure. 12 Muharram 1323. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 269.

¹²⁰ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, pp. 243-270.

¹²¹ These pages are replete with criticism of tyranny, certainly the most conspicuous theme of these meetings. For more particular mention of ministers and the tyranny of high officials, see Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, pp. 249-252, 256-259, 260-263.

¹²² Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 289.

¹²³ The statement was by Majd al-Islam. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 273.

In a drafted resolution in a late meeting in which constitutionalism received no mention, the list of twelve demands started with the call for the establishment of just laws (*qanun-i `adl*) and a “House of Justice” (*`adalatkhanah*), an institution that later became the demand of clerical leaders and a contested issue.¹²⁴ It conservatively insisted that laws were the monarch’s will only but advised that it would be better if laws were drawn up in consultation (*mashvarat*) with the intelligent viziers and the nation’s learned scholars before ratification by the monarch.¹²⁵ The list of demands also called for modernizing reforms with regard to the cadastre, the tax structure, the army, provincial elections, commerce, customs, and education. Furthermore, it asked for the reorganization of the government payroll, the creation of factories and the exploitation of mines, limiting ministers, ministries and the clergy to the religious laws (*shar`*), and the stipulation of the range of rights and responsibilities of the local governors and rulers. The resolution ended on the telling remark that with meeting these demands, Iran would surpass Japan within twenty years.¹²⁶ To dismiss all suspicions of antimonarchism, the author professed that “none of the subjects on earth are as obedient, royalist, and loyal to their government as the Iranians . . . If a certain ruler commits an injustice in the remotest location, they consider the grand vizier to be at fault.”¹²⁷ Furthermore, the author claimed the old dictum – kingship lasts with irreligion, but not with tyranny – to be the essence of his argument.¹²⁸

Similarly, the author’s story portrayed the betrayal of the grand vizier and the shah’s associates, while showing the shah to be in favor of the demands. He claimed that copies of their resolution had been sent to the shah and to all the high officials traveling with him in Europe, including Grand Vizier `Ayn al-Dawlah, who had treacherously removed the shah from the capital by arranging the trip.¹²⁹ As soon as the shah arrived at the Iranian-Russian border, readers were told, the resolution was handed to the grand vizier – but he and other high officials failed to deliver it to the shah. A high official member of their secret society finally did so; upon reading it, the shah called for the reorganization of the Ministry of Justice and Europe-like enforcement of laws, adding that, “if the Iranian government becomes a constitutional government like other [European] governments, both I and the subjects will be relieved and comfortable.” To this, the notorious Minister of Army Amir Bahadur Jang responded that “If the shah repeats this statement I shall tear up my stomach and commit suicide!” Upon hearing this, “the innocent (*mazlum*) shah fell silent.”¹³⁰

¹²⁴ As we will later observe, the creation of a House of Justice was the central demand of the clergy and a controversial issue because it competed with the idea of a parliament.

¹²⁵ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol.I, p. 302. The two famous Quranic passages on consultation were cited in previous discussions. See p. 289.

¹²⁶ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 302.

¹²⁷ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 300.

¹²⁸ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 301.

¹²⁹ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, pp. 298–299.

¹³⁰ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, p. 308.

This thinking resonated well with one of the two most influential pro-constitutional clerics, Bihbahani, and his followers. During the initial days of protest they formulated their demands as follows: “we have no goal other than the dismissal of the traitor `Ayn al-Dawlah from grand vizierate and the dismissal of Naus . . . the Grand vizier stands between the shah and his subjects as an obstructive barrier and does not allow our petitions to reach him.”¹³¹

Another member and close friend of the leader, Majd al-Islam Kirmani, expressed similar views. Arrested in Tehran for antigovernment activities and banished to Kalat in the East, he kept a notebook of his experiences during the long and ghastly journey. The bulk of his notes recounted the cruelty and whimsical behavior of provincial officials, the prevalence of bribery and corruption, and their extortionist conduct toward ordinary, helpless inhabitants to maximize their own wealth.¹³² He attributed this sad state of affairs to the lack of laws and unaccountability of officials, a defect that constitutional law was to remedy. Constitutional law, he argued, established a rational-legal order where the duties of officeholders and responsibilities of officials were codified rather than enforced based only on rank and power.¹³³

Majd al-Islam attributed the crisis to the breakdown of the administration of justice and the oppression inflicted by officials. He held the “tyrannical,” “cruel,” “shameless” and “self seeking” grand vizier and viziers responsible for squandering the “five-thousand-year-old” heritage of the state and for turning the shah into an object of hatred among the subjects.¹³⁴ For the traditionally oriented, constitutionalism was primarily associated with justice and an end to the tyranny of officials, and only secondarily with progress, and rational, rule-governed conduct. The past lessons of politics remained dominant in their thinking.

SOCIAL GROUPS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION

The initial support of the clerical establishment was unanimous, yet it began to wane among the higher echelon as the “real” constitution was drafted and the Assembly made clear its intentions. Why this change?

¹³¹ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, vol. I, pp. 292–293.

¹³² Ahmad Majd al-Islam Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Inqilab-i Mashrutiyat-i Iran: Safarnamah-'i Kalat*, ed. Mahmud Khalilpur (Isfahan: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Isfahan, 1968).

¹³³ Majd al-Islam, *Safarnamah-'i Kalat*, p. 73.

¹³⁴ Majd al-Islam, *Safarnamah-'i Kalat*, p. 96. Similarly, the Grand Vizier was blamed for preventing the implementation of the shah’s decree for the establishment of the House of Justice (pp. 148–151). As mentioned above, Majd al-Islam was in many ways typical of a generation of constitutionalists who synthesized European constitutionalism with local political notions. Note his defense of rational-legal order and constitutionalism, discussion of prisons in Europe (pp. 180–183), the desire to surpass Britain, France and Russia (p. 430), and lessons of the French Revolution, the only upheaval mentioned in the entire volume (p. 418).

Various reasons have been put forth to explain clerical participation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century social movements. It is claimed that the Iranian clergy took part because of the revolutionary character of shi'ism and its rejection of worldly authority; to defend the institutional interests threatened by nineteenth century reforms; in reaction to threats from the public; out of concern for their reputation as community leaders and the delegitimizing consequences of inaction; as political entrepreneurs ready to reap the rewards of a possible victory against the state; and, finally, because they had become convinced of the advantages of a constitutional government. Depending on the inclination of the author, their participation has been explained by recourse to one or, more often, a combination of the above.

It is my sense that with the exception of the first, all of these contributed to clerical participation. The argument in favor of doctrinal beliefs is the least satisfactory of all. The best representative of this view, Hamid Algar, argues that the occultation of the last Imam gave a peculiarly activist character to shi'ism by considering worldly authority illegitimate. As Algar explains further, historically only a faction has interpreted the doctrine in an activist manner and consistently opposed the illegitimate secular powers; the doctrine, also allows for a diametrically opposed interpretation, calling for absolute inaction in the face of illegitimate temporal authority and adopting a quietist stance – for nothing may be done until the return of the Hidden Imam. According to Algar, the activist stance was dominant at the time. Motivated by the late nineteenth century reforms, this interpretation pushed the clergy to the forefront of the struggle against the illegitimate state.¹³⁵

For this period, however, such a conclusion is simply untenable. The clerical leaders not only considered the Qajar shahs legitimate, but even at the peak of revolution acted in a more conciliatory fashion than did the rest of the opposition.

Algar's emphasis on the institutional conflict is more satisfactory. Unlike the Ottoman clerical establishment, which had become progressively absorbed into the state, the Iranian clerics had preserved their decentralized nature and institutional autonomy to a large extent; they were in contact with the state and dependent on its patronage, but also largely independent from it. They continued to perform many social functions in the daily lives of the population, most importantly in education and the administration of justice.¹³⁶ In the late nineteenth century, the courts presided over by the clergy (*shar'* courts) were in competition with those under state jurisdiction (*'urf*). "Throughout the nineteenth century," Algar has noted, "this interaction of two types of courts,

¹³⁵ Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama In the Qajar Period*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 3–5, 242–256. This view does not find support even in the more religiously inclined studies of the constitutional movement in Iran. See Vanessa Martin, *Islam and Modernism: The Iranian Revolution of 1906* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), p. 33, 64.

¹³⁶ For a list of these functions, see Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 11–12.

combined with the lack of any formal demarcation of their jurisdiction, was a major source of conflict between the state and the *ulama*.¹³⁷ The judicial and educational reforms, which affected institutions that had heretofore been almost entirely monopolized by the clergy, intensified this tension.¹³⁸

Furthermore, the clerics claimed to be leaders of the community of believers and their myriad daily functions lent this claim credibility. At a time of widespread discontent, the clerics were forced by a combination of threats and obligations to assume community leadership. Their close ties to the merchants and prominent guilds, reinforced through kinship or bazaar networks, amplified their obligations. The prospect of rewards and higher standing in the community were certainly added incentives.

Threats, pressure from followers to assume leadership, obligations, and the rewards of increased prominence after victory characterized the Tobacco Rebellion of 1891–1892,¹³⁹ which is remembered as a dress rehearsal for the constitutional movement.¹⁴⁰ The constant barrage of harassment and threats to force the clergy to assume their obligations toward the community is how a noted scholar of this movement has explained clerical participation.¹⁴¹ The cancellation of the tobacco monopoly concession granted to a British company greatly bolstered their standing.¹⁴² The movement's success proved to other social groups the effectiveness of an alliance with the clergy.¹⁴³

If for these reasons the clergy might have wanted to participate in a movement against the state, we still have to explain why they accepted the alliance of constitutionalists. I have partially answered this question in my discussion of the intelligentsia's attempts to reconcile Islam and constitutionalism. Unlike the Ottoman intelligentsia, the Iranian intelligentsia made significant concessions to the clerics, always promising them leadership in a future constitutional system. Further, the systematic associations between strength and constitutionalism were, for the clerics, attractive propositions for saving Iran and Islam from falling under Russian or British rule. For the intelligentsia, on the other hand, constitutionalism was shorthand for modern state machinery, which meant regular and orderly

¹³⁷ Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 12–13 (quote is from p. 13).

¹³⁸ Algar, *Religion and State*, pp. 128, 169–171, 223–224.

¹³⁹ The preceding uprisings which led to the cancellation of Reuter's concession were also led by the clerical establishment. However, the movement lacked the scope and magnitude of the Tobacco Rebellion.

¹⁴⁰ For this common view among contemporaries, see Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat-i Ihtisham al-Saltanah*, ed. M. Mussavi (Tehran: Zavvar, 1988), p. 572.

¹⁴¹ Faridun Adamiyat, *Shurish Bar Imtiyaznamah-'i Rizhi: Tablil-i Siyasi* (Tehran: Payam, 1981), pp. 19–20, 30–31, 34–35, 60, 65–67, 74–75, 133–134, 138–140.

¹⁴² Nikkie Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892* (London: Frank Cass, 1966). It was not surprising that Nazim al-Islam, a close associate of the clerical circle, devoted a lengthy section to this rebellion in his history of constitutional movement, and in his usual style, bolstered their role. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari-i*, vol. I, pp. 19–60.

¹⁴³ Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion*, p. 2; Nikkie R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 66; Bakhsh, *Iran*, p. 243.

taxes, a rational bureaucracy, and an interventionist outlook with ambitious programs for revamping the taxation structure, judicial administration, education, public works, and general institution-building. Yet, for the clerics, constitutionalism was the administration of justice and redress of grievances, prescriptions that restored the state's strength to enable it to stave off foreign encroachment and protect religion. They were not attuned to a statist interpretation and sought a bigger role for themselves in the community affairs. These two visions were not identical; they were even contradictory. Nor was it clear that the clerics were fully cognizant of the challenges of a law-making assembly and the notions of equality propagated by such an assembly, especially when they were promised leadership positions in it.

The clerics, however, were not a united or uniform body. A distinction should be made between those who clearly identified with the constitutional movement and remained its supporters (until at least the defeat of counterrevolution), and the conservative clerics whose cautious anti-statism had been transformed into temporary support for constitutionalism; the latter soon defected to stand solidly behind the government.

In addition, high- and low-ranking constitutionalist clerics exhibited clear differences in their commitment to constitutionalism. Yet, despite differences within the constitutionalist camp, there seems to have been a shared understanding of constitutionalism as a conditional form of government that operated within limits set by religious laws. Hence, the transgressions of limits of which the officials (and eventually the shah) were accused, earned them the labels "tyrant" and "unjust." The evils of these transgressions were to be rectified with a constitutional, limited, and just government.¹⁴⁴ The constitutional clerics were also in dialogue with Western constitutional notions to make the two compatible. If they were also in dialogue with notions of kingship, and thus simultaneously dealt with three definitions of sovereignty, that is, one based on religion, one derived from the shah, and the other originating in the public, this happened to be part of the complexity of their times.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ For exposition of this view among the high-ranking constitutional clerics of Najaf and Karbala, Na'ini in particular, see the excellent work of Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism*, pp. 110–101, 107, 183–184, 197, 216, 237–238 (The different genealogies attributed to the word constitution (*mashrutiyyat*) in Iran served as one basis for different interpretation by the lay constitutionalists and clerical constitutionalists. The former took it to be from the French "la charte" while the latter assumed it was from Arabic *sharta*; see pp. 183–187). For a similar understanding among the lower clerics, see the extensive excerpts from *al-Jamal*, Jamal al-Din Isfahani's newspaper during the constitutional period, in Iqbal Yaghma'i, *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Tus, 1978), pp. 95–223 (for above, see pp. 164–165, 191–192). See also Thaqat al-Islam's defense of the constitution as placing limits against charges that it contradicted *shar'*. *Namah-hayi Tabriz: Az Thaqat al-Islam bib Mustashar al-Dawlah*, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Farzan, 1999), pp. 8–10.

¹⁴⁵ For *al-Jamal's* views on the Circle of Justice, prosperity, and strength under the Sassanids (during the reign of Anushirvan in particular), shah as the enforcer of Islamic law and purveyor of justice, justice as the source of prosperity, and the Assembly of Justice, see Yaghma'i, *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi*, pp. 109–110, 112–114, 119, 128, 196–197, 222. The Iranian clerics of Iraq were the least concerned about the kingship metaphor, its language, imagery and import.

By the end of the constitutional movement, the task of reconciling public sovereignty remained unfinished. Even the exemplary high-ranking clerical constitutionalist leader, Tabataba'i, did not impart to his followers a deep or clear understanding of what was at stake, his protégé's declaration to the contrary notwithstanding. The pro-constitutional clerics in Najaf and Karbala, centers of Shiite learning, did set about to make original attempts (e.g., Na'ini) to reconcile the constitutional and Islamic traditions with primary use of religious sources, and thus expand on, or present an alternative to, what attempts had been made in that direction by lay intellectuals. Despite their backing, which outlasted the defeat of counterrevolution, victory ended in grave disappointment for the pro-constitutional clerics of Iraq, who seemed to have underestimated the state-oriented aims of their allies from afar.¹⁴⁶ More could not be said for the few pro-constitutional high clerics in Iran, one of whom was assassinated by the constitutional forces afterwards.

If the high- and lower-ranking constitutionalist clerics had a shared understanding of constitutionalism as "conditional" government, it is my sense that the radicalism of the lower ranks stemmed from proximity to the guilds, who harbored strong grievances against the state. These clerics, in line with many reformers at the time, took strong issue with the high-ranking conservative members of their profession, condemning many for corruption, ignorance, all manner of wrongdoing, and complicity with power for personal gain.¹⁴⁷ Others consider their brand of opposition politics an outgrowth of their Babi dissident religious views.¹⁴⁸ These clerics and lay reformers certainly faced the charge of heresy, Babism in particular, from the conservatives, charges that in some cases were undoubtedly true; yet it should be kept in mind that such accusations were commonly leveled by clerics against opponents indiscriminately.¹⁴⁹

The merchant community, with its financial wherewithal, was another critical ally. Three reasons for merchants' dissatisfaction have been presented so far: the prevailing commercial insecurity caused by officials in the capital and provinces; the decline of local manufacturing in competition with British and other

¹⁴⁶ Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism*, pp. 99, 238–240. It should be added that the pro-constitutional clerics in `Atabat were in a clear minority.

¹⁴⁷ Sayyid Jamal al-Din Va'iz Isfahani, *Ru'ya-yi Sadiqah*, ed. Sadiq Sajjadi (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran [1316/1898?] 1984), pp. 25, 28–29, 32–38, 44. This was apparently written in collaboration with Malik al-Mutakallimin, Majd al-Islam Kirmani, and others. For similar condemnations during the constitutional period, see Yaghma'i, *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi*, pp. 108, 149–150, 166–173, 189, 220–223.

¹⁴⁸ Mangol Bayat, *First Revolution*, pp. 53–75; Abbas Amanat, "Constitutional Revolution I. Intellectual Background," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, p. 166; Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 43–48. The evidence with respect to Babism of lower-ranking religious clerics is circumstantial and quite thin. In their writing, they dissociated themselves from Babism, which in fairness could be attributed to the common practice of *taqiya* (e.g., *Ru'ya-yi Sadiqah*, p. 29). Yet they went out of their way to accuse Babism of smearing Islam, and condemned its beliefs, even calling it idol worship. Yaghma'i, *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi*, pp. 100, 106, 171.

¹⁴⁹ For a more skeptical reading that is similar to mine, see Martin, *Islam and Modernism*, p. 126.

European goods; and the rationalizing reforms of the customs administration under the Belgian officials.

The commercial insecurity of merchants was a recurrent theme. In 1883–1884 (1301) the representative of Tehran merchants complained to the shah about the extortion from certain government officials, whose corruption and oppression of public in general went unpunished. This discouraged commerce and so terrified the public that no one dared to petition the shah.¹⁵⁰ A petition a year later by the newly established Council of Merchants accused the governors of devouring half the provincial military's budget and extorting the inhabitants, naming two of the shah's sons among these. It also lamented the prevailing insecurity, under which prominent merchants were unwilling to embark on substantial projects unless the governors' hands were "cut short." Yet it still spoke of the shah as more just than Anushirvan, and bemoaned the governors' betrayal of him, the innocent (*mazlum*) ruler wronged by his officials.¹⁵¹

To encourage commerce and industry, the Council [established 1883–1884 (1301)] drew up a six-part program at the initiative of the Tehran commercial community, and established many additional similar bodies in provinces.¹⁵² The program, sent for the shah's approval, requested greater governmental involvement through initiatives such as establishing a bank, increasing security in trade by enforcing commercial laws, and bringing violators to justice. Significantly, it asked for protectionist measures to prevent the obliteration of local crafts and manufactures, and for the preferential treatment of Iranians over foreign merchants.¹⁵³

The document argued that Iranian goods, superior in quality and durability, had suffered from unfair competition with superficially more appealing European goods, forcing owners and workers out of jobs. To stop this "ruinous flood," it requested support for local industries, part of which was to be accomplished through a temporary ban on the consumption of foreign products to allow rejuvenation of local industries.¹⁵⁴ The document showed particular sensitivity to the competition of European textiles.¹⁵⁵ The unorthodox request was certainly informed by government's inability to impose unilateral sanctions against imported foreign goods, and instead suggested prohibitions against local consumers.

¹⁵⁰ Amin al-Zarb was the head of Tehran's merchants. Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 304–305.

¹⁵¹ The letter is dated 1884–1885 (1302). Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 362–364.

¹⁵² Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 299, 330–335.

¹⁵³ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 314–328.

¹⁵⁴ After this period, the government was to prohibit the consumption of products that had domestic substitutes by penalizing the violators, so as to "force the public to abandon the consumption of foreign products." Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 320–322 (quote from p. 322).

¹⁵⁵ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 320–322.

This was an impossible request with serious political repercussions. In his response, the shah was conspicuously silent on the issue and limited himself to generalities such as the propagation of commerce and punishment of fraud.¹⁵⁶ Frustrated with the government and the Ministry of Commerce, the council dissolved itself within one year, although the merchants continued to convene unofficially.¹⁵⁷

Some fifteen years later, similar concerns were voiced by two popular preachers, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Va`iz Isfahani and Malik al-Mutakallimin, who had particular influence among the guilds. Early in 1899 (1316) the two established the Islamic Company with the cooperation of a group of Isfahan merchants with the express purpose of encouraging domestic industry and crafts that had gravely suffered in competition. In their preaching, they encouraged the public to invest in the company to promote self-sufficiency and free the country from Western economic dominance.¹⁵⁸ Little more than a year after its establishment, one preacher, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Isfahani, in his pamphlet *Libas al-Taqwa* (virtuous garb),¹⁵⁹ voiced the earlier concerns of merchants toward the local crafts, especially textiles. His criticisms were couched in the language of religion, and linked the threat of economic subservience to the dangers of the cultural and moral servitude of Islam to non-Muslims. The cultural decline of Islam was amply demonstrated, in his opinion, by the example of Muslims under Christian rule in the Russian Caucasus.¹⁶⁰

Religious or not, the central message of economic nationalism was similar in both. Calls were made to the Muslims of Iran to unify and reject foreign textiles, to adorn themselves with Islamic-Iranian fabrics so as to “prevent the flow of our nation’s assets abroad.”¹⁶¹ In one instance, the author even called for economic holy war (*jihad*) against the infidels:

At this moment the meaning of holy war (*jihad*) is the protection of territory of Islam, acting according to commandments of Qur’an, obstruction of path of infidel, increased glory of Islam and elimination of dependence on the enemy. We should know for certain that we the people of Iran have not worn the garb of servility and degradation and have not become subservient to foreigners and strangers so far as we have not abandoned this holy war . . . We are enslaved so long as we are in need of others. The meaning of need is lowliness, indigence and enslavement . . . And if we truly desire respect and are worthy of gain, we should become independent of foreigners.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudah*, p. 323.

¹⁵⁷ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudah*, pp. 368–370.

¹⁵⁸ Sayyid Jamal al-Din Va`iz Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, ed. Huma Rizvani (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran [1318/1900], 1984). From the “Introduction,” pp. 5–6.

¹⁵⁹ The word *taqwa* means both abstinence and virtue. The author was thus inviting the Iranians to exercise abstinence by wearing domestically produced clothing, a practice that made them virtuous.

¹⁶⁰ Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, p. 31.

¹⁶¹ Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, pp. 10–11, 22 (quote from p. 11).

¹⁶² Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, pp. 23–25 (quotes from pp. 24–25).

Abstinence from the seductive appeal of foreign goods was his solution. A mere one hundred years before, Iranians purportedly had led a happy life without these. Yet, as though not entirely convinced himself, he quickly appealed to the readers' nationalism: "It is true that the eye that has seen the electrical light will be no longer content with the tallow burner. But if the tallow burner is ours and the electrical light borrowed, of course the tallow burner is preferred."¹⁶³ In due time, the author held, products similar to those imported will be produced in domestic factories, creating riches and a sound government that constituted the best guarantee against foreign penetration.¹⁶⁴ Here, he referred to the clothing made of domestically produced textiles as the "garb of virtue" (the book's title), the wearing of which preserved Iranian honor: It was the garb that pleased God and the Prophet, it was the garb of zeal and ardor, it was the garb of Islam and religiosity, and finally, it was a garb that "proliferated the market of Muslims and dulled the commercial markets of the infidels."¹⁶⁵ This short-term strategy, the author held, was a necessary sacrifice to encourage domestic industries, resurrecting Iran from its lost glory and bringing it to the rank of the civilized nations.¹⁶⁶

The artisans and guilds, the most active public behind the movement, had very similar grievances, combined with the fact that they had not been given any tax relief in light of recent downturns.¹⁶⁷ A petition from 1911 (1329) can be taken as quite typical of the plight of artisans engaged in one or another aspect of textile production. The weavers' (*sha`rbaf*) guild of Mashad in Khurasan province petitioned the local government for a reduction of taxes after speaking of their economic plight and the fall in status. The turn of fortune since the 1870s had transformed this prosperous and respected city guild to one incapable of paying its taxes. As principal reasons, the Mashad weavers cited heavy taxes and competition with the lightly-taxed Kirman weavers and the abundant foreign fabrics that had flooded the local markets. Supposedly their trade had shrunk to a third. This claim was confirmed by the local government as well as the provincial committee which, after close inspection, reported a decrease in weaving machinery from the previous 1,500 to the present 500. The local government, however, cited only foreign competition as reason for the decline, and identified the high taxes as a consequence, rather than a cause of decline; the assessed taxes had failed to keep track of the falling number of weavers and the amount collected belonged to the far larger numbers of yesteryear. The local government and the provincial committee supported the weavers' request for tax relief, and advised the central government to agree to a reduction to safeguard against the serious possibility of the local extinction of the weavers' trade; in the

¹⁶³ Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, 38–40, 46–47 (quote from p. 39).

¹⁶⁴ Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, p. 40. ¹⁶⁵ Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, p. 74.

¹⁶⁶ Isfahani, *Libas al-Taqwa*, p. 18.

¹⁶⁷ The economic research on this period, although sparse, invariably confirms the decline of artisanal trade and manufacturing. See Bakhash, *Iran*, pp. 290–292.

local government's view, the demand that remained was hardly sufficient to maintain even the present number of weavers.¹⁶⁸

The third cited reason for merchant dissatisfaction was the customs policy. From 1898, with the assistance of a group of Belgian customs officials, the state had set about to reform the traditional customs.¹⁶⁹ Yet, opinion is divided on whether the merchants' dissatisfaction was with the centralized and rationalized customs administration in general or with some of its policies in particular. One strand of scholarship speaks of the reorganization's positive results for the government and its negative impact on merchants. It is argued that the merchants preferred the traditional farming-out system, as a result of which they paid lower duties and evaded customs more easily.¹⁷⁰ The opposition by merchants in various cities to the head of the customs, Joseph Naus between 1900 to 1905, is presented as proof of their general dissatisfaction with the new customs regulations.¹⁷¹ These are then considered as precursors to the constitutional revolution, the implication being that it was a traditionalist revolt against modern reforms.

A more detailed monograph on the Belgian administration, however, disagrees that the merchants were generally unhappy with the new, rule-governed conduct and the application of uniform standards, abolition of farming-out, or the new methods of assessment and payment.¹⁷² The new custom regulations did manage to triple revenue.¹⁷³ So successful were the Belgians that in 1902 Naus, the chief of customs, was granted the title of minister by the shah – unprecedented for a foreign administrator in Iran – and subsequently given many new critical responsibilities for extensive financial reforms.¹⁷⁴ It is true

¹⁶⁸ SAMT, 240/71–55.

¹⁶⁹ The thought of reforming the customs with the aid of Europeans arose in response to the new foreign loans in 1896 (1314). The Belgians, from a neutral European country, were invited to transform this administration into a reliable guarantor against future foreign loans. Anette Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzhiki dar Khidmat-i Dawlat-i Iran, 1898–1915 (1314–1333)*, translated to Persian by Mansoureh Etehadieh (Nezam-Mafi) (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1984), pp. 29–31.

¹⁷⁰ Gad G. Gilbar, "The Big Merchants (*tujjar*) and the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1906," *Asian and African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Winter 1977), pp. 275–303. For greater detail, see the five reasons listed by Gilbar for the merchants' preference for the old system, pp. 293–295. This conclusion is shared by Martin, *Islam and Modernism*, pp. 42–43, 51–55.

¹⁷¹ Gilbar "The Big Merchants," pp. 295–296. This opinion is shared by others. See Robert McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission and the Persian Constitutional Revolution* (Minneapolis: Biblioteca Islamica, 1974).

¹⁷² Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzhiki*, p. 133.

¹⁷³ Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzhiki*, pp. 40, 65, 130–131.

¹⁷⁴ Appointment of Naus as the minister of customs was indeed unusual, for his offices were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Finance, and as such, did not constitute a distinct ministry. Yet he was considered a minister and held responsible directly to the shah, rather than the Minister of Finance. Naus was also given the responsibility to reform the postal administration and the entire tax structure. The first of these was a duty he accomplished with great success but he failed badly in the second. Tax auditing was outdated and he lacked sufficiently trained personnel to carry it out. As we will see, the persistence of the latter problem seriously hampered the first Assembly's efforts toward financial reforms. Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzhiki*, pp. 68, 70–71, 82–85, 124.

that this increase came at the expense of some merchants, such as those who farmed the custom houses. Yet, the merchants, it is argued, were generally satisfied with the organizational changes introduced by Belgian administrators because they also improved commerce.

The real source of the merchants' dissatisfaction lay not with the overall reforms of Belgian officials but with some particular policies adopted as the result of the renegotiation of the Turkmanchay treaty with the Russians. The renegotiation, which took place under severe financial pressure, had forced Naus to deviate from his original plans and accept conditions that put Iranian merchants at a disadvantage relative to their Russian counterparts.¹⁷⁵ Naus and his assistant Priem were thus accused of having Russian sympathies.¹⁷⁶ Subsequently, the merchants did oppose Naus, Priem, and the new custom duties through collective action in 1903 and again in 1905.¹⁷⁷ The merchants, as we will see in the discussion of the constitutional movement, were finally able to dismiss Naus and Priem by arguing that the appointment of a non-Iranian as minister was a challenge to the sovereignty of an independent state. The argument in general favor of Belgian administrators seems more plausible when we realize that even after their dismissal, other Belgians continued to remain at the head of customs, without opposition from the merchants or the Assembly.

MODERN INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Even though revolutionaries in both Iran and the Ottoman Empire shared a vision of a strong, rational state, the patrimonial states they hoped to radically reorganize had fundamental differences. The Ottoman state, both because of its longer, more successful history of reforms, and its pre-reform structure, was more bureaucratized and centralized. Furthermore, the extensive bureaucratic apparatus of the Sublime Porte that housed the executive during the Tanzimat was a clear indication of institutional differences. Iran had no equivalent institution. Even if the Porte had suffered major setbacks when the Palace Secretariat reclaimed a good part of the executive functions with an elaborate and modern apparatus of its own, the weakened Sublime Porte had carried on as a parallel institution. The Porte took over from the Palace in the early weeks of revolution with astounding ease, leading to a swift dismantling of the Palace as a governing body. Hamidian patrimonialism was really a hybrid of new administrative practices and revived traditions; it reintroduced elements such as loyalty to the person rather than to the office, and clientelism, while pushing for a rational bureaucratic order. Hence the label neopatrimonial is an apt description. In Iran, however, the assembly spent a good deal of time arguing the merits of a modern state and the need for an independent executive, and much of its efforts were

¹⁷⁵ Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzbiki*, pp. 53, 66–67.

¹⁷⁶ Priem was the head of customs in the Azarbaijan province. Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzbiki*, pp. 41–43, 133–139.

¹⁷⁷ Destre, *Mustakhdimin-i Bilzbiki*, pp. 78–82, 101–102.

diverted toward reforming a patrimonial monarchy in which there was no meaningful distinction between the government executive and the shah, his court, and his household. The modernist reforms of the nineteenth century, despite efforts to this end, failed to create institutional differentiation between the monarchy and the executive; the two remained fused and indistinguishable. Attention to this difference is essential for appreciating the dynamics of the constitutional movement in Iran and the Young Turk revolution.

In Iran, the earnest call for reform came after defeats in the early nineteenth century wars with Russia (1805–1813, 1826–1828) and their costly indemnities, unfavorable trade agreements, and lost territories.¹⁷⁸ The chosen name for this first series of military reforms was *Nizam-i Jadid* or the New Order, revealing an affinity with the first Ottoman military reforms under Sultan Selim III, which had also come after Russian defeat. They were even more short-lived than the latter and were abandoned in 1834.¹⁷⁹

Interest in reform was renewed with the ascendancy of Nasir al-Din Shah (1848–1896), first during the administrations of two grand viziers, Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir (1848–1851) and Mirza Aqa Khan Nuri (1851–1858), and again in the 1870s under Mirza Husayn Khan Mushir al-Dawlah (Sipahsalar). These were under the influence of Ottoman and Russian reforms, aimed at centralization and curbing the power of independent domains such as that of the clerics, the local magnates, or tribes. They also strove for the creation of an independent executive and bureaucratic administration, the introduction of European-inspired laws, and the integration of the public in managing affairs. Yet, the reforms not only fell short of Iran's neighbors on all counts, but also did not come remotely close to the reformers' vision.

The most consistent theme during Amir Kabir was reducing clerical influence by bolstering the state courts (*urfi*) over the religious *shari`ah* courts, increasing the influence of the center in judicial appointments, adjudicating disputes involving minorities in Tehran, and ending the practice of taking sanctuary.¹⁸⁰ Although the results were unimpressive, the confrontation set a precedent for disputes between the state and religion later in the century. With Nuri's accession, the only significant attempt was the introduction of the Ottoman Tanzimat-inspired (and hence European) codes of laws guaranteeing the security of life and property for the public, though these were never put into practice.¹⁸¹

In 1858 with Nuri gone, the shah ordered the creation of six ministries and an advisory/consultative council resembling a cabinet. The advisory council called the Consultative Assembly of the State (*majlis-i shura-yi dawlati*) was composed of

¹⁷⁸ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864–1914: A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968); Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe* pp. 15–16.

¹⁷⁹ Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir*, pp. 162, 281; Shaul Bakhash, *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars: 1858–1896* (London: Ithaca Press, 1978), p. 1; Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 17–18.

¹⁸⁰ There were additional administrative, educational and military dimensions to Amir Kabir's reforms. Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir*; Bakhash, *Iran*, pp. 83–84; Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 22–27; Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 18–21.

¹⁸¹ Bakhash, *Iran*, p. 84.

the six ministers and five leading officials and princes.¹⁸² A second advisory council established in 1859 and named House of Reform (*maslahat-khanah*), was less weighty, and with the exception of a few high-ranking officials it drew its twenty-five members from mid-level court and government officials and even included clerics and writers.¹⁸³ This council was sometimes also referred to as the *mashvarat-khanah-i`ammah-i dawlati*, roughly translated as the Governmental Public House of Consultation, or more simply as *majlis-i mashvarat-khanah*, Consultative Assembly.¹⁸⁴ This was significant because at the time *mashvarat-khanah* was one of the designations used for foreign parliaments¹⁸⁵ and it appears that the shah and his advisors had intended to create an institution with broader representation.¹⁸⁶ Both advisory bodies were abandoned shortly.

The formation of the second council may tell us something about the government's thinking when confronted with the demands for a constitutional government in 1906. The government attempted to appease opponents with an assembly that in many ways resembled the *maslahat-khanah* of 1859, an advisory council of reforms with broader representation and some legislative duties, but not a full-fledged legislative assembly. The ambivalent advisory/legislative character of *maslahat-khanah* was expressed in its statutes. The original regulations defined it as a purely deliberative body, while its supplemental statutes (*qanun-i bar mashvarat-i majlis*) gave it some legislative duties: its chairman, after approval of a legislative bill by the majority, had the right to submit it directly to the shah for ratification, after which it became the law of the land.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² The head of this council was Ja'far Khan Mushir al-Dawlah; who seems to have suggested its establishment to the shah. Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 91–92. Mustawfi calls this the first cabinet of ministers in Iran (Abdullah Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol. I, p. 119). Adamiyat and Nashat, with greater reservation, agree with this assessment. Adamiyat points out the later transformation of this council into a legislative body as well. The laws written in *maslahat-khanah* (see below) were forwarded to *shawra-yi dawlati* for approval. Also, two ministers were shortly added to the above six. Adamiyat, *Andishah*, pp. 53–57; Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁸³ The council was to meet every day and discuss "important civil and military matters, the ordering of affairs, the welfare of the subjects, the development of the kingdom and the progress of the state." Barred from discussing foreign policy, its members were to address issues concerning the improvement of the state, economics, education, and justice. Similar councils were to be established in the provinces. Isa Khan 'Itimad al-Dawlah headed this council. Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 91–92; Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol I, p. 126; Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁸⁴ Adamiyat notes a contradiction in its title: "If the assembly belonged to the state, then it was not public, and if it was public, then it could not have belonged to the state." Yet he qualifies this by pointing out that despite appointment of all members by the state, the public was allowed to submit proposals for reform, and the assembly was required to discuss them. Adamiyat, *Andishah*, p. 57; Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, p. 189. Nashat has rendered this council as "General Advisory Council of the State." Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁸⁵ Adamiyat, *Andishah*, p. 57.

¹⁸⁶ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, p. 189.

¹⁸⁷ The original protocol had called for submission of proposals to the *majlis-i shawra-yi dawlati* rather than directly to the shah. It is also worth mentioning that the internal regulations approved for the Assembly in 1906 bore some resemblance to the supplement regulations of 1859 for *maslahat-khanah*.

It appears the government had thus intended to separate the executive and the legislature to some degree.¹⁸⁸ Yet *maslahat-khanah* was clearly set apart from a parliament in that its members were chosen by the shah and despite going beyond elite bureaucrats did not have national representation. Furthermore, it was entirely subservient to the ruler. Finally, when the supplement recommended establishing similar bodies in provinces, it reinforced *maslahat-khanah's* role as deliberative councils for suggesting reforms.¹⁸⁹

An interesting incident during the short life of *maslahat-khanah* was a member's proposal to broaden its responsibilities. In keeping with tradition, he suggested the election of provincial ombudsmen (*vakil al-ru'aya*) based on popular vote without meddling by governors. These were to reside in the capital (*darbkhana*) and attend to the concerns and grievances of their constituents by communicating them to the center (*divankhana*) and *maslahat-khanah*. Furthermore, a chief ombudsman, chosen from government officials, was to support the provincial ombudsmen and to convey their petitions (*ara'iz*) to relevant authorities.¹⁹⁰ This was certainly an example of negotiation between local and imported traditions, and it was relevant to understanding the negotiation over the meaning and functions of the Assembly after 1906.

In 1871, Husayn Khan urged the shah to create a consultative council modeled after the European-inspired councils in the Ottoman Empire. The new *dar al-shura-yi kubra* (the Great Consultative Assembly), composed of first-rank princes, a few ministers, and high-ranking bureaucrats, had purely consultative duties and communicated with the shah on a strictly informal manner on subjects such as provincial appointments and tax collection.¹⁹¹ On November 1871, Husayn Khan was promoted to the grand vizierate. He was endowed with great responsibilities and powers and with a new title, *Sipahsalar*, that emphasized his role in military affairs,¹⁹² even though his greatest achievements would be in other spheres.¹⁹³ One of these was the creation of the cabinet of ministers or *darbar-i a'zam*. The tone of the decree, issued for the occasion immediately prior to the shah's departure for Europe (signed on 23 October 1872/20 Sha'ban 1289),¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 190–195.

¹⁸⁹ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 189, 209–211.

¹⁹⁰ Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 211–212. Once again the government on 1 August 1906 (10 Jumada II, 1324), in one of its earliest concessions to the constitutionalists who were demanding an assembly, conceded to the establishment of a Houses of Justice with branches in the provinces, an organizational structure whose idea was suggested by the above bureaucrat in 1859–1860.

¹⁹¹ Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 93–94; Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol I, pp. 151–152.

¹⁹² Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol.I, p. 156; Bakhsh, *Iran*, p. 95.

¹⁹³ For the military and financial reforms, see Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol.I, p. 159; Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 98–104. Both Bakhsh and Mustawfi believe that the improvement in finances were very limited, and rather than introducing new methods, merely reinforced the traditional practices. Bakhsh, with the exception of the Cossack Brigade, holds a more pessimistic view of the military reforms as well.

¹⁹⁴ Historians have presented conflicting dates for this decree. The above agrees with the date presented by Mustawfi and Adamiyat, conflicts slightly with Bakhsh and to a greater extent with that provided by Nashat.

suggested it was partly meant for presentation to a European audience: the shah could now boast that Iran, like all civilized nations, had a cabinet. Of interest was also the decree's reference to the "nation" as a sovereign body, the first of its kind in an official context. The establishment of this cabinet, stated the decree, would make the Iranian nation forever grateful to its monarch.¹⁹⁵

This was the most serious attempt to date at the creation of a modern executive branch, with the division of the state into nine distinct ministries with clearly specified duties, the introduction of a cabinet with unity of purpose under the grand vizier, and the curbing of the shah's powers on legal grounds. It was the grand vizier-prime minister who was now referred to as the highest-ranking member of government (*shakhs-i avval-i dawlat*) and as an intermediary between the ministers and the shah. The prime minister was appointed and dismissed by the shah, but he was responsible for selecting and dismissing ministers, subject to the shah's approval. He was responsible to the shah and the ministers in turn were responsible to him.¹⁹⁶ It was called *darbar-i a'zam*, and *majlis-i mashvarat-i vuzara* (consultative assembly of the ministers), or the "council of ministers, which the Europeans call the cabinet."¹⁹⁷ Several other consultative bodies were revived or created afterward and lengthy regulations issued,¹⁹⁸ yet at the end these amounted to superficial changes.¹⁹⁹

In 1874 the state introduced an ambitious program under the title Tanzimat to regulate provincial tax collection, decrease the power of governors and their abuse of the local population, bring order into provincial administration by making it more uniform, and increase center's presence over provincial affairs. The provincial Tanzimat councils, established in all major provincial centers, were to assist the state in accomplishing these tasks. Like the similarly named measure in the Ottoman Empire, it was principally an ambitious centralizing endeavor. It achieved little of value and was abandoned in less than two years. Tanzimat was resisted mainly by governors who did not welcome the center's intrusion and the clergy who feared its greater role in the judiciary.²⁰⁰

In the area of educational reforms, recent research clearly shows major differences between the Iranians and the Ottomans. The Hamidian state had made state-sponsored education a chief priority. This was partly in conformity with

¹⁹⁵ Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol. I, pp. 163–164.

¹⁹⁶ Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol. I, pp. 164–166. Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 96–98. See also Adamiyat, *Andishah-i Taraqqi*, pp. 196–214 and Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 78–88.

¹⁹⁷ Mustawfi, *Tarikh-i Ijtima'i*, Vol. I, p. 166. The content of the decree was greatly impressed by Malkum's *Kitabchah-i Qaybi* (see below). Although, as Bakhsh notes, Husayn Khan placed much greater emphasis on the powers of the Prime Minister than Malkum. Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 97–98. In time, both documents left their imprint on the Supplement to the constitution of 1907.

¹⁹⁸ Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 152–165; Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 106–107.

¹⁹⁹ Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 443–50.

²⁰⁰ For the text of the Tanzimat code, see *Avvalin Qavanin*, pp. 155–174; Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 166–170; Adamiyat, *Andishah-i Taraqqi*, pp. 217–227; Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 52–53, 104. The text had made no explicit mention of *shari'ah* courts, and the clerics were understandably concerned.

the inertia of Tanzimat reforms, but was also fueled by the unique challenges provided by foreign, missionary, and *millet* schools in the multiethnic empire. State schools were supported as part of the struggle for the “hearts and minds” of the empire’s youth, and they were supported by the religious establishment when the schools became increasingly Islamic in response to that challenge.²⁰¹ In Iran some modern schools were created outside the clerical purview between 1870 and 1906, but their numbers were meager by comparison. This was because the state failed to sponsor education and modern schools were initiated almost entirely by private individuals with minimal state support. Another difference between the Ottomans and Iranians was that the clerical establishment, not facing the same kind of competition among schools as the Ottoman clerics, held a generally negative attitude toward educational reforms. Although some modern schools were supported or even established by the clerics, these were the same individuals active in the constitutional movement.²⁰² Without state sponsorship, mass literacy remained an unattainable ideal, which was translated into the weakness of the modern middle class in Iran.

The reform movement had also introduced a level of semantic ambiguity that is worth considering for its critical impact on the constitutional movement. The language of government decrees, the press, and reformist writings introduced a new vocabulary and led to a shift in the meaning of traditional concepts. In this regard, I find Ayalon’s²⁰³ treatment of the Arab political discourse pertinent to Iran. But while he considers ambiguity debilitating for the reformist cause, I find it in fact empowering and a critical resource exploited by the constitutionalists.

When importing institutions from abroad, the reformers named them with old appellations despite their potential (or actual) new, expanded, and unprecedented responsibilities. The benefit was continuity with tradition, but the risk was reduction to traditional functions and uncertainties about their role. The potential for semantic confusion increased when statesmen and the press sometimes referred to the organizations, councils and parliaments in the West, and their Western-inspired corollaries at home, by the same name although they were not to have the same responsibilities, composition, or functions. The concepts that stood out throughout the nineteenth century were *shura*

²⁰¹ Fortna, *Imperial Classroom*.

²⁰² For small numbers of these, see Monica M. Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2001), pp. 178–185. The numbers provided by Ringer are admittedly incomplete. Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, an individual personally involved with new schools, gives a list of forty-nine new schools in Tehran alone (without Dar al-Funun), only four of which can be distinctly recognized as foreign or minority schools. He also points to the incompleteness of the list as additional schools were established during the reign of Muzaffar al-Din shah (1890–1906) in Tehran and Azarbaijan, Isfahan, Yazd, Kirman, Mashad, Hamadan, Kirmanshahan, Shiraz, Bushihr, and Rasht. Nonetheless, the point remains that the schools were private, marginally funded by the state, and paled in comparison with the similar efforts under Abdülhamid in the Ottoman Empire, where the middle class emerged in far larger numbers. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 653–655.

²⁰³ Ayalon, *Language and Change*.

(consultation, with its various derivations), *majlis* (assembly), *divan* (council, tribunal), *khanah* (house, department), and *nizamnamah* (administrative charter), the most commonly used terms for referring to various governmental bodies, functions, and regulations, either domestic or foreign.²⁰⁴ In the process, the less loaded words, such as *majlis*, were winning out against traditional concepts, such as *divan* or *khanah*, that carried with them the weight of the past, and hence limitations.²⁰⁵ Thus, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, when *majlis* appeared in the title of a newly formed body, one would know that it was a permanent council, European-inspired and consultative in function, with members appointed directly by the ruler or chosen in a more representative fashion through indirect elections. When *majlis* was invoked in reference to institutions in the West (Europe or America), it could be part of the appellation of any of the state councils, or more significantly, it could appear as part of the title of foreign parliaments.

The reformers also used the historically significant and less free-floating word *shura* (and its various derivations) in conjunction with or in isolation from *majlis* to refer to foreign deliberative councils or parliaments. It was a weighty concept for the reformists, constitutionalists in particular, and we have seen its centrality already. When the reformers created European-inspired deliberative councils, they frequently used the term *shura* to gain traditional legitimacy. A cursory observation of the official newspaper in Iran shows that the term *shura* (and its derivations, e.g., *mashvarat*) was indeed used to refer both to a foreign parliament (e.g., the British parliament), and to an official gathering or meeting of high state officials in the local setting.²⁰⁶ “*Shura* thus . . . meant one thing when used in a local context; it meant quite another when applied to institutions abroad.”²⁰⁷ Furthermore, it was frequently used in conjunction with *majlis*. Although its use in the local context signified its consultative and deliberative responsibilities, it could not be anything but subservient to the ruler.

The ambiguity surrounding these words and around *milli* (national or religious community), and *musavat* (equality) came to play a decisive role during the negotiations with the government over the granting of the constitutional assembly. The ambiguities proved to be decisive in reaching a compromise to open the door for institution-building and garnering support for the constitutionalists.

²⁰⁴ *Khanah* was a term used by Iranian and Ottoman states, but apparently not in the Arab lands.

²⁰⁵ The latter were especially inappropriate for representative and sovereign institutions, such as the British Parliament or the French Chamber of Deputies. Ayalon, *Language and Change*, pp. 111–113.

²⁰⁶ The word *shura* and its derivatives were used alone as well as in compounds (e.g., *mashvarat-khanah* or *majlis-i mashvarat* or simply *shura*). For two different usages of *shura*, see *Iran*, No. 208, 10 February 1873/25 Dhu Hijja 1290, p. 2; *Iran*, No. 212, 17 March 1874/28 Muharram 1291, p. 2. The latter gave *shura* as translation for *majlis-i parlman* or parliament. See also Adamiyat, *Andishah* p. 57 for another usage.

²⁰⁷ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, p. 121.

THE PATRIMONIALISM OF QAJAR STATE AND ITS PROBLEMS

The extreme financial burden on the Qajar administration is agreed upon by almost all accounts of the nineteenth century. And although the Iranian and the Ottoman states were both experiencing financial crisis, in Iran, the negative effects on the internal administration were more evident.

Perhaps it is fitting to start the discussion of the administration's problems with the already considered tract of Majd al-Mulk. Reflecting on the problems prevalent in the 1870, Majd al-Mulk complained of state decentralization, the extent of governors' power, and the governors' ability to retain a large part of the tax revenue raised in the name of *tafavut-i `amal*. Also criticized was the center's open sale of offices to the highest bidder, which sometimes ended in granting a single individual half the taxes of a province or several conflicting titles and duties, and the prevalence of corruption among the exceedingly large number of state accountants (*mustawfi*). We are also told that the wealthy owners of the best lands exempted their properties from taxes by paying bribes and gifts, prompting the governors to shift the burden of the land taxes they did not collect to those least capable of paying them.²⁰⁸

Research on this period, especially that pertaining to the last decades of Nasir al-Din Shah's reign (1880 to 1890s), depicts an even gloomier scene. In these years we hear only of injustice, corruption, disorder, the center's loss of authority, the court's extravagance, the sale of offices, and the farming out of important state departments (e.g., mint and customs), insecurity of office and the tendency to maximize gain while in office in the shortest possible time, plurality of office, rivalry of high officials, emergence of independent domains within the bureaucracy, and the breakdown of finances and chronic deficit. These are well documented by others and we do not need to dwell on them here.²⁰⁹ The reign of Muzaffar al-Din Shah (1896–1907) has not aroused nearly the same interest as that of his overpowering father Nasir al-Din (1848–1896), yet what does exist shows the continuation of the same patterns: failure of reforms and worsening financial conditions, with few exceptions.²¹⁰

The relation of these problems with Qajar patrimonialism has been most systematically explored by Sheikholeslami. The Qajar government was an extension of the shah's household; indeed it was hardly possible to separate the central bureaucracy from the household. The governorships were given for the most

²⁰⁸ Majd al-Mulk, *Risalah-i Majdiyab*, pp. 28–33.

²⁰⁹ Bakhash, *Iran*, pp. 261–280; Charles Issawi, *Economic History of Iran, 1800–1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 335–370; Nikkie R. Keddie, "The Economic History of Iran, 1800–1914, and Its Political Impact" in *Religion, Politics and Society* (1980); Said Amir Arjomand, *Turban for the Crown: The Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 21–23. For the earlier period see Ann K. S. Lambton, "Persia: The Breakdown of Society," in *Cambridge History of Islam*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 430–467; Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir*, pp. 197–198, 228–229, 261–272.

²¹⁰ Shaul Bakhash, "The Failure of Reform: the Prime Ministership of Amin al-Dawla, 1897–1898," in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social and Cultural Change 1800–1925*, eds. E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), pp. 14–33.

part to the closest of kin, sons and princes in particular, and although some ministerial positions, like the military, were regularly reserved for them, these were for the most part allotted to other members of the household.²¹¹ The bureaucrats served as household servants, without clearly defined responsibilities, limits, or jurisdiction of office. Public offices were in fact considered the shah's property which he allotted, and in times of financial crisis late in the nineteenth century, these were put up for sale on a large scale to the highest bidder. The winning bidders in turn treated the offices as property and a means of revenue, which could be farmed out several times over to other bidders, raising the burden on taxpayers.²¹² The treatment of offices as the shah's property implied that the shah had the power to confiscate them, yet many high offices did tend to become the private property of their holders; they were passed down to their sons in case of death or promotion, sometimes resulting in very young high office holders.²¹³ The Hamidian neopatrimonialism did share some Qajar administrative characteristics worthy of criticism, such as the free allocation of medals and titles to the point of devaluing them, the necessity of establishing patronage ties through individuals close to the monarch, the presence of very young people in high ranks of the army or administration, and factional rivalry, plots, and intrigue.²¹⁴ Yet not only were the most serious of these problems (e.g., the sale of offices) absent in the Ottoman administration, but in Iran the similar-sounding issues were of a far more generalized nature; they were part and parcel of an unreformed patrimonialism in times of financial crisis that was worsening because of global pressures. Furthermore, even the traditional patrimonialism of the Ottoman state differed in one major respect from that of the Qajars, which spoke to the centralized and decentralized nature of each. In the Ottoman Empire, the center consistently attempted to avoid alliances with powerful elements, to preserve its autonomy to the extent possible. The Janissary Corps – the elite military force whose members were “reconstructed” from childhood with new identities – and the raising of armies that had minimal alliances with powerful local forces are legendary in the Ottoman Empire.²¹⁵ But so was the matrimonial strategy of the Ottomans, which left the limited number of elite women (at most four) who were sultan's wives childless and bestowed succession on the children of concubines to avoid attachment and obligation on the part of the center.²¹⁶ This was a glaring contrast to Qajar patrimonialism, which concentrated its military and matrimonial strategies

²¹¹ Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 100–104.

²¹² Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 98–100, 114, 139–143, 155.

²¹³ Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 148–154.

²¹⁴ Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 94, 118; Amanat, *Pivot of Universe* (see in particular pp. 134–138). In some ways, Amanat's entire book is structured around the issue of factional rivalry.

²¹⁵ Rhoads Murphy, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999).

²¹⁶ Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

exclusively toward building larger and larger alliances with powerful peripheral forces for the sake of creating stability and an inbred nobility.²¹⁷ These differences of the pre-reform era had important consequences later on, leaving the structure of the Iranian state far more decentralized and resistant to centralizing reform efforts, which in turn affected the course of revolution.

LATER MILITARY REFORMS

Perhaps the most significant change within the Iranian army in the decades before the revolution was the creation of the Cossack Brigade in 1873, a small modernized sector that came to play a critical role during the revolution and beyond. Before considering other changes, it is appropriate to begin with a critical tract on the despicable conditions prevailing in the army in the 1870s, showing the close affinity with the problems in the civilian administration.²¹⁸

In a manner typical of the critical reformist literature, the author began with decline, searched for reasons, and highlighted the orderly and law-governed European states (*duval-i munazzamah*). He criticized the military leaders who paid the army irregularly or insufficiently so as to enrich themselves, the governors who viewed the army as a source of income and sold for personal gain the military hardware allocated from the center, those who drew regular pay for their hereditary titles or because they were connected to statesmen, without providing military service, and others who received bribes and gifts. The author also complained of deductions from soldiers' half-pay made under various pretexts that forced other jobs on them at the same time, or their haphazard assignments, with some regularly appointed to distant locations for long durations, in contrast to others who stayed put for long stretches of time. Moreover, the existing regulations for rewards and sanctions went entirely unenforced; some commanders' servants and cooks received medals while the deserving with a record of sacrifice were deprived. Also, the prevalence of corruption and disorderliness at the borders, the author related, made the military especially vulnerable in strategic locations.

There are no indications of military improvements of any sort beyond this date. Even the most ambitious of all reformers, such as Prime Minister Husayn Khan, whose title *Sipahsalar* emphasized his special role in the military, could not bring about any transformation of lasting significance. With the exception of the Cossack Brigade, his military reforms fell into established patterns, consisting of an attempt (with questionable success) "to prevent speculation of pay and rations, to assert central control over army finances, to end nepotism, and to improve the quality of the army by the appointment of capable officers, the employment of foreign instructors and the purchase of more modern

²¹⁷ Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, p. 20.

²¹⁸ This critical pamphlet written on 1870/1871 (1287) by the modernist bureaucrat, Dabir al-Mulk, appears in full in Adamiyat and Natiq, *Asar-i Muntashir Nashudab*, pp. 417-448.

weapons.”²¹⁹ As Bakhsh notes, under *Sipahsalar* “[t]he army continued to be composed, as it had traditionally been under the Qajars.”²²⁰ The years 1880 to 1907 do not record any major changes in the army, which, according to Tousi, was divided into “i) the regular infantry; ii) the tribal levies, chiefly mounted; and iii) the artillery, or rather men enlisted as gunners. In addition, there was the Cossack Brigade.”²²¹ Thus, a substantial portion of the Iranian army, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, still consisted of tribal levies. The tribes composed the army’s entire irregular cavalry, serving under their own commanders, providing their own arms and equipment, and with a few minor exceptions, serving in their own districts. In addition, they provided a small part of the infantry which enlisted men under the *bunichah* recruiting system. An 1899 survey shows that the weapons held by tribes were of higher quality than, and twice as many as, those held by the infantry. Thus, in terms of fighting capability, the tribes’ better training and equipment made them “superior to the regular infantry.”²²² The British military attaché reported in 1907 that the tribal sectors had managed to maintain themselves on the same levels as before while the nontribal portion had in the last few years drastically declined. The deterioration was attributed to the absence of training, and especially to the lack of funds and corruption that accompanied times of hardship.²²³ The existence of the tribal/nontribal cleavage, and the presence of a substantial tribal sector with primary allegiance to tribal leadership, opened the way for the breakup of the armed forces during the revolution.

The problems that were recounted by Dabir al-Mulk in the 1870s persisted afterward. The army’s pay was constantly in arrears, salaries were for the most part low and paid at irregular intervals, and corruption was pervasive. Yet the shortage of funds for the regular personnel did not prevent the payment of large sums to many who held military rank without connection to the army or providing any service. Promotions could be, and in most cases had to be, bought by payment to the minister of war – and even to the shah himself. Lack of funds forced soldiers to take up other employment while in service, and it adversely affected their equipment and training.²²⁴ Bakhsh notes that in the 1890s, despite the military’s reduced circumstances, its yearly budget could drain half the entire state budget. The larger portion, however, was soaked up by the

²¹⁹ Bakhsh, *Iran*, p. 100.

²²⁰ This consisted “of a permanent royal guard, an irregular cavalry based on tribal levies, an irregular infantry militia raised and supported locally by each district and a semi-regular army of infantry, cavalry and artillery which constituted the bulk of the defense forces.” Bakhsh, *Iran*, p. 100. For the negligible results of military reforms under Mushir al-Dawlah, see also Nashat, *Modern Reform*, pp. 68–70.

²²¹ Reza Ra’iss Tousi, “The Persian Army, 1880–1907,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April 1988), pp. 206–229.

²²² Tousi, “Persian Army,” pp. 212–217, quote from 217.

²²³ Tousi, “Persian Army,” p. 207.

²²⁴ Bakhsh, *Iran*, pp. 276–277; Tousi, “Persian Army,” pp. 207–209, 213–215, 218–219.

notorious Kamran Mirza, head of the military and the shah's son, and the string of officials in charge of finances.²²⁵

It was mentioned earlier that infantry recruitment was done under the *bunichab* system, under which "each village, district or tribe was obliged to provide recruits in proportion to its revenue assessment." Not unlike the tax assessments, a major problem with this system was that the last survey, carried out in 1842, was badly outdated.²²⁶

The passage of a law early in 1877 (Muharram 1294), specified the duties and rights of the military commanders, the lines of conduct between provincial rulers and military commanders, and stipulated the subservience of the military to the civil administration.²²⁷ However, like other legal regulations, it was ignored. As Tousi remarks, "there was no clear demarcation line between the range of powers and responsibilities of the civilian authorities and those of the military command. Thus, the powers of the War Ministry were 'variable and undefined.'"²²⁸ At issue was not the lack of military deference to the civilian administration, but more often the reverse; the absence of clear lines of conduct relegated critical military decision to the civilian non-experts.²²⁹

The Cossack Brigade, created and commanded with the help of Russian officers, was the army's best fighting force, superior to other troops in training, equipment, and discipline. Yet its small numbers – 1,500 in all – did not make it more than an efficient instrument for guarding Tehran. Furthermore, even this prestigious division was not immune to the financial problems that plagued other sectors. Its pay during the critical years of 1905–1906 was low and in arrears during the financial crisis of 1906.²³⁰

THE RUSSIAN IMPACT

The revolution in Russia in 1905 was critical for Iran. In the absence of a cohesive revolutionary party and a vanguard, the events in Russia in 1905 played an inordinate role in placing revolution on the agenda. No contemporary commentator of Iranian events failed to take note of that revolution.²³¹ As Spector writes, "Of all Asian countries, the one which felt the most direct and immediate impact of the Russian Revolution of 1905 was Iran (Persia). Long-established educational contacts had drawn an appreciable number of Iranian students to Russian universities. Traditionally close economic ties between Russia and Iran stemmed in part from business contacts between Iranian and

²²⁵ Bakhsh, *Iran*, p. 276.

²²⁶ Tousi, "Persian Army," p. 209; Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 175–180.

²²⁷ Adamiyat, *Andishah-yi Taraqqi*, p. 226.

²²⁸ Tousi, "Persian Army," p. 207. ²²⁹ Tousi, "Persian Army," p. 207.

²³⁰ Tousi, "Persian Army," pp. 219–226. For the circumstances that led to its creation, see Firooz Kazemzadeh, "The Origin and Early Development of the Persian Cossack Brigade," *American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 15, No. 3, October 1956, pp. 351–363.

²³¹ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 120; Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 37–38; Bayat, *First Revolution*, p. 142.

Russian merchants. Even more important was the large Iranian labor force of migrant workers employed in the Trans-caucasus, especially at the oil centers of Baku and Grozny, as well as at factories in Tiflis (Tbilisi), Erivan, Vladikavkaz, Novorossiisk, Derbent, and Temir-Khan-Shuro. These conditions contributed to the rapid dissemination in Iran of news and views of the revolution.”²³² That Baku was one of the most active centers of the 1905 revolution in Russia added to that influence. The material impact of the Russian revolution came in the form of the migratory laborers and the organizations created in Russia among Iranians, Russians, Azaris, and Armenians, printed material, weapons, and tactics, to name a few²³³— all of which played a crucial role in Iran. But such material impacts came after the confrontations that led to the grant of the constitution in the summer of 1906. At the beginning of this movement, it was more the idea of Russia as an example of constitutional revolution among the intelligentsia, rather than its material presence, that played a role at the fateful gathering at the British Legation in the summer of 1906. What strengthened their conviction was the impact of the Russo-Japanese war, which was imagined, talked about, and written about very much along the same lines as the Young Turks. The Japanese defeat of Russia proved that a constitution was a source of strength.²³⁴ 1905 Russia expanded the realm of possibilities; more than ever before, a constitutional revolution in Iran became imaginable.

²³² Spector, *The First Russian Revolution*, p. 38.

²³³ Spector, *The First Russian Revolution*, p. 39.

²³⁴ Haag-Higuchi, “Japan in Some Twentieth-Century Iranian Texts,” and Pistor-Hatam, “Progress and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Japan.”

The Less Likely Revolution

The Constitutional Revolution of 1906 in Iran in Light of the Young Turks

Early in August 1906, after a series of popular confrontations with the government, the shah of Iran issued a decree that was widely interpreted as conceding a constitutional administration. In place of alleviating tensions, however, the constitutional concession managed only to heighten them, as it had in the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and France. Unlike the revolution's largely bloodless beginning, the ensuing twenty-three months witnessed contentious fights over the functions, responsibilities, and powers of the new institution. These tensions culminated in a bloody counterrevolution that lasted a year and ended with the victory of the constitutionalists and a new monarch on the throne.

The Iranian revolution is examined here at the global, regional, and local layers, within an explicitly comparative context. The conflict's framing under the constitution ushered in a political culture and institutions that were globally recognizable. These included a legislative assembly, national elections, a written constitution, confrontations between the monarch and the "nation" over the locus of sovereignty, creation of distinct legislative and executive spheres regulated by the constitution, ministerial accountability and demarcation of authority, interpellations, and the fall of ministers and cabinets. Evident also was the growth of the public sphere, chiefly with a proliferation of associations and the explosive growth of the press. The Iranian constitutionalists, like their Young Turk counterparts, did not have on their agenda the takeover of the executive or overthrow of the monarchy; they sought instead to radically reorganize the political structure and culture by subduing the traditional centers of power with the aid of the legislature, and to use the legislature as a platform for extensive reformist measures.

The Iranian intelligentsia, like its Ottoman counterpart, had Islamicized constitutionalism to bring legitimacy to the movement and had also made a successful association between constitutionalism and strength. Although both movements attracted clerics, the consequence of their participation was not the

same. In the less institutionalized Iranian setting, the clerics were not only made into allies, but they also came to serve as the chief organizers of opposition.

The institutional independence of high-ranking clerics in Iran complicated matters. If clerics were concerned about saving Iran and Islam from colonial rule, as stated in the [previous chapter](#), their understanding of constitutionalism was at odds with that of the intelligentsia. The clerics imagined themselves as future leaders in a constitutional administration; the disingenuous reformists' writings had conveyed that impression. Furthermore, their primary understanding of constitutionalism was the placing of limits on the transgressions of officials. This was a theme dear to the reformists as well and their exaltation of laws as a way to counter official abuse was of great appeal to clerics. Yet the discourse of legality for the constitutionalists was a call for a state-centered secular legal structure and legal-rational reform of state institutions. Their ideal of progress was invariably tied to the modern state, which they sought to use to promote political, social, and economic agendas. They were as statist as the Young Turks, and called for more, not less, state involvement in citizens' lives with "modern" methods.¹ Much evidence suggests that the clerics did not share this understanding. Their interest was in limiting the powers of the state and monarch and extending their own by offering public protection and bolstering religious laws. Finally, their ideal of strength was bound up with age-old notions of prosperity and flourishing (*abadi, abadani*) that were natural byproducts of justice and security. These varied from the statist notions of constitutionalism and progress. The rhetorical overlap had likened the ideals but the distinctive viewpoints came into conflict as time went by.

Iran also experienced a counterrevolution dominated by religious rhetoric. Both were reactions to the reformist undertakings of the legislature. Like the Ottoman Chamber, the Assembly could not withstand the direct consequences of its own actions in the context of dual sovereignty and a lack of control over the executive. Opposition to reforms found ready allies among religious forces that felt a challenge to *shari'ah* from the Assembly's law-making activities (especially when it leant toward wholehearted adoption of European laws), were threatened by its approach to religious courts and schools, and were uneasy about its Western cultural orientation and values. Counterrevolution thus found its language in religious opposition and in this sense it followed closely the pattern in the Ottoman Empire. Yet the reforms at issue were different in each, the doctrinally based opposition was stronger in Iran, and the movement's popular mobilization was also broader.

The major reason for the differences between two revolutions was to be found in their state structures. Because of the minimally reformed, decentralized, patrimonial state structure in Iran, the challenge facing the constitutionalists was more daunting. Despite the blows to the Sublime Porte's prestige by a

¹ Few studies of constitutional movement have been attuned to this crucial, indeed central, concern of the statesmen and intelligentsia. Arjomand is an exception. *Turbran for the Crown*, pp. 35, 39–40, 48.

resurgent Palace under Abdülhamid, the Porte had continued to exist as a parallel institution and in the revolution's aftermath it was easily rejuvenated while the Palace was dismantled. During the reform era in Iran, however, a full-fledged independent executive had never materialized; the executive and the Qajar household could not be meaningfully separated. The legislative had thus the double burden of creating an executive before subduing it. When it confronted the cabinet and ministers, the legislature was dealing with individuals that were the shah's extension, responsible to him alone, with little independent authority.

The rudimentary reforms had also left Iranian society largely impervious to state penetration and hence not under its gaze. Modernity in the Ottoman empire had brought the destruction of Janissaries and popular religious orders, important channels for public mobilization against unpopular policies. In Iran, by contrast, the urban scene had not been disturbed greatly and initial public mobilization could take place through long-established networks, such as those of the clerics and the bazaar. As a result, the conflict in Iran drew from a far wider range of the public and was of a more popular nature than in the Ottoman Empire. Having framed constitutionalism in such a way as to broaden its appeal created more immediate complications in Iran. A broad range of actors joined together, despite different interests and wants, who looked to the constitution as a panacea. As differences began to surface in the revolution's wake, these coalitions broke down.

The Iranian legislature's strength was another difference. Political party formation took place earlier in the Ottoman Chamber, and most Ottoman deputies were members of a single, well-established political organization. Thanks to the empire's relatively strong middle class, the Ottoman Chamber could rely on extensive support from the civil and military ranks that belonged to the same party. The Ottoman Chamber was further assisted by a legal and well-organized political party that resorted to legal and extra-legal means when it wanted to achieve its aims.

The Iranian Assembly was less homogeneous and did not have unity of purpose. Its members were not organized around political parties connected to propaganda organs, although they could draw on the support of many newspapers. Most crucially, because of the weakness of the middle class, the Assembly had few supporters within the small Iranian army. Some well-known constitutionalists were in fact influential, high-ranking bureaucrats, and even part of the Qajar household, but their influence paled in comparison with the consistent support of an emerging class. The Assembly sustained itself with the help of popular committees and irregular militias that sprang up throughout Iran and were aided from the Caucasus – a spillover from 1905 Russia. Surprisingly, these groups were given official status as quasigovernmental institutions. Aligned with the Assembly, and under its supervision rather than that of the state, the groups were disorganized, independent, and militant, a reflection of their popular character. In the absence of outside bodies that could coordinate these committees, the Assembly became the heart of the

constitutional movement. A colorful, varied, boisterous, and at times militant institution, the Assembly was a far cry from the Ottoman Chamber and its seasoned deputy bureaucrats.

A final and not insignificant difference between the two was the role of the culture of kingship in Iran. In fact, a good part of popular, and even clerical, mobilization in support of the Assembly came from equating it with the House of Justice, an institution associated with the culture of kingship. The vitality of this political and cultural framework mobilized support for the Assembly by adding another layer of ambiguity to this institution. Initially, at least, the Assembly appeared to be an organic part of the traditional culture of politics; its sudden insertion into the political cultural scene destabilized and transformed the idea of monarchy.

I believe that the revolution in Iran was the product of a fateful contingency. It occurred when the clerics, the leaders of the popular uprising, moved their protest outside Tehran, creating an opportunity for the intelligentsia to rise to the movement's leadership and capture the center stage. They were then able to transform a widespread revolt against taxes and other abuses into a constitutional movement. Their preparations, numbers, and organizations were not comparable with those of the Young Turks. Iran's leap to constitutionalism was indeed sudden and unexpected, a transformation that could be appreciated only in a comparative light.

CONTINGENCY AND REVOLUTION

The unexpectedness of the Iranian revolution² can be appreciated in light of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Russian revolution of 1905. Considering the relatively small and disorganized Iranian modern middle class, it is astounding that the movement turned out the way it did. Inspiration from Russia, the invented tradition of the previous century, and the intelligentsia's agency were all crucial here. But none would have borne fruit had it not been for a chance-like development that placed the intelligentsia at the helm and turned this familiar-sounding revolt into an unfamiliar revolution. Its ascendance gave it an influence disproportionate to the small size, power, long-term planning and organization, of this emerging class.

Throughout the movement the three major strands of nineteenth-century political discourse continued to interact with one another. On the one hand stood the global, European language of statecraft and constitutionalism; on the other, the regionally recognizable fusion of the discourses of kingship and religion. What made the discourse ultimately local and peculiar to Iran were the singularity of the mixture of discourses and the greater weight given to some elements, such as the ideology of kingship. While the three discourses infused and inflected one another, they created a space rife with ambiguities and open to

² To avoid inconsistencies in dating, I have relied, to the extent possible, on Edward G. Browne's chronology in his *The Press and Poetry in Modern Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), pp. 312–336.

maneuvering. If initial demands called for creation of a House of Justice, the meaning was unstable; depending on the discourses within which it was articulated, “house of justice” could mean a full-fledged legislative body, an administrative-consultative council, a clearing house for grievances addressed to the monarch, or an institution that enforced Islamic justice under the tight supervision of clerics. The last three left open the possibility of some form of executive authority for the institution. In practice, the institution that prevailed was a combination of all three strands of politics, but interested actors attempted to impose their own definitions.

The War of Words

The incidents and exchanges that led to the inauguration of the constitutional system demonstrated a clash of opinion and lack of clarity about the meaning and functions of the new institutional framework.

Beginning in March and April 1905, a series of protests by the merchants and clerics against government injustices, and in particular against the Belgian director of customs, Naus, brought together two clerics who were to figure largely in later events. It was against this backdrop that a rather minor incident sparked large protests. On 11 December 1905, the Tehran governor `Ala' al-Dawlah had a group of merchants bastinadoed for charging high prices for sugar; the merchants blamed the high prices on the Russo-Japanese war and the drop in Russian supplies. The news of this injustice led to the shutdown of places of trade and in the next two days a large crowd swarmed the Shah mosque. The prominent clerics, some by choice and some by force, took part. When the government broke up the mosque gathering, the sanctuary relocated to the holier shrine of `Abdul`azim to the south of Tehran on the next day (13 December 1905). The incident, which in retrospect came to be known as the Lesser Exodus (*hijrat-i suqra*), mobilized “some two thousand [clerics], students and merchants, headed by Sayyid Muhammad Tabataba’i and Sayyid `Abdullah Bihbahani,” two of the most prominent ayatollahs. Comfortably sustained by prominent merchants for a month, the demonstration ended when the government agreed to demands.³

³ For early days of revolution I have relied heavily on eyewitness accounts. These are not free of problems and are filled with retrospective reevaluation. Nazim al-Islam, the most celebrated among these, insisted, for example, that despite appearances, from the inception the real conflict was between the protestors and the grand vizier, who had allegedly sanctioned the governor’s behavior and orchestrated the government response from behind the scene. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 331–358. The protests eventually did target the grand vizier, but this was more likely the unfolding of a cultural process rather than the result of the grand vizier’s direct involvement. The quotation is from Browne’s chronology *Press and Poetry*, p. 312. Sharif Kashani lists other sources of funds for those taking sanctuary such as prominent statesmen and prince Salar al-Dawlah who contributed 25,000 tumans. As events were to show later, much of this support was to exploit the tensions within the ruling dynasty. Muhammad Mahdi Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi`at-i Ittifaqiyah dar Ruzgar*, eds. M. Ettehadieh Nezam-Mafi and S. Sa`dvandiyani (Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran, 1983), p. 39.

These demands were limited in nature, articulated by the clerical leaders and communicated to the Ottoman embassy for delivery to the shah. The first three of the list of eight demands bordered on the trivial. Articles five through eight called for the impartial implementation of the laws of Islam, dismissal of Tehran's governor and of Naus, and the abolition of the 10 percent tax on government salaries and pensions. Most critical was the fourth clause, which called for the creation of a House of Justice (*`adalatkhanah*) in every town and region to investigate public complaints against injustice and grievances (*`ara'iz va tazallum*) and to adjudicate justly and impartially. If its meaning was stretched to signify a parliament, this was more an outcome of later circumstances than the original intention of its authors.⁴

According to an eyewitness, the term House of Justice (*`adalatkhanah*) was not part of the common parlance and until then had not been used formally or publicly.⁵ The idea, however, was hardly novel; it grew from the kingship discourse of politics and the ideals it embodied regarding a just government. Clearly, the demand was meant to revive an institution whose foundational ideas had a long history, even if such an institution had had less than an illustrious career. Its best known example in recent memory was the late nineteenth century Council of Grievances, a frequently used appellation for the House of Justice later in the movement. Furthermore, the reference to a justice-disseminating institution with branches in the provinces was quite reminiscent of the proposed ombudsman institution of the last century, and in keeping with the "mirrors" method of dispensing justice.⁶

If clerics were to form a good part of the membership of the House of Justice, then it was to be an institution in negotiation with, but somewhat different from, the state-centered Council of Grievances. Great confusion reigned over its meaning, but one thing was clear. The clerics had not aimed for a constitutional

⁴ For these demands see Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 358. The demand for House of Justice was repeated shortly in another context; see page 365. Dawlatabadi's less reliable account of demands is different from above both in content and chronology. In his memoirs, he records seven demands none of which contained the request for the establishment of House of Justice. But rather, he contends the demand for the "National Consultative Assembly" was included in the list after his personal intervention before their final submission to the Ottoman ambassador, the intermediary between the protestors and the shah. Thus, according to Dawlatabadi, the request for the Assembly was on the agenda from the first gathering at `Abdul`azim, which is highly unlikely. See Yahya Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II (Tehran: Intisharat-i `Attar, Intisharat-i Firdawsi), pp. 22–24. Nazim al-Islam was skeptical of Dawlatabadi's claim, even when he thought that Dawlatabadi was only claiming credit for the inclusion of House of Justice in the list of demands, let alone the "National Consultative Assembly." See Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 358–359.

⁵ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 359. A letter addressed to Bihbahani during the days of Lesser Exodus also uses the term. Sharif Kashani, *Ittifaqiyah*, pp. 34–35. For a contrasting view of the genealogy of the "house of justice," see Juan R. I. Cole, "Iranian Millenarianism and Democratic Thought in the nineteenth Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Feb., 1992), pp. 1–26.

⁶ See *previous chapter*, and the discussion of *maslahat-khanah* there, esp. p. 325.

assembly, but remained within the religious and local political notions of just rule.⁷

Immediately afterwards, the capital experienced a flurry of activities, ranging from routine shop closures and crowds gathering in the sanctuary to the more unusual sight of screaming and wailing women surrounding the shah's carriage to plead for the return of the clerics. Sometimes notes of intimidation were handed to the shah. A more effective method – put to frequent use – was disseminating “nightly letters” (*shabnamah*), anonymous leaflets so named for their time of distribution.⁸

The distinctly popular local discourse held the upper hand against the global constitutional one for some time. Some anonymous leaflets concerned themselves with justice, blamed troubles on the treacherous viziers, and portrayed the shah as a manipulated simpleton.⁹ Occasionally there were others, such as the daring notes, disguised as petitions, that were handed to the shah by a man and a woman. These addressed him in the name of the public – the public who had bequeathed to him the kingship regalia – and forewarned of the fate awaiting him when the public removed his scepter and crown.¹⁰ These two languages came to merge ever more closely in the course of the movement.

Fear of further escalation prompted negotiations, with the shah's representatives acceding to all demands. The clerics, who ended their month-long sanctuary on 12 January 1906, returned to the capital in the royal carriage, despite their initial reluctance to accept this honor.¹¹ The shah's decree demonstrated that the House of Justice had little to do with a legislative assembly, a body that was to be established throughout Iran and described to be of the highest priority for the subjects' comfort and the enforcement of religious laws.¹² The decree also conceded a greater role to the laws of religion in affairs of the realm. Yet, despite the decree's traditional-sounding content, an eyewitness reported that the huge crowds before which it was read had shouted, “long live the shah of Islam,” and “long live the nation of Iran,” adding that “this was the first time the cry of long live the Iranian nation was raised up to the heavens; up to this point the inhabitants of Iran had not dared to say so openly.”¹³

⁷ For a discussion of the Council of Grievances throughout Islamic history and from the vantage point of religion rather than of the state, see Hossein Modarressi Tabataba'i, “Divan-i Mazalim,” in *Farhang-i Iran Zamin*, Vol. 27 (Tehran) 1365/1986, pp. 98–118.

⁸ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 359–364. Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 40–45. For participation, societies, demands and overall activities of women, a neglected aspect of the constitutional movement, see Afary, *Grassroots, Democracy* pp. 177–208.

⁹ Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 40–45.

¹⁰ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 361. The critical reader may surmise how their content came to be known. Whether credible or not, the eyewitnesses expressed the emergence of a distinct outlook that anchored kingship in the public.

¹¹ Upon return, their conversations with the shah signaled their increased clout when the shah used the first person I in place of royal We, and avoided referring to clerics by the derogatory term *akhund*. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 363–364, 367–369. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 25.

¹² Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 366. Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, p. 46.

¹³ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 364.

For the next six months no discernible signs of the government's intention to act as promised emerged. Meanwhile, anonymous leaflets blasted authorities and pressed the clerics to take a more activist stance; on occasion the leaflets accused clerics of having been silenced with bribes, prompting public denials.¹⁴ In the mixed language of politics the leaflets spoke of a victimized shah, sprinkled with rare attacks on his person:

Perhaps His Highness, the king of Islam, is incognizant of the extent to which his glory and power would increase if he stopped these traitor bloodsucking whimsical ministers from tyrannical expropriation of the nation and state, and if he placed some limits on them. Today, the shah believes that he is the king, when all spiritual royal dignities have been robbed by the traitor ministers. In fact today the shah is a face whose spirit has been stolen by treason and a skin whose brain has been eaten by trickery.¹⁵

The disturbances were renewed on 21 June 1906 when, in the course of freeing a popular preacher, scores were left dead,¹⁶ including two *sayyids* (presumed descendants of the Prophet). This prompted a retreat to sanctuary at the Jami` mosque in the next few days, to which the government responded with a troop blockade that cut off food, water, and supplies.

The harsh response provoked the clerics to take sanctuary in Qum at one of the holiest Shi`i sites on 15 July 1906. Known as the Greater Exodus (*hijrat-i kubra*), the move clearly marked an escalation of affairs.¹⁷ It also set in motion the contingency that ended in revolution. Along with the prominent clerics led by Tabataba'i, Bihbahani, and Nuri (who was to join later), a mass of 100,000 protestors was reported to have left the capital on foot some ninety miles to the south.

That the clerics were simply concerned with justice and the redress of grievances was apparent before their departure. Earlier on 6 July, in response to public pressure, Tabataba'i, the cleric known for his "liberalism" and an alleged constitutionalist, had delivered a sermon that was exceedingly interesting. It confirmed the murmurings about constitutionalism in the capital and the constitutionalist movement's connection to the ongoing disorders. On the one hand, he assured the vast audience before him that the clerics had not been silenced. On the other hand, he allayed government fears about constitutional agitators by explicitly denying the demand for a constitutional assembly:

¹⁴ For a few examples, see Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 47–65. Nazim al-Islam puts great emphasis on the anonymous leaflets (*shabnamah*) that pressured the clerics to demand the House of Justice. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 387–390, 401–403 (see esp. p. 390). For Tabataba'i's public denial of bribery, see Nazim al-Islam *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 411, 445. Dawlatabadi corroborated the pressure exerted on clerics from below, urging them to fulfill their task of leadership of community and acknowledged the role of leaflets that warned against cooption by the state. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 35.

¹⁵ Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, p. 63.

¹⁶ The numbers range from 15 to 58 to 115. The lower estimate is that of Browne and others by Nazim al-Islam according to hearsay. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 458.

¹⁷ For a detailed account see Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 478–507. Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 65–69. Both give 16 July 1906 (24 Jumada I) as the date.

Today the infidels and foreign nations have embarked on the path of justice, but we Muslims have deviated from it. We all are either tyrants and oppressors or assistants to them. For at least eight months we have said nothing but this single word, justice. In hiding and in open, on the pulpit, in the mosque and at home, clearly and openly, frankly and explicitly we have not demanded from the government anything but justice. Now some claim we are constitutionalists or republicans. I swear by God and by my immaculate forbears against these insinuations. If we demanded equity, the intention was to establish an assembly (*majlis*) and association in which the public is redressed and the extent of suffering of the helpless subjects from the tyranny of rulers and the extent to which the population and lands of subjects perishes yearly due to the statesmen oppression is exposed. We did not claim we do not want a shah. We did not say we are enemies of the shah. Either in `Abdul`azim, in the [capital] city, or from the pulpit, we have repeatedly expressed gratitude toward this shah. In all fairness, the shah is kind, affectionate and compassionate. If there is to be a House of Justice, it will be during the reign of this kind and compassionate shah, and if there is to be reform, it will be during the reign of this Muslim shah . . . Whatever we said and wrote *they* explained to him antithetically and *they* said people do not want you and intend to dethrone you. We swear by all prophets that we have no concern and motive other than an assembly (*majlis*) composed of a group that attends to the public and subject grievances. When we persevere, *they* claim we ask for constitution and republic . . . You are unaware of the injustices committed by the governors [and rulers] in the provinces. The poor Iranian subject and his family subsist on corn and barley bread to pay the state taxes. There are no peasants left and nor is there anything in the shah's treasury. The shah may remain shah by means of his treasury, and the treasury would not be filled except by the country's flourishing and the country would not flourish except by justice . . . Here I proclaim [. . .] there is a single person who is responsible for the injustice and that is the Grand Vizier. Seek the cure in him. The shah is kind and compassionate and ill, unwilling of oppression and injustice. He is unaware of the conditions in the land . . . We do not demand constitution or republic, we demand the religiously sanctioned Assembly of House of Justice (*majlis-i mashru`ah-i `adalatkhanah*).¹⁸

That the government felt sufficiently assured was evidenced by one of the shah's close associates. Writing to a prominent official, he held that the clergy had made it abundantly clear that as the shah's loyal subjects they demanded neither a constitutional government nor a republic. Instead, they protested against the prince and Grand Vizier `Ayn al-Dawlah, who had isolated the shah and prevented the "nation's" petitions from reaching him.¹⁹

The movement that had begun by targeting the Belgian customs official Naus, and then turned to the governor of Tehran, `Ala' al-Dawlah, now focused its attention on the chief vizier and the accusation of intercepting petitions. In some ways, however, the procession of targets was no change at all. In mid-April, when Tabataba'i was asking for Naus's dismissal, he was also demanding the same for the "traitor . . . chief minister [who] stands as an obstacle between the shah and his

¹⁸ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 444–453 (emphasis mine).

¹⁹ The letter is from Vakil al-Dawlah to Nariman Khan Qavam al-Saltanah. See Document 2 in Ibrahim Safa'i, *Asnad-i Mashrutah* (Tehran: Rushdiyah, 1352/1973), esp. pp. 29–30. Note the different usages of "nation" by clerics and constitutionalists.

subjects and does not allow our petitions to reach the shah.”²⁰ When the Tehran governor was being attacked, the eyewitness Nazim al-Islam was adamant that this was in appearance alone and the real animosity was toward Grand Vizier `Ayn al-Dawlah.²¹ And even when `Ayn al-Dawlah emerged as the prime object of public scorn and was replaced (see below), the later principal targets showed remarkable consistency: the chief minister. Perhaps this pattern communicated something more fundamental about the political unconscious and the doxic hold of the culture of kingship over political imaginings.²²

Coming back to the event, the prominent clerics' absence in the capital was a contingency that qualitatively changed the course of the movement. It was possible that without it a constitutional revolution would not have materialized. The Iranian constitutionalists were not an organized party or group, or even a significant clique. Although their agenda was known, for them to be taken seriously required a good deal of luck, which they exploited avidly when it presented itself.

On the same night the clerics left for Qum, a group of nine merchants took sanctuary at the British Legation. In the next few days they were joined by crowds estimated at 14,000 to 16,000, mainly members of guilds and trades, in addition to prominent and common merchants, intelligentsia, statesmen, and students of religion. In the customary fashion, the responsibility to financially sustain the prolonged protest fell to the merchants. At the Legation, various secret societies and the intelligentsia took it upon themselves to educate the public on constitutionalism and its politics, notions few had heard before. Had the prominent clerics remained in Tehran, it is doubtful the British Legation would have been their choice for sanctuary.²³ More important, they would have retained the movement's leadership, but in their absence, the reformist statesmen and radicals became the major party in communication with the government. It was in the Legation grounds that the demand for a House of Justice and dismissal of the chief vizier was transformed to a demand for a constitutional assembly.

The growing movement had now invited Britain to the conflict, albeit symbolically, and this forced a new round of concessions. On 21 July 1906, the official newspaper *Iran* published its proposal for a “House of Justice.” The

²⁰ Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 292–293 (quote from p. 293, around 18 April 1905/12 Safar 1323).

²¹ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 331–334, 357–358.

²² Bourdieu, *Outline*, pp. 164–171.

²³ Nazim al-Islam claimed the site was chosen by Bihbahani for the merchants before leaving for Qum. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 509–510. See also Martin, who generally agrees. *Islam and Modernism* pp. 90–91. Bihbahani's ties to the British are well known. Nonetheless, it was unlikely that the site would have been the Bihbahani's choice had the clerics remained in Tehran. Furthermore, it was unlikely that the demands would have escalated the way they did at the British Legation had the prominent clerics remained behind. If Bihbahani had suggested the site, he must have gotten a taste of the unintended consequences of his action. There is wide consensus that the demands were transformed at the Legation. See Martin, *Islam and Modernism*, pp. 93–96; Bayat, *First Revolution*, pp. 129–139; Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 54–58, among others.

offer, merely a detailed administrative regulation for a new Ministry of Justice in the capital and provinces, was a disappointment.²⁴ The government had used the vagueness of the original demand, “House of Justice,” to make this offer, but it was trivial and had come too late. The Legation crowd had moved on. An anonymous leaflet in the form of conversation between two friends, distributed at the Legation and beyond on 23 July, highlighted the new mood:

Q: Why would the shah agree to so much tyranny and oppression?

A: Dear Brother, who would allow such matters to reach the shah? Kingship and toil do not mix. `Ayn al-Dawlah has taken the shah to Shimiran and put him in a garden in the midst of a few thin-bearded men.²⁵ Day and night they are going after their business. From where would he know about the country? [The protestors] rejected the proposed House of Justice (i.e., the Ministry of Justice) as the chief source of injustice which had nothing in it according to the laws of Islam.

Q: These people and merchants and students of religion who have gathered under the British flag, what do they want?

A: Their request is twofold: One, to dismiss `Ayn al-Dawlah who has inflicted so much oppression upon the innocent clerics and killed the sayyids. Two, if the shah is a Muslim, he should establish a National Assembly in Iran so that Islamic laws could be put into effect in Iran by means of this National Assembly so that no one could oppress another. The public wants a National Assembly to get rid of injustice.²⁶

Among the hundred tents raised at the British Legation, numerous secret societies were busy convincing the guild members and tradesmen, the students of religion, and the merchants, to forgo other demands, focus on essentials, and persist on the Assembly. `Ayn al-Dawlah, in particular, was argued to be just another tyrant who could be changed with yet another. Sensing the symbolic import of the grand vizier’s dismissal, the radicals were anxious about a premature end to the movement and about participants’ misinterpretation of its final goal.²⁷ The intelligentsia tried to convince the crowds to give up this nonessential demand, but to no effect.²⁸

Emotions were stirred also by another leaflet. A patently fraudulent telegram from Edward VII, the King of England and Emperor of India, addressed the students of religion, the merchants, and the tradesmen of Tehran at the scene of protest. After acknowledging the receipt of their petition, he expressed grave

²⁴ For the full content of the proposal, see Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 515–524. The correct date is 29 Jumada I, 1324 (21 July 1906) in place of the stated 19 Jumada I, 1324.

²⁵ The allusion here is clearly sexual.

²⁶ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 530–531. The leaflet had reached Nazim al-Islam on 23 July 1906/1 Jumada II 1324. To date, this was the most explicit demand for the establishment of a National Assembly.

²⁷ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 533–534; Faridun Adamiyat *Idi’uluzhi-yi Nahzat-i Masbrutiyat-i Iran*, vol. 1 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Payam, 1976), pp. 168–170.

²⁸ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 534.

sorrow at the inequities they and the clerics had suffered and added that he had forwarded his answer to the “National Consultative Assembly” (i.e., Parliament) for delivery to the shah Muzaffar al-Din with the hope that he would accept the “impartial request” of the British “National Consultative Assembly” and his own “personal plea” to fight oppression.

Even though the telegram had purportedly come from the king, the distinction between the “personal plea” and the more authoritative “impartial request” were read as having subordinated the king to the British Parliament. More significantly, this was an attempt to clarify the ambiguities surrounding the meaning of consultative assemblies; and it was now obvious that by “National Consultative Assembly” the protest leaders meant a full-fledged legislative assembly. Yet, the letter also made concessions to local politics, emphasizing the monarch’s role, the importance of petitions reaching him, and the preoccupation with tyranny and injustice, to be fought through personal intervention of the ruler. Typical of the oppositional literature of the time, the text was both continuous with and a break from local politics. Most probably, however, the ordinary folk interpreted it from the vantage point of familiar categories. The thousand copies distributed at the Legation, recounted one eyewitness, created great excitement; many heard of the National Consultative Assembly for the first time and they supposed it to be their savior from injustice and tyranny.²⁹ Disappointment and surprise was the reaction of a royalist statesman, who talked of the Legation affair as a fiasco in which the shah was referred to as the “representative of the nation.”³⁰

The first day (1 August) after the government dismissed ‘Ayn al-Dawlah, the Legation crowd stayed put, determined to remain until the House of Justice was guaranteed. Upon assurances the next day that the grand vizier had in fact been dismissed, many began to do what the leaders had feared: they prepared to leave. They were persuaded otherwise only after the leaders reasoned that the grand vizier’s dismissal was a matter entirely beyond their concerns.³¹ They also reminded the clerics at Qum to guard against deception until the final goal was reached.³²

Meanwhile, the shah and high officials urged the clerics to return, but without making significant promises.³³ On 3 August, the clerics at Qum issued a fresh set of demands. These were clearly influenced by the new language, but they fell far short of calling for a new political system.³⁴ Signed by Tabataba’i, Bihbahani, and Nuri, the clerics significantly asked for an Assembly of Justice (*majma’ va*

²⁹ The letter was dated 25 July 1906. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 534.

³⁰ The letter also indicates that the crowd at the legation had threatened the clergy at Qum to be more persistent. Document 7, Vakil al-Dawlah to Atabak in Safa’i, *Asnad-i Mashrutah*, esp. p. 78.

³¹ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 541.

³² They received assurances in return. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 541–542.

³³ *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 544–546.

³⁴ I ignore Nazim al-Islam’s claim about the constitutionalism and republicanism of Tabataba’i. Although more liberal and moderate, like some of his compatriots in Najaf and Karbala, his views were at odds with the radicals, nor was he representative of the clergy as a whole.

majlis-i `adalat) in place of the House of Justice. Its expanded responsibilities included putting an end to the transgressions and tyranny of government officials and their neglect in the execution of religious laws; to the spread of abominable crimes; and to the committing of acts forbidden by religion. These were considered Islamic goals that strengthened the Islamic monarchy, removed foreign influences, and forbade the occupation of the land of Iran. The Assembly of Justice was to be staffed by a group of ministers and high officials, merchants, clerics, the wise and learned, and notables. Its members acted as the shah's trustees under the supervision and leadership of the kind and benevolent shah of Islam. They were entrusted with the responsibility to govern and supervise all state offices and determine their rights, responsibilities, and duties; to rectify defects in internal and external affairs, finances, and the municipality; to enjoin good and prohibit evil according to the holy law; and to arrange domestic and foreign contracts, reciprocation, and transactions according to laws of Islam; assign dues and taxes, and arrange their registers; administer justice for the oppressed and punish violators; and rectify the affairs of Muslims according to the holy law of Islam and the precepts of *shar`*, the official law of the monarchy and the "nation." The clerics maintained the right to draw up the assembly's internal regulations (*kitabchah va nizammamah'i dakhlah*).³⁵ Clearly surpassing the House of Justice, this was not designed to be a legislative assembly; it was more like an official consultative body with wide responsibilities and executive functions.³⁶

By this time, the Legation gathering, partly because it was at the capital and partly because it appeared to have, or might come to have, backing by a Great Power, occupied center stage. When the shah's second proposal was issued on 4 August 1906, it was sent for approval to the Tehran gathering and not to the clerics at Qum, who had expressed less serious concerns. The shah's second decree was significant for its mention of the word assembly (*majlis*). This was to operate in Tehran alone without branches in the provinces and was subservient to the shah, who was not obligated to carry out its rulings.³⁷ According to the eyewitness, "the merchants and trades responded that we do not need such an Assembly. The Assembly should be the absolute ruler, and its branches should operate in all cities, towns, and villages, and in case the Assembly issued a ruling on a subject, His majesty is obliged to ratify and carry it out."³⁸ The response went a long way in communicating the divergent understandings about the role, functions, and operations of the Assembly, even at this central site of constitutional agitation. Nonetheless, the unwillingness to accept the Assembly's subservience to the monarch was agreed by all and was indicative of a new spirit.

³⁵ The letter was dated 3 August 1906/12 Jumada II 1324. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 546–548.

³⁶ The appellation of the new body resembled that issued by Tabataba'i before his departure for Qum.

³⁷ The decree is dated 13 Jumada II 1324. Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 548.

³⁸ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 548.

The government came back with a more attractive offer the next day (5 August). The assembly was to include representatives from the six ranks of princes and from the clergy, nobility, landowners, merchants, and the trades. This composition corresponded exactly with the Legation demand, was broader than that requested from Qum, and did not include government officials. However, it did fail to mention any legislative functions and reduced the assembly to an advisory council of reforms with the right to draft proposals. These were to be taken to the shah for ratification by the chief vizier who acted as an intermediary. Lastly, the decree had explicitly left to the shah the responsibility to draw up the assembly's future regulations and arrange its means (*nizamnamah va tartibat va asbab va lavazim-i tashki*).³⁹ When the government affixed this decree to the Legation walls and at nearby locations they were torn down in protest.⁴⁰ A supplemental decree on 7 August that referred to the "Islamic Consultative Assembly" and gave this assembly the right to approve and ratify its internal regulations (*nizamnamah*) before ratification by the shah was not persuasive either.⁴¹ Obviously, the government's attempt to contain the demand within the official discourse of the previous half century and to trivialize it by pretending that it was familiar was failing. Its hope for a Europe-inspired, nonrepresentative, subservient consultative council in place of a legislative, sovereign body, even calling it Islamic to appease the clerics, was unappealing to the Legation crowd.⁴²

When a delegation of the Tehran protestors, accompanied by the British chargé d'affaires, met with the chief minister to request the immediate establishment of the National, not the Islamic, Consultative Assembly on 8 August, they had already warned that nothing short of a guarantee by the British Legation would convince them to disband. The minister insisted on the Islamic consultative character of the body and was absolutely adamant in opposing a national one. Against this, a representative threatened that the National Assembly would be wrested away with the force of the nation. After much negotiation, the government gave in.⁴³

The final decree on 9 August contained significant victories for the Tehran protestors. In place of the "Islamic Consultative Assembly," it now referred to the "National Consultative Assembly"; as agreed, the representatives preserved the right to approve regulations and arrangements (*nizamnamah-i tartibat*), but

³⁹ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 551–552.

⁴⁰ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 553–554.

⁴¹ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 558.

⁴² The last example of these was "majlis-i a'yan" or the Council of Notables proposed by Amin al-Dawlah in 1897/1315 with the duty to plan and advise on reforms. Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, pp. 107–108.

⁴³ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 561–562. According to Nazim al-Islam, the reason given was future concerns about conservative clerics. He even named Nuri as the source of future troubles, and cited concern when representatives of religious minorities were included. One should take both assertions at this early date with a grain of salt. A more pertinent issue was the power struggle between the constitutionalists and clerics, and if these issues were raised, they were pretexts.

it was the chief vizier who drew them up.⁴⁴ One could not conclude that the government had agreed to a legislative assembly. The assembly described in the shah's 9 August decree was to act as the guardian of his justice (*nigabban-i`adl-i ma*), begin necessary reforms, and implement the sacred *shari`ah* laws. If the context did suggest strongly that it could be something more, the Legation crowd was entirely convinced – or at least pretended to be – that it had been granted a legislative assembly and began celebrating. The constitutional era had begun; so had the fight over the meaning and responsibilities of the new assembly. Like his Russian and Ottoman counterparts, the shah insisted on his free will in issuing the decree, even backdating it four days to coincide with his birthday, to be taken as a good omen.⁴⁵

Although the constitutional political ideology had not gained anything like near hegemony, the intelligentsia had convinced others, especially the clerics, to speak in their language, more or less. As to why they sounded so convincing, the answer was sure to be found in the previous century: the religious term “consultation” had by now had strong constitutional resonance. For example, when in a private meeting the minister of court had tried to persuade the clerics of the antireligiosity of the demanded National Consultative Assembly, Sadiq Tabataba'i (Tabataba'i's son) rebutted his argument by citing the two Quranic passages on consultation.⁴⁶ Another astute eyewitness-participant, Dawlatabadi, dismissively remarked that the clerics understood constitutionalism from a few Quranic verses on consultation (*mashvarat*).⁴⁷ The struggle over the terms nation and national (*millat* and *milli*), on the other hand, was more contentious. The clerics had used it to mean the “community of believers.” Nonetheless, they were weary of its nonreligious use, especially when the constitutionalists had gone to such lengths – at the risk of breaking up the coalition – to substitute “national” for “Islamic” to be inclusive of all creeds and religions. Initially at least, the clerics showed tolerance for this double meaning and were willing to postpone a power struggle, if and when it became necessary. Finally, the term “assembly,” with its mild Western resonance, was problematic too, but it could potentially be neutralized as meaning a gathering. It was certainly not a term of choice and was used by the clerics only after prodding by the constitutionalists.

The word *nizamnamah*, which appeared in the final decree, had an interesting career as well. During the negotiations, it remained entirely vague. It had rarely been used as a substitute or translation for the constitution in the Iranian context; its primary use was for administrative statutes. In fact, the government, by using the compound “regulations and arrangements,” had unambiguously meant it to mean the internal administrative regulations of the Assembly.⁴⁸ It

⁴⁴ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 564.

⁴⁵ See, for example, the decree on 5 Rajab 1324/25 August 1906, or the speech to princes (below). *Muzakirat-i Majlis* (hereafter *Majlis*), pp. 7–8.

⁴⁶ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 566–567.

⁴⁷ Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 84.

⁴⁸ It used the same word when referring to election regulations (*nizamnamah-i intikhbat*).

was quite doubtful that by agreeing to a *nizamnamah*, the government was conceding to a written constitution that was to be approved or disapproved by others. The first Assembly, however, used it in all sorts of ways, including to mean the constitution itself. True, the word had been on occasion applied beyond administrative statutes⁴⁹ and in other Islamic contexts the term was occasionally employed to denote foreign constitutions, such as those in France or America.⁵⁰ As we will see, the Assembly made a complicated use of this word until it gained the right to draft the constitution. It was only afterwards that it dropped all references to *nizamnamah* and adopted *qanun-i asasi* as its term of choice. From that point on, *nizamnamah* reverted back to its literal usage.⁵¹

Another controversy was over equality (*musavat*). It meant equality of all before the law, regardless of religion and creed, when invoked by the constitutionalists. The clerics, under the latter's influence, had used it at least twice in their demands,⁵² but for them equality did not extend to religious minorities. The minority (the recognized minorities) issue in Iran was not politicized to nearly the same extent as in the Ottoman Empire. There was no reason why the constitutionalists would want to confront the clergy over minority rights when they had a long list of other issues to fight over.⁵³ It was, however, a point over which the clerics and constitutionalists collided because it could determine the meaning of the nation, and with it, its leadership. In other words, the struggle over this concept was less about the rights of religious minorities than it was about what constituted the Iranian nation, whether it was a Muslim nation or a secular one, and who represented it, the clerics or the Assembly.

The guilds' understanding of the Assembly, from all indications, was much closer to that of the clerics. Despite their status as the most active participants, unfortunately we hear little from them directly, but their actions speak of affinity for a monarch-centered universe. Yet, they avidly supported the radical constitutionalists who fought the monarchy and the conservative clerics. This is a paradox in need of explanation which I will turn to at the end.

This wide array of actors had very different and sometimes opposed understandings of key concepts, a matter that became apparent to participants only in

⁴⁹ Mustashar al-Dawlah referred to the constitution in both French (*constitution*) and Perso-Arabic compound *nizamnamah-i hukumat*. In the next passage, however, he also referred to it as *usul-i kabirah-i asasiyah*, a term closer to the adopted *qanun-i asasi* in 1906. Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Yak Kalamah*, p. 18. Also, a reform-minded diplomat in 1888/1889 had recommended a series of laws influenced by the Napoleonic Code and had used this same word for his recommended laws. Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Masbrutiyyat*, Vol. 1, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Ayalon, *Language and Change*, pp. 92, 94–95.

⁵¹ For the constitutionalists' definitive later use of this word to mean administrative statutes or internal regulations, see *Majmu'ah-i Musavvat-i Advar-i Avval va Duvvum-i Qanun'guzari-i Majlis-i Shura-yi Milli* (Tehran: Idarah-i Qavanin va Matbu'at-i Majlis-i Shura-yi Milli, n.d.), pp. 53–63.

⁵² Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 358; Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 547.

⁵³ Zoroastrians were the only group with their own representative (Arbab Jamshid). The Armenians and Jews were "convinced" to delegate this task to Bihbahani and Tabataba'i.

retrospect.⁵⁴ The vagueness of demands generated a multiplicity of meanings that served the initial coalition-building and mobilization goals nicely and also created room for accord with the monarchy. Yet a cloud hung over constitutionalism and its multiple possibilities in the future. “Consultative assembly” (*majlis-i shura*) was a multivocal⁵⁵ signifier that could mean a “House of Justice,” a legislative assembly, or an advisory council of reforms with or without executive functions, among other possibilities. In other words, it was a free-floating, contested concept, ready for rearticulation in a variety of discourses.

With the shah’s decree, the meaning of the assembly was far from settled. A close associate of the shah, on the assembly’s opening day, remarked that up to that point the confrontation had only been a verbal dare (*rajaz khani*); the real fight had just begun.⁵⁶ This was only half true. It was partly the war of words that had opened a new era of politics.

FIXING CONSTITUTIONALISM: THE LEGAL BATTLES

With the formal issuing of the shah’s decree, the Iranian opposition found itself in a significantly improved position. In the new atmosphere of freedom, open political associations, revolutionary committees, and political publications (newspapers, pamphlets, and journals) proliferated.⁵⁷ The intelligentsia, the revolutionary committees manned by the common folk, the press, and the National Assembly heralded the era of mass politics and civil society. Here the dynamics of the Young Turk and the Iranian revolutions coincided. The increased sense of possibilities in the new atmosphere of freedom led to another shared consequence: tensions that were brewing under the old society were heightened, rather than reduced, after this significant concession by the old regime.

The opening of the National Consultative Assembly was marked with a formal ceremony on 7 October 1906 in the shah’s main residence, Gulistan Palace.⁵⁸ On the same day, the crowds walked behind a portrait of the bedridden Muzaffar al-Din shah to the representatives’ temporary meeting place. Upon finding its permanent compounds, the Assembly gate was adorned with words Muzaffar’s Justice (*‘adl-i Muzaffar*). Speeches delivered for the occasion sanctioned the shah’s

⁵⁴ Majd al-Islam, *Inhial-i Majlis*, Vol. II, 21–23; Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 84; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 1, 28 April 1907/15 Rabi’ I 1325, pp. 2–3; Adamiyat *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, pp. 168–170.

⁵⁵ V. N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

⁵⁶ Document 14, Vakil al-Dawlah to an unidentified correspondent. Safa’i, *Asnad-i Mashrutah*, esp. p. 141.

⁵⁷ For a comprehensive discussion of constitutionalist newspapers, see Gu’l Kuhan, *Tarikh-i Sansur Dar Matbu’at-i Iran*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Agah, 1983). See also Muhammad Sadr-Hashimi, *Tarikh-i Jara’id va Majallat dar Iran*, *Four Volumes* (Isfahan: Intisharat-i Kamal, 1984, 2nd print). The Ottoman Empire, Egypt, Russia, India, and Britain, served as previously popular locations for opposition publications.

⁵⁸ *Majlis*, 7 October 1906/18 Sha’ban 1324, p. 9.

claims about his free will, peppered with stock phrases and imagery, like the flock that was now protected from the wolf, the shah's justice, the Shadow of God Upon Earth, but also, shura, shar`, equality, and liberty.⁵⁹

The election guidelines, approved merely a month earlier on 8 September 1906, allowed representatives from six estates: the princes and members of the royal family; the clergy and clerical students (*ulama va tullab*); notables and dignitaries (*a`yan va ashraf*); merchants and landholders; and finally peasants and guild members. The election had many shortcomings, to be sure. Its strong urban bias made the Assembly far from representative in a predominantly rural country. Tehran alone was given 60 of the 156 seats, with 32 of them going to the guilds. Furthermore, the required property qualification of a thousand tumans put severe limitations on the franchise. In addition, not all the representatives belonged professionally or by birth to the estates they were elected to represent.⁶⁰ Of the recognized religious minorities, only the Zoroastrians were given token representation; Christians and Jews gave up this right against their will. They were to be symbolically represented by Tabataba'i and Bihbahani in the interest of avoiding opposition from conservative clerics.⁶¹ Finally, the national election was not conducted simultaneously everywhere. Tehran's election was earlier, and the provincial elections were finalized each at different times. Tehran's representatives were given the right to legislate and deal with the constitution before the provincial elections had been completed. Despite all these shortcomings, the franchise was far wider than the government's initial offer, or than what the clerics had demanded. There was thus much reason to celebrate this unexpected and early experimentation with representative politics.

The problems were not all caused by inexperience. The shah's final decree had stated that the Assembly was to convene in Tehran alone. In principle, this should not have been a cause for concern as all such bodies meet in the capital only. Yet the explicit mention of Tehran was worrisome. As a key representative, Taqizadah, recalled, the government had secretly ordered the governors to stall the provincial elections so that in the absence of representatives the Assembly could eventually be transformed into the Tehran Municipal Council. Granting a large number of deputies to Tehran and their unusual legislative rights in the absence of provincial representatives were responses to these fears.⁶² His recollections are corroborated by Assembly minutes: the first sessions witnessed repeated protests against the governors' failure to announce the constitutional era and to hold elections; or worse, the governors had sabotaged the elections' conduct or agitated against them in Khurasan, Arabistan, Luristan, among a host of other locations.⁶³

⁵⁹ Also referred to as *`adl-i Muzaffari*. *Majlis*, 9 December 1906/22 Shawwal 1324, pp. 20–21. For speeches see *Majlis*, n.d. p. 10; *Majlis*, 23 December 1906/7 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 32.

⁶⁰ 8 September 1906/19 Rajab 1324, *Majlis*, p. 6–7. For a detailed description of elections and serious associated problems, see Adamiyat, *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat*, V ol. 1, pp. 347–359.

⁶¹ Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, p. 70. Hourī Berberian, *Armenians and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001) p. 97.

⁶² Taqizadah, *Sib Khibitabah*, pp. 42–44. ⁶³ *Majlis*, pp. 16, 17, 18, 25, 26, 28.

Expressions of loyalty aside, from the very beginning the radicals were intent on establishing Assembly dominance over the patrimonial Qajar government. Also apparent was the monarchy's unwillingness to recognize the Assembly as anything beyond an advisory council. Debates revolved around the extent of the Assembly's power over the executive; whether it could dismiss individual ministers, or the entire cabinet; and in general the rights and responsibilities of ministers and the shah toward the Assembly. The underlying theme was the locus of sovereignty and whether it resided with the shah or the "nation." The debates with the clerics, on the other hand, revolved around the Assembly's legislative role and whether it was a "House of Justice," or the "Parliament of Paris."

Constructing a radical definition of constitutionalism in Iran proved harder. The Iranian and Ottoman constitutionalists shared the burden of defining the new political system for their supporters. Iran's small modern middle class, the more populist makeup of the Iranian Assembly, and the nonbureaucratic background of most representatives, who could not claim knowledge of the new system, made this a more formidable task. The Ottoman Chamber (and the CUP in particular) could afford to ignore mass politics, or even to actively discourage it, but the Iranian Assembly could not. The Assembly's only defense against the state were the myriad guilds and committees who were determined to end the injustices against them.

The election battles began when the Qajar princes, sensing the coming threat to their time-honored privileges (despite some notable defections in their camp), refused to collect their electoral ballots. The shah called a meeting of Qajar nobility and princes in his summer palace (Farahabad) on 14 September to persuade them otherwise. He argued that the National Consultative Assembly was created out of his own free will; all representatives were loyal to him; any opposition to the Assembly was opposition to his person. He further added that all his personal attempts to expand consultation had been thwarted by chief viziers until the most recent appointment.⁶⁴ The court cooperation was critical as the shah's household and the state had no clearly defined boundaries.

After the elections, the Assembly used many occasions to publicly scorn the princes, underscoring the movement's populist, anti-privilege slant. In an early session, a petition written by the "people" was read out in which the "grand princes" were condemned for atrocities toward the commoner and advised to cease placing private interests and profiteering before the "nation."⁶⁵ The emotional dedication ceremony of funds raised by young schoolchildren for the

⁶⁴ *Majlis*, 27 September 1906/8 Sha'ban 1324 p. 8; Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 628–631. Dawlatabadi categorized the court faction into three, and argued the animosity of the great majority toward the Assembly with very few in support of the new system. See Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, pp. 103–105.

⁶⁵ The letter specifically attacked the princes for their profiteering at a time when the government was engaged in raising money with the assistance of the "nation." *Majlis*, 22 November 1906/5 Shawwal 1324, p. 13.

planned National Bank also brought ridicule for selfish princes who had yet failed to contribute. Nor was it untypical for the Assembly to chastise individual princes, as when it did Shu`a` al-Saltanah, the governor of Fars, for levying exorbitant taxes there.⁶⁶ Even when, in April 1907, the newly formed Council of Princes professed loyalty to the Assembly, some representatives questioned the council's sincerity, for it had failed to make any mention of the constitutional government in their letter.⁶⁷ In later sessions, the princes with claims to the throne were condemned for fueling provincial disorders that had consumed the country. The representatives argued in favor of revoking their legal immunity and making them liable to punishment like other officials. Another truly radical suggestion was to ban them entirely from government office.⁶⁸

When it came to the decree issued by the shah, it had been established that the right to draft the internal regulations (*nizamnamah*) belonged to the government and the Assembly had the privilege to approve it. The Assembly now stretched the meaning of *nizamnamah* to mean the constitution itself; not to leave any doubts, it pressed the government for the fundamental laws using the unmistakable *qanun-i asasi*. Whatever the government thought of this request, it was reluctant to draft the *nizamnamah*. When on 19 October 1906, after much delay, the Assembly was finally presented with it, it was rejected as soon as it was received for being autocratic (*mustabidanah*). If this had indeed been a constitution, it was curious why the Assembly did not bother to modify it. One can only surmise that it was not, nor was it meant to be. Instead the Assembly began immediately to draw up a constitution (*qanun-i asasi*) for presentation to the shah.⁶⁹ Obviously, the Assembly was in possession of some limited power to modify the *nizamnamah*, which was implicit in the right of approval; yet discarding the government offer to draft a new one certainly violated the terms of agreement. This did not deter the Assembly.

A draft was completed in a mere four days and sent immediately to the chief vizier for ratification by the shah. The short time indicated that the work had begun much earlier. It was a moderate constitution so far as it concerned Assembly powers. Yet, for so critical a matter, it was announced in a scantily attended session. Even if the head of the majlis, Sani` al-Dawlah, declared the "majority" had already approved the constitution (*qanun-i asasi*), it left many questions unanswered.⁷⁰ For one, who was this majority beyond the very few involved in

⁶⁶ *Majlis*, 4 December 1906/17 Shawwal 1324, pp. 17–18; 23 December 1906/7 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324.

⁶⁷ *Majlis*, 9 April 1907/25 Safar 1325, p. 130.

⁶⁸ *Majlis*, 19 June 1907/8 Jumada I 1325, pp. 192–193. Sensing the weakness of central government after the revolution, prince Salar al-Dawlah, the governor of Kurdistan, had made claims to the throne and even acted on them in early June. After defeat, he took refuge in a British consulate. Bayat, *First Revolution*, pp. 180–181. Shu`a` al-Saltanah, the governor of Fars, and Zill al-Sultan, the governor of Isfahan, were princes with similar ambitions.

⁶⁹ *Majlis*, 19 October 1906/1 Ramadan 1324, p. 10; Adamiyat, *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, pp. 384–385.

⁷⁰ Sani` al-Dawlah did in fact indicate intense revision (*jarh va ta`dil*) of constitutional articles, which may be inferred to mean laboring over the document presented by the shah. Yet, the previous session had explicitly mentioned rejecting and sending it back, thus closing the possibility

writing the document? Where were the records of deliberation? Why had the vote on the constitution been held in a place other than the Assembly? Such behavior went a long way in advertising the Assembly's insecurity from assault and infancy. Nonetheless, the Assembly had arrogated to itself the right to draft the constitution, in a drastic role reversal, and it was now the Assembly that awaited the constitution's approval.

This was to take a long time. The court, headed by Crown Prince Muhammad Ali, who had returned from the Tabriz governorship for this purpose, objected and resisted ratification. In the ensuing ten weeks, the Assembly asked for the constitution in every single session. But the Assembly had succeeded in establishing that the fight was over the constitution and not over some kind of administrative regulation, and now it engaged in another skillful verbal maneuver: It abruptly dropped all references to *qanun-i asasi* and instead requested the ratification of *nizamnamah*. The well-known *qanun-i asasi* was the only acceptable term for the Ottoman constitutionalists, used predominantly in Malkum's writings, and the term of choice up to that point. Yet, since it was not *qanun-i asasi* the decree had promised, but *nizamnamah*, the latter word became the word of choice. The terminology switch was awkward, as now *nizamnamah* was used in four different contexts simultaneously. It referred to election regulations (*nizamnamah-i intikhabat*), internal Assembly protocol (*nizamnamah-i dakhili*), the National Bank regulations (*nizamnamah-i bank*), and the constitution (simply *nizamnamah*, or in a few rare occasions, *nizamnamah-i asasi*).⁷¹ Its liberal use did create embarrassing confusions when *nizamnamah* was invoked without further qualification.⁷² Despite the drawbacks, the Assembly could now claim that it only demanded what it had been promised – *nizamnamah*.

To protect itself against the Assembly, the government, or more accurately the court and Crown Prince, now demanded a senate with a membership that was trustworthy and conservative. Rumors thus began to fly that the Crown Prince opposed the Assembly. This he was forced to deny publicly, attributing the delay to his careful study of it.⁷³ When the draft was sent back to the Assembly on 25 December (9 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324), it did ask for several important changes that made their way to the constitution. Expectedly, inclusion of a senate was among these and although the representatives initially resisted its legislative role and membership, they did compromise. The government formula that was agreed consisted of thirty appointed and thirty elected officials drawn in equal numbers from Tehran and provinces. The legislative autonomy of the Assembly, which it now shared equally with the Senate, was tempered, but the Assembly retained independence over financial decisions (article 44).⁷⁴ Also, the shah demanded an

of discussion. From all indications, their efforts were directed toward a draft drawn up by the Assembly. *Majlis*, 23 October 1906/5 Ramadan 1324, p. 10.

⁷¹ *Majlis*, pp. 13–17, 19, 20, 22–24, 27–29, 32, 33, 35, 36.

⁷² See, for example, *Majlis* 22 December 1906/6 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 29.

⁷³ *Majlis*, 16 December 1906/29 Shawwal 1324, p. 24.

⁷⁴ *Majlis*, 25 December 1906/9 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 35. *Majlis* 27 December 1906/11 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 37.

oath of loyalty toward the monarchy and promised not to betray it under any circumstance. To this the representatives strongly objected; such an oath could never be required from those who embodied the “nation” but insisted on the shah’s obligation to do so. Nonetheless, a conditional oath of loyalty toward the monarch and the throne was approved (article 111). The Assembly was constitutionally quite weak against the executive. The ministers were ultimately made responsible to the shah, and although the Assembly had the right to interpellate them in case of legal breach, it could only ask the shah to dismiss them if not satisfied (article 27, 28, 29). The shah could dismiss the Assembly and order new elections in case of unresolved differences jointly with the Senate and cabinet (article 48), but given that the senate did not meet until 1950, this provision did not have its intended effect. The constitution was finally signed, on Muzaffar al-Din shah’s deathbed, on 30 December 1906.⁷⁵

When the shah died a few days later on 4 January 1907, the Assembly moved swiftly to express loyalty toward the heir apparent. The young and ambitious Muhammad Ali snubbed the Assembly by not inviting representatives to his coronation ceremony. The prominent few who attended did so as holders of official rank. The disgruntled representatives and committees took the “nation’s” exclusion as an ominous sign. Yet they could not but grumble as no legal violation had taken place.⁷⁶ They later retaliated by requiring an oath of loyalty from the monarch before the upper and lower houses (and the cabinet) before coronation (Supplement to the constitution, article. 39).⁷⁷

Confrontations with the cabinet began cautiously. In a metaphor also employed by the Young Turks, Taqizadah likened the Assembly to a court in which the representatives were claimants and government the defendant.⁷⁸ Others added that a trial may not get under way without the defendant, and impractically asked for ministerial participation in all Assembly sessions.⁷⁹ Polite allusions were set aside soon when the Assembly straightforwardly demanded the introduction of cabinet by the shah or the prime minister for its approval. This was also meant to demarcate ministerial powers and responsibilities, and alert ministers to the Assembly’s watchful eyes.⁸⁰

The formal introduction was also to be used toward an additional goal. The employment of Naus, a Belgian financial advisor who served as the minister of

⁷⁵ 14 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324. *Musavvat, I-II*. Taqizadah, *Sih Khitabah*, pp. 43–44. Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, p. 385. For an English translation of the constitution and its Supplement see W. Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (Washington, D.C.: Mage Publishers, [1912] 1987), pp. 337–355.

⁷⁶ *Majlis*, 19 January 1907/4 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 53. For the protest of the official committee in Tabriz, see *Anjuman*, No. 43, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 2. See also Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 134.

⁷⁷ *Musavvat, I-II*, pp. 23–24. ⁷⁸ *Majlis*, 6 January 1907/21 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 46.

⁷⁹ *Majlis*, 6 January 1907/21 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 47.

⁸⁰ *Majlis*, 24 January 1907/9 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 63–64. The representatives desired to be in direct contact with each minister instead of being told that they could be contacted only through the Prime Minister. *Majlis*, 31 January 1907/16 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 70–72.

customs, was considered to be unbefitting of a sovereign nation. When the respected minister of finance (Nasir al-Mulk) was interrogated over it, he insisted Customs to be a distinct ministry not under his control and avoided identifying Naus as its minister.⁸¹

In response, Prime Minister Mushir al-Dawlah called a meeting with prominent representatives at his house. In the informal gathering the representatives were shocked to hear that they had no business knowing the name and number of cabinet ministers. When Sa`d al-Dawlah objected that the right was unquestionably theirs, the prime minister caused a stir by defining the Assembly as a place for debate and making legislative suggestions and nothing more.⁸² The embarrassment of the inclusion of a foreigner with a ministerial portfolio eventually ensured dismissal of Naus and his associate Priem.⁸³ The merchants, his long-time vocal opponents, finally received their wish.

During the twenty-month existence of the first Assembly, no fewer than nine cabinets were formed and fell.⁸⁴ It was at this time that the representatives and the press made their best effort to construct a new culture of politics.⁸⁵ In one instance, the eminently vocal and visible representative Sa`d al-Dawlah complained that the Assembly as a whole had not yet understood the meaning of government (*dawlat*) and continued to equate it with the sacred person of the shah. The government, he explained, was the committee of ministers called a cabinet that functioned in accord with the prime minister. He went on to explain the ministers' accountability and responsibility, the conditions for their dismissal, and the shortcomings of the cabinet in Iran.⁸⁶ Newspapers collaborated in this effort by expounding on central concepts, such as "cabinet crisis."⁸⁷ Accountability and responsibility became key terms for assailing the government.

Interpellations were used to intimidate the ministers and force their cooperation. They also served as a symbolic device to give form to an executive independent from the shah. They compared the ignorant Iranian ministers with European

⁸¹ See *Majlis*, 17 January 1907/2 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 51.

⁸² *Anjuman*, No. 48, 28 February 1907/15 Muharram 1325, p. 2. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 217–219. Taqizadah, *Sib Khitabah*, p. 46.

⁸³ *Majlis*, 24 January 1907/9 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 64. *Majlis*, 29 January 1907/14 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 69 and *Majlis*, 31 January 1907/16 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 70. The request to dismiss Naus and Priem was also frequently voiced by the committees. For an example, see *Anjuman* No. 57, 21 March 1907/6 Safar 1325, pp. 1–4; Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 220–221.

⁸⁴ Jamshid Zargham Burujini, *Dawlatha-yi Asr-i Mashrutiyat* (Tehran: Idarah-i Kull-i Qavanin, 1971), pp. 1–28.

⁸⁵ For a good definition of the ideal modern "scientific" state they were after and the shortcomings of the state in Iran, see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 2, 29 April 1907/16 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 3–4.

⁸⁶ *Majlis*, 22 January 1907/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 60–61. His career is a mind-boggling episode of the constitutional movement in Iran. Adamiyat and Browne considered Sa`d al-Dawlah the informal leader of the Assembly. The later debates, however, clearly point to Taqizadah.

⁸⁷ Similar efforts for constructing a definition of constitutionalism preferred by radicals could be seen in many newspaper articles. For a more explicitly educational article see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 100, 15 August 1907/6 Rajab 1325, pp. 1–3.

ones who supposedly participated in every single parliamentary session.⁸⁸ This was not to be expected of the old-fashioned Iranian ministers, who continued to accept bribes, sell offices, and manipulate the meaning of “responsibility” to make it meaningless.⁸⁹ *Habl al-Matin*’s editorial added that only a few who were worthy of ministerial positions existed in all Iran, and even qualified ordinary state administrators were rare; these seemingly simple tasks, it reasoned, had proven to be the most difficult of jobs because they demanded responsibility:

Being a minister without being accountable was an easy task . . . Really, sitting at home or in one’s garden in the morning and accepting a gift of ten thousand tumans from a certain ruler and stamping a decree was not a laborious job. But that ruler with the decree plundered the people for one hundred thousand tumans and that action was considered unrelated to [the minister]. But now accountability is involved. Talk is no substitute for action, lies and glib tongues are of no use, compliments and flattery cure no pain . . . newspapers propagate quickly the good and the bad and they may not be banned . . . no longer can one beat up a nosy individual, and now it is forbidden to cleave people in two, throw them from the roof tops or make them rot in the dungeon.⁹⁰

Uncooperative ministers were further held to be the source of the Assembly’s inability to implement reforms. For the diehard constitutionalists, the “executive” did not collaborate with the “legislative.” Others invoked the more familiar trope of the unity and disunity of the “nation” (*millat*) and “state” (*dawlat*) to describe the rift. Regardless of the language, they all agreed that the trouble lay with the “traitor” ministers who had betrayed the shah and the nation and were the cause for the division between the two.⁹¹ With growing disturbances, the cabinet was linked to the rapidly growing counterrevolution. Frustrated and without legal power, the Assembly did much as had the Ottoman Chamber in the same circumstances and voted overwhelmingly in favor of dismissing entire cabinets.⁹²

Facing an unyielding government and the hostile mood that pervaded the court, the Assembly thought of ways of empowering itself by drafting the Supplement to the Fundamental Laws. This amounted to a new constitution that surpassed even the revised 1909 Ottoman constitution in empowering the legislature. By the time the Supplement was ratified on 7 October 1907, on the first anniversary of the Assembly, it had become a most contentious issue of the constitutional movement.

⁸⁸ *Majlis*, 13 January 1907/28 Dhu al-Qa`de 1324, p. 50.

⁸⁹ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 1, 18 April 1907/5 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 3–4; *Majlis*, 1, 24 January 1907/9 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 63; *Majlis*, 1, 27 March 1908/23 Safar 1326, p. 492.

⁹⁰ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 53, 28 June 1907/17 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–3 (quote from p. 2). For further assailing of ministers over accountability and responsibility, see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 204, 11 January 1908/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1325, pp. 1–2.

⁹¹ *Majlis*, 22 January 1907/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 59–60. *Majlis*, 14 March 1907/29 Muharram 1325, pp. 107–109. For two examples where ministers were denounced as traitors among many, see *Anjuman*, No. 44, 14 February 1907/1 Muharram 1325, pp. 1–4; *Anjuman*, No. 45, 17 February 1907/4 Muharram 1325, pp. 1–4.

⁹² *Majlis*, 24 April 1907/11 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 151–153. *Majlis*, 29 April 1907/16 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 153–154.

CONSTITUTIONALISM AS STATE-BUILDING

Nowhere did the program of legal rationalization manifest itself more fully than in tax and financial reforms, a task that proved overwhelming. Judging the state of Iran's finances from Assembly debates, one is struck by the degree of decentralization in the taxation structure, the lack of uniform measures, and the inconsistencies that marred the entire administration. Much like the CUP, among the Iranian intelligentsia the desire for constitutionalism stemmed from the need for a rational, interventionist state to improve the lives of its inhabitants and its international standing. Secondly, it was to withstand colonial expansion. Key differences existed between the two, however, that stemmed from their histories of reform. The Iranian attempts at reform in the previous century had seriously faltered, leaving a decentralized state without monopoly over the means of coercion and a standing army at the center. Its taxation structure, decentralized, nonuniform, and left to the whim of local authorities, left inhabitants crying out for justice. The patrimonial state structure, on the other hand, relied on the royal household for key positions which closed off access and mobility for the capable and educated. Minimal differentiation had taken place between the royal household and the government, and the Assembly had the task of differentiating the two from one another, before it could meaningfully subdue the "executive."

Thus, what lay before the Iranian Assembly was no simple matter – it was to accomplish what the Ottoman reforms had started more than a century earlier, but with a near absence of trained staff, financial wherewithal, or the cooperation of local power-holders. These challenges had been faced by Ottoman reformers as well, but over a longer stretch of time – the same advantage the European states, or even Russians, held over the Ottomans. And if the pre-Tanzimat reforms had quelled the local power-holders, the local magnates in Iran were as powerful as ever, with very little reason to cooperate. At the time of revolution the Ottomans faced the threat of partition under the watchful eyes of the Great Powers; similarly, the Iranians faced the very real threat of domination by Russia and Britain; yet the urgency was greater in the Ottoman Empire.⁹³ Nonetheless, the Iranian reformers found before themselves the challenge of accomplishing in a few years what a century of meager reforms had failed to do. On a comparative scale this meant carrying out the pre-Tanzimat, Tanzimat, post-Tanzimat, and Young Turks reforms all in one stroke, a nearly impossible task.

By the early twentieth century, the Ottoman state and army were not only far better organized than the Iranian, but had also pacified the society to a larger extent. This became apparent in the course of revolution. Although the reforms engulfed both regimes in a bloody counterrevolution, in Iran this tumultuous

⁹³ For two excellent recent studies of the Iranian and Ottoman geopolitical challenges, see Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism and Dissent* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006); Mustafa Aksakal *Ottoman Road to War*.

event lasted more than a year, instead of nine days. Furthermore, in Iran the mere threat of reforms, rather than their actual implementation, brought down the Assembly.

Of these reformist measures, those intended to close the deficit, like rational budgetary allocation, salary reforms, and a rational taxation regime were the most destabilizing.⁹⁴ These were intended to balance the budget by increasing the badly deficit-ridden 8,000,000 tuman state income by an additional 2,500,000 (a 30 percent increase) in quite a short time. Rational budgetary allocations meant extensive cutbacks in court and palace budgets, transfer of treasury from the Palace to the Ministry of Finance, assigning of salary to the shah, and allocations to ministries based on detailed expenditure records. Rational taxation, on the other hand was an even more complicated matter and required precise and extensive information that was to be obtained through a nationwide "scientific audit" (*mumayizi-i `ilmi*).⁹⁵ The audit that was to serve as the basis for financial reforms was never carried out. Yet, pressured to solve the legacy of more than two centuries of financial problems, the Assembly haphazardly set out to implement major revenue-saving and income-enhancing reforms and to abolish various traditional taxation and salary categories (*tuyul*, *tafavut-i `amal*, and *tas`ir*). The results were quite unsettling.

As a major step toward centralization, the Assembly intended to supervise all tax collection in provinces, increase the center's share, and end the abuses by local rulers, from governors down to local magnates, lesser rulers, tax-farmers, and landowners. The provincial budgets were in theory set by the center and sent to provinces in special registers (*kitabchah-i dastur al-`amal*) that specified tax amounts (*`amalkard*) and expenditures. Several problems plagued this taxation regime. Local taxation was based on tradition and prevalent customs and based on estimates last carried out in 1888/1889 (1306).⁹⁶ If the provincial taxes had increased at a continuous pace, with the passage of years the center's share had remained the same. Even more worrisome was that the governors were not paid by the center. They thus considered their assignments to be a reward and a means of accumulating wealth, a view sanctioned by the center. As such, they collected an additional amount above and beyond *`amalkard* in the name of *tafavut-i `amal*, sometimes also referred to as auxiliary (*far`*) as opposed to principal (*`asl*) taxes. The amount beyond was not acknowledged officially, but quite well known, with an established name, and routinized over time; in fact part of it made its way back as gift (*pishkash*) to the government officials, the shah, or government coffers. The trouble was that *tafavut-i `amal* was unregulated by the center and almost always exceeded the principal taxes, sometimes by severalfold. When combined with the

⁹⁴ For a short summary of financial reforms during the first Assembly see Charles Issawi, *Economic History of Iran* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 338, 366–367.

⁹⁵ For a description of the cadastre, see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 123, 22 September 1907/14 Sha`ban 1325, pp. 1–3. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 246, 9 March 1908/5 Safar 1326, pp. 1–2. For reforms of Palace financial structure, see Ihtisham al-Saltanah *Khatirat* p. 615.

⁹⁶ Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, p. 446.

insecurity of tenure at the governor's office, the short-term maximization motive of officials placed great burdens on the taxpayers. The issue, however, had not been unique to this period and was quite prevalent from at least the 1870s when it was also recognized as a serious problem. Hence, the amount remitted to the center was much lower than the sum raised at the province, and the system was inconsistent and unpredictable.⁹⁷ An example of abuse was the Fars region, where the governor, prince Shu`al-Saltanah, was expected to collect 200,000 tumans as *tafavut-i`amal*, while in practice he collected four times as much.⁹⁸ To check abuse, inconsistency, and to increase the central state's share and control over the provincial taxes, the Assembly approved a bill that required all taxes collected under *tafavut-i`amal* to be included in the provincial budgets.

Its actual implementation, however, was rife with problems. For one, although there was wide consensus over the tax abuse in provinces, because of the variety of practices in different locations, the representatives could not agree on a uniform definition of *tafavut-i`amal*.⁹⁹ Nor was it clear how the Assembly intended to implement this measure without having accurate information or an enforcement mechanism. One delegate recommended that before scientific auditing, taxes should continue to be collected according to the traditional practice.¹⁰⁰ Another argued for a middle ground between the new and old.¹⁰¹ The most radical and the least feasible suggestion (from Taqizadah, supported by others) was to have taxes collected by Finance Ministry tax collectors backed by the Ministry of Justice, under the supervision of provincial assemblies and without any participation of provincial officials.¹⁰² He added that the ministries did not have influence over the provinces, for now the provincial committees should take over the tax collections. Against this the dissenters argued that *tafavut-i`amal* was not recognized as legitimate by taxpayers, and if sanctioned by the Assembly, it was to lead to disappointment and resentment. Furthermore, with its adoption, the governors would demand even heavier taxes from the already destitute inhabitants. Finally, the Assembly would only be able to enforce its decision upon the weaker officials; the powerful would be unaffected.¹⁰³ And in fact there were indications that these predictions were borne out.¹⁰⁴ Despite the widespread consensus that auditing would take at least two, and perhaps many years to conduct, the Assembly went ahead after citing its dire financial need and large deficit; it approved the bill that required all auxiliary

⁹⁷ Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, pp. 146–147, 155, 189, 202–203; A. Reza Sheikholeslami, “The Patrimonial Structure of Iranian Bureaucracy in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Iranian Studies* VolVol. XI, 1978, pp. 199–252; see esp. p. 236.

⁹⁸ *Majlis*, 19 March 1907/4 Safar 1325, p. 111.

⁹⁹ For the best example of this see *Majlis*, 19 March 1907/4 Safar 1325, p. 111.

¹⁰⁰ *Majlis*, 28 February 1907/15 Muharram 1325, p. 97.

¹⁰¹ *Majlis*, 23 March 1907/8 Safar 1325, p. 116.

¹⁰² *Majlis*, 19 March 1907/4 Safar 1325, p. 111. For provincial committees, the popular arm of constitutional revolution, see pp. 365–380.

¹⁰³ *Majlis*, 19 March 1907/4 Safar 1325, p. 111.

¹⁰⁴ *Majlis*, 17 August 1907/8 Rajab 1325, p. 252.

taxes (*tafavut-i `amal*) to be included in provincial budgets. The law now required sending them along with the “principal” (*divani*, or *`asl*) to the central treasury, and the center was to reallocate funds to provinces afterwards.¹⁰⁵ It would be an understatement to say that the governors and local rulers were not happy with the new arrangement.

The same bill had clauses about abolishing two additional salary and tax categories, *tuyul* and *tas`ir-i jins*. Abolition of the first revenue category, *tuyul*, was one of the most critical decisions of the first Assembly, for *tuyul* constituted a most important source of wealth, especially for the nobility and notables in the capital. Under the existing system, the state assigned revenues from a village or crown lands to an official in lieu of salary as *tuyul*.¹⁰⁶ Over time, the value of many assignments had grown to far exceed the salary at the time of grant. This discrepancy was occasionally 20 percent to 30 percent, but disproportionate amounts, such as an income of 50,000 tumans in lieu of a 1,000 tuman salary, or 40,000 tumans in place of 1,400 tuman, or 1,200 in place of 70, were not rare.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the lands or taxes granted as *tuyul* tended to become the private property of the assignees long after service had ceased, especially after the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁰⁸ The last tax category, *tas`ir*, concerned the large land owners and was the portion of the yearly taxes that they paid in kind. Over the years, the landowners had switched to paying these taxes in cash, but this practice had become abusive; commodity prices had increased but the remitted cash had remained the same. The Assembly decidedly abolished all three categories of *tafavut-i `amal*, *tuyul*, and *tas`ir*, a decision that was widely regarded as the only way to balance the budget.¹⁰⁹

The financial reforms, especially the abolition of *tuyul*, led to uproar. The moderate and leading liberal cleric Tabataba`i, in the midst of financial discussions, urged the Assembly to perform the original duty for which it had been created but had not fulfilled – that is, to act as the Council of Grievances. Fearful of the reaction, he advised the Assembly to delay its plans for the time being, but

¹⁰⁵ The deficit was estimated to be 5 to 6 *kurur*, while the government revenue was 16 *kurur* (p. 111). It was unclear if the local salaries, especially the governors', were to be deducted at the locality at first, but discussions had certainly suggested collecting the full amount and paying them afterwards from the center. For the financial bill that was later approved, and which stated that “scientific auditing” would be completed within one year, see *Majlis*, 6 April 1907/22 Safar 1325, pp. 125–126; Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, p. 447–448. See also Kasravi *Tarikh-i Mashrutab*, pp. 228–229. Kasravi provides an example from Kirman with regard to the abuse of this method of taxation.

¹⁰⁶ Sheikholeslami considers *tuyul* as “much more common than . . . private landownership” *Central Authority* p. 140. Arjomand, *Turban for the Crown*, p. 22, and Ann K. S. Lambton, *Peasants and Landlords in Persia*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1953).

¹⁰⁷ For a description of *tuyul* from the Assembly's view, see *Majlis*, 6 January 1907/21 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 45. *Majlis*, 19 March 1907/4 Safar 1325, pp. 111–112.

¹⁰⁸ Sheikholeslami, *Central Authority*, p. 147; Arjomand, *Turban for the Crown*, p. 22; Lambton, *Landlords and Peasants*.

¹⁰⁹ For these last two categories, see Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, 448–450, Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutab*, pp. 228–229, and Browne, *Persian Revolution*, 238–239.

the majority ignored the advice.¹¹⁰ True to his fears, the *tuyul* holders, both in the capital and the provinces, started to organize under the leadership of the prominent Naqib al-Sadat in Tehran, who arranged a large meeting attended by disgruntled *tuyul* holders. The meeting, using the pretext of religious mourning ceremonies (*rawzah-khani*), could not conceal its real intent, a fact that Naqib al-Sadat himself could not convincingly deny when questioned by a representative.¹¹¹ The newspaper *Habl al-Matin*, which described the religious mourners as parasitic *tuyul* owners who used religion as a pretext to oppose the Assembly, reported the government backing of the ceremonies. The newspaper *Sur-i Israfil*, with unmatched satire, mocked the anti-Assembly agitations as a grand funeral for the deceased *tuyul*.¹¹²

The financial decisions of *majlis*, first with regard to *tuyul*, and then *tas'ir* and *tafavut-i 'amal* taxes, led to similar commotions in the provinces and in every major city. The local disturbances are far too many to recount, but major and recurring ones were the anti-constitutionalist agitations by the magnate Qavam and his sons in the city of Shiraz and the Fars region in general, and those by Rahim Khan and company (e.g., Maku'i) in the city of Tabriz and the Azarbaijan region. In addition, there were anti-constitution agitations in Isfahan, Qazvin, Mashhad, and many other cities, towns and villages, frequently in collaboration with disgruntled governors and local rulers.¹¹³ The reaction of the owners of *tuyul* was surprisingly strong, given that most assignments remained intact.¹¹⁴

The financial reforms included yet another sensitive category: the state payrolls. The opposition soon exploited this issue. As a representative put it, "malicious individuals" were spreading the rumor that the Assembly intended to reduce the salaries of government officials and their dependents, poor or rich. The Assembly and newspapers vehemently denied this and held that these were not intended to affect the poor, the middle class, or ordinary state employees but the princes, the courtiers and those with "salaries larger than some foreign presidents."¹¹⁵ Head of the Assembly explained that those affected were only the recipients of multiple salaries under different titles, thirteen hundred officials whose salaries were larger than 10,000 tuman, and remarried widows. Overall, the reductions amounted to 450,000 tuman from thirteen unnamed individuals,

¹¹⁰ *Majlis*, 26 March 1907/11 Safar 1325, pp. 117–118.

¹¹¹ *Majlis* 6 June 1907/24 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 183–184.

¹¹² *Habl al-Matin*, No. 38, 11 June 1907/29 Rabi' II 1325, p. 2. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 49, 23 June 1907/12 Jumada I 1325, p. 1. *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 5, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, p. 3.

¹¹³ For example, see *Majlis*, 12 August 1907/3 Rajab 1325, p. 242. The newspapers also reported disorders created by landlords and the wealthy in general, as in Tabriz or Shiraz. See *Musavat*, No. 23, 10 May 1908, p. 7; *Anjuman*, No. 69, 24 April 1907/11 Rabi' I 1325, p. 4; *Anjuman*, No. 70, 26 April 1907/13 Rabi' I 1325, p. 4. Sadiq Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Khatirat va Asnad-i Mustashar al-Dawlah-i Sadiq*, Vol. 2, ed. I. Afshar (Tehran: Firdaws, 1983), pp. 27–29, 54–57, 212–215.

¹¹⁴ For indication of the Assembly's lack of success, see *Anjuman*, Nos. 77–78, 4 May 1907/ 11 Rabi' I 1325, p. 3; *Majlis*, 26 August 1907/17 Rajab 1325, pp. 263–264.

¹¹⁵ *Majlis*, 16 August 1907/7 Rajab 1325, pp. 249, 252; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 166, 19 November 1907/13 Shawwal 1325, pp. 1–3.

plus 500,000 tuman from the rest of the state employees, altogether affecting two thousand individuals. Also cut was 300,000 tuman from the Palace's budget of more than 880,000 tuman; this was done without first informing the shah, and his protest was left unanswered. The shah himself was assigned a salary, and the treasury was transferred to the Ministry of Finance from the Palace. Although the Palace's extensive payroll was not touched by the cuts, the shah refused to pay the staff and encouraged their participation in violent protests against the Assembly by holding it responsible. The salary reductions sparked widespread disorders and the Assembly's resolve to publish the names of the few who were seriously affected had no apparent effect.¹¹⁶

Salary reforms could not have come at a worse time. Attention to the context goes a long way in explaining the success of counterrevolutionary agitators. As a contemporary noted, the finance committee of the Assembly was creating a large number of enemies by cutting salaries at a time when, because of the emptiness of the treasury in the past few years, the state employees had received little or nothing at all.¹¹⁷ In fact, prior to the salary reform proposal there was a series of extensive and sometimes violent actions by the police, the army, and widowed women over pay. But in none of these, in Tehran or outside, was the Assembly implicated in any way. The constitutionalist newspapers wrote compassionately of the protesters' plight.¹¹⁸ Yet, the protestors turned against the Assembly once it took up the discussion of financial reforms, and was portrayed as unsympathetic or even directly responsible for payment problems. Efforts to calm the protests were unsuccessful, partly because they now involved backing from the shah, the court, and high officials. Once again, the weakness of Iranian revolutionaries was on display. Discussions during the last days of the first Assembly revealed that the salary reforms, like other financial plans, were not implemented, but the slightest moves in that direction had managed to spark widespread reaction nonetheless.¹¹⁹

These protests formed one basis for the counterrevolution. Counterrevolutionary activities took shape independently of one another and for different reasons in various parts of the capital and around the country. The government supported these financially and with manpower and seemed to have played a

¹¹⁶ *Majlis*, 30 October 1907/23 Ramadan 1325, p. 363; *Majlis*, 2 November 1907/26 Ramadan 1325, p. 365; *Majlis*, 9 November 1907/3 shawwal 1325, p. 376; *Majlis*, 16 November 1907/10 shawwal 1325, pp. 385–386; *Majlis*, 18 November 1907/12 shawwal 1325, p. 389; Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 114; Taqizadah, *Sih Khitabah*, pp. 50–52. Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat* p. 615–616.

¹¹⁷ Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 113. He also warned of the danger of abolishing the *tuyul*.

¹¹⁸ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 43, 16 June 1907/5 Jumada I 1325, p. 4; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 54, 29 June 1907/18 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–3; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 69, 16 July 1907/5 Jumada II 1325, pp. 1–3. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 72, 20 July 1907/9 Jumada II 1325, p. 3. *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 4, 19 June 1907/8 Jumada I 1325, pp. 4–5.

¹¹⁹ *Majlis*, 15 May 1908/13 Rabi' II 1326, p. 547. *Majlis*, 17 May 1908/15 Rabi' II 1326, p. 550. *Majlis*, 20 May 1908/18 Rabi' II 1326, p. 557. *Majlis*, 31 May 1908/29 Rabi' II 1326, pp. 566–567.

critical role in uniting the opposition. On the one hand, it was no secret that the shah, the court, and high officials were wooing *tuyul* owners and those threatened by salary cuts and the poor, or that they were preparing the army for an attack on the Assembly.¹²⁰ In a few well-publicized instances, the shah was implicated in the dispatching of troops to help organize meetings and raise tents for the protesting *tuyul* owners.¹²¹ In an Assembly session, the minister of war was ostracized for ordering the *tuyul* owners to join the crowds at the shrine of `Abdul`azim.¹²² Further, it was widely known that the shah and the government made large financial contributions to the conservative clerics through the Russian Bank. These clerics, in protest against the Assembly, had taken sanctuary at the shrine of `Abdul`azim and organized secret meetings to unite the opposition which brought together forces angered at financial, political, and religious reforms.¹²³ The repeated demands for the dismissal of ministers were also in part a protest against their open participation in anti-Assembly agitations.

ASSEMBLY AND THE PUBLIC

The Assembly was far from an impotent, helpless institution, thanks to the public support it received. The two revolutions were similar in relying on extra-parliamentary mechanisms to gain respect. These defenders of legality and proponents of the separation of powers repeatedly deviated from their legal mantra to interfere with the executive. Yet the nature of their support, kind of interference, and consequences for the movements were different because of differences in the institutional histories of Iran and the Ottoman Empire. If the CUP relied on the extensive network of officials and officers around the empire, the Iranian Assembly opted for what was at hand.

In the absence of a substantial following in the patrimonial bureaucracy or support from the army, the constitutionalists took great interest in the popular committees or *anjumans* that sprouted in major cities and in many smaller provincial towns. In an unusual legal maneuver, the Assembly made them an integral part of the state and bestowed upon the popularly staffed committees – mostly composed of guilds – many state-like functions. They frequently went beyond these and meddled in government business in the name of the public. The committees proved to be the most loyal and also radical supporters, and played

¹²⁰ *Majlis*, 29 April 1907/16 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 154–155. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, p. 499. *Musavat*, No. 6, 24 November 1907; *Musavat*, No. 9, 12 January 1908. *Musavat* (No. 6) appealed directly to the poor to ignore the instigation of the powerful and court elements who had found their traditional vested interests threatened by the Assembly.

¹²¹ *Majlis*, 6 June 1907/24 Rabi` II 1325, pp. 183–185; *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 5, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, p. 3. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 364, 366. When the shah dispatched troops to raise tents for religious mourners on another occasion, the committees that were aware of the intentions of organizers prevented the ceremony. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 374–375.

¹²² *Majlis*, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, p. 196.

¹²³ Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, pp. 129–130; *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 5, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, p. 3.

an essential role in the Assembly's power struggles. They organized large numbers of city dwellers, engaged in distinctive forms of collective action, and mobilized a popular militia. As a result, the Assembly was feared, and its orders were sometimes carried out.

In this sense the popular committees were analogous to the CUP branches throughout the empire. Without them, the legislature could not have made as strong an impression upon the executive and the task of reform could not have gotten under way or proceed as quickly. Both governments were infuriated by this. In Iran the legislature, and in the Ottoman Empire the CUP, were repeatedly reminded about stepping beyond their functions and meddling with the executive. The criticism brought forth the legal dilemma of the constitutionalists: a break with strict legality was required to intimidate the old regimes and was what made them constitutional *revolutionaries*, with all the contradictions entailed.

Even with the greater legal privileges of the Iranian committees, the Iranian Assembly was comparatively weaker. The reason highlights a major difference between the two. Iran witnessed a popular, multiclass movement while the other was a semipopular movement with a tightly knit class of soldiers and bureaucrats at its core. The CUP was an organized party, with disciplined centers and branches in all administrative districts (and even lower levels) around the empire that were capable of coordinated action; it had the overwhelming majority in the Chamber, and comfortable access to all state institutions, especially the military. Although it transcended the bounds of legality on many occasions, thanks to its insider status, much of what it did was either within the bounds of law or just on the margin. It clearly held the upper hand against the state. The pro-constitutional forces in Iran, in contrast, were far from anything resembling a single class, a political party, or even well-disciplined actors. The spontaneously formed committees were badly in need of coordinating action among themselves, let alone the Assembly, and these actions were taken, for the most part, haphazardly. When armed, the committees constituted an unruly popular militia that was hardly under the Assembly's control; relations were fraught with tension. Their goals overlapped in many important respects, but were not the same. If one aimed to subdue the executive, the other strove to end the transgressions of officials; if one looked to the "scientific" transformation of an outdated taxation structure, the other was engaged in a tax revolt; one strove to establish legality and the rule of law, the other strove for justice. One gave priority to the global discourse of constitutionalism, and negotiated it with regional and local cultural notions, together with local material concerns and interests; the other began its negotiation from the bottom up, that is, from monarchic and religious-centered notions of justice, but also kept an eye on its own material interests and concerns. They did speak in a mutually recognizable language, but their concerns overlapped rather than coincided. In short, one had an institution-building agenda while the other sought to redress a long list of grievances under Qajar rule. Despite the affinities, their differences became more apparent as time went by.

Committee Membership and Structure

Our concern here is with the popular societies that had membership, organizational structure, and goals that were quite different from the secretive intellectual societies of the intelligentsia and statesmen. The popular societies may be divided into official and nonofficial types. Most committees, and certainly the most significant ones, began their activities prior to being sanctioned by the law.¹²⁴ Upon legal recognition and designation as official, they were divided into three types: provincial (*ayalati*), subprovincial (*vilayati*) and municipal (*baladi*).¹²⁵ Yet the difference between official and nonofficial broke down, and distinction among official types was hard to maintain. Furthermore, consistent with administrative irregularities in Iran, at this time it was still unclear what constituted a province (*ayalat*) and what a subprovince (*vilayat*). When the Assembly finally recognized only four provinces in all of Iran, the matter became a source of friction and dismay for some committees that had previously designated themselves as provincial (*ayalati*) but were forced to downgrade, in name at least, to subprovincial (*vilayati*).¹²⁶

As evinced from the newspaper *Anjuman* of Tabriz – the organ of the most radical and significant provincial/official committee – the committees were in regular contact with official and nonofficial ones, were aware of problems and grievances in each locality, knew their membership composition, and in times of need, requested and came to each other's assistance. The Tabriz committee, for example, in addition to its frequent contacts with Tehran committees, was in close touch with official committees in major cities such as Rasht, Anzali, Isfahan, Shiraz, Qum, Mashhad, Qazvin, Kirman, and Kirmanshahan, among other locations. These in turn coordinated activities within the province. The committee in Tabriz, the capital of Azarbaijan, itself was the coordinating center for subprovincial committees in Maku, Khuy, Salmas, Urumiyah, and other locations; the Isfahan committee coordinated Qamshah, Mubarakah, and Abarquh. Newspapers, Assembly minutes, and memoirs clearly indicate that some kind of national organization of committees was in the making.¹²⁷

As mentioned, in practice it was hard to uphold the distinction between official and nonofficial committees. One received legal sanction as a state institution with

¹²⁴ The law on official (provincial, *ayalati* and subprovincial, *vilayati*) committees was one of the first bills approved by the Assembly (May 1907). *Musavvat*, I-II, pp. 64–84. The first issue of the newspaper *Anjuman*, the organ of the official committee in Tabriz, was published on February 1907. *Anjuman* was the new name for the 38th issue of the earlier *Jaridah-i Milli* which had begun publication in the last months of 1906. This organ and the Assembly minutes clearly demonstrate that many official committees were well established prior to legal recognition.

¹²⁵ For laws of municipal committees, see *Musavvat*, I-II, pp. 85–97; Browne, Edward G. *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 244–245.

¹²⁶ Ali Muradi Maraghah'i, *Ubur Az Istibdad-i Markazi* (Tehran: Awhadi, 2005), pp. 109–111.

¹²⁷ Note the valuable recent research by Muradi Maraghah'i, *Istibdad-i Markazi*.

defined responsibilities, and the other was an association of interested private individuals. Yet in Tabriz, as in other places, the popular committees were under the command of the official committee and reported to it.¹²⁸ Newspapers referred to them collectively as committees (*anjuman*); it would indeed have appeared odd to readers otherwise.¹²⁹

The large number of popular committees in Tehran had as its coordinating body the Central Committee (*anjuman-i markazi*), which in time became the leader of all Tehran committees to make their actions consistent.¹³⁰ This move came after ministers had been confronted with contradictory demands and in an effort to end conflicts of opinion among themselves. It informally included two representatives from each committee in the city among its permanent members. For key issues a collective vote was needed, and initial decisions were presented to important committees for deliberation and approval. From all indications, it seems the Central Committee's opinion prevailed for the most part, as it already included other committee representatives.¹³¹ The committees issued temporary identification cards to the qualified that were renewed periodically.¹³²

Estimates of the number of Tehran committees vary, with some contemporaries putting the number at 110 and 140's range.¹³³ Kasravi, the great historian of the constitutional revolution, mentions the figure 180, while the contemporary

¹²⁸ Ann K. S. Lambton, "Persian Political Societies, 1906–1911," *St. Antony's Papers*, No. 16, Middle Eastern Affairs, No. 3, 1963, p. 46. Also see later references to *Anjuman* for Tabriz and other official committees.

¹²⁹ See for example *Habl al-Matin*, No. 222, 4 February 1908/1 Muharram 1326, p. 1.

¹³⁰ Majd al-Islam Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Inbilal-i Majlis: Fasli az Tarikh-i Inqilab-i Mashrutiyat-i Iran* (Isfahan: Intisharat-i Danishgah-i Isfahan, 1351/1972). Majd al-Islam, a constitutionalist close to the reformist religious circles, scorned the extensive growth and proliferation of popular and provincial committees. His dislike for them, however, prompted him to record valuable information with regard to their organization. He also mocked the appellation "national" they had adopted and called them a band of ignoramus, traitor, indecent, uninformed, self-interested rascals and villains (see, for example, pp. 45, 49, 51–52). He considered the counterrevolutionary outbreak and the subsequent dissolution of the Assembly a direct result of their activities (p. 44, 51–52). Adamiyat notes that in competition with the Central Committee, a Mobile Committee was formed, but neither acted as promised and decision-making was more informal. Faridun Adamiyat, *Idi'uluzhi-yi Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat-i Iran*, Vol. 2 (Tehran: Intisharat-i Rushangaran, 2000), p. 134.

¹³¹ Majd al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Inbilal*, pp. 47–48. As an example of the informal code of conduct among the committees, Majd al-Islam recounts the decision making process with respect to the formation of the National Guard.

¹³² See *Musavat*, No. 23, 10 May 1908.

¹³³ The larger estimate is Taqizadah's. *Zindagi-i Tufani* p. 99; *Sih Khitabah* p. 44; Sadiq Mustashar al-Dawlah, *Khatirat va Asnad-i Mustashar al-Dawlah-i Sadiq*, Vol. 1, ed. I. Afshar (Tehran: Firdaws, 1982), p. 97; Mahdi Quli Hidayat, *Khatirat va Khatarat* (Tehran: Kitabfurushi-i Zuvvar, 1361/1982), pp. 151, 159. Hidayat, a pro-constitutional minister and the brother of Sani' al-Dawlah, the first head of the Assembly, had great reservations about the radical course of the constitutional movement, was hostile to the committees, and regarded them as destructive to the constitutional movement. His memoir, written years later, has problems similar to Nazim al-Islam's, and is less reliable. Both are immensely informative, however.

Ihtisham al-Saltanah puts the number in the 80s.¹³⁴ The largest of these, the radical committee of Azarbaijan (in Tehran), had more than 2,900 members.¹³⁵ Membership rolls for the various official and unofficial committees are extremely rare. However, despite variation of makeup in different cities, a great majority seems to have been drawn from the guilds.¹³⁶ This was clearly indicated by their names in Tehran, which, in addition to bearing regional or neighborhood affiliations, were mostly identified by trade, such as shoemaker, hatter, carriage driver, bookseller, and the like.¹³⁷

The guilds seemed to have dominated the majority of the official ones as well. The provincial committee in Tabriz, for example, boasted of its democratic nature and claimed that it was a true reflection of the city population because most members were of the city guilds. Its newspaper, *Anjuman*, showed that the guilds dominated the discussions, controlled membership, and felt free to dismiss representatives of the merchants, the clergy, and the notables and elect new members in their places.¹³⁸ On many occasions the provincial committee of Tabriz referred to its constituents as trades and guildsmen.¹³⁹ Some documents from the city of Rasht during the counterrevolutionary period lend strong support to this impression. We are fortunate to have a detailed list of sources of revenue (donations and extortions) and expenditure for the provincial committee of Gilan which lists predominantly guilds and trades as members, although merchants are conspicuously present as well. Included are also the expenditures of the popular committee of Sattar (the largest of its kind), and the expenditures of the War Council, of the Reserves Council, Organizing Council, City Cleaning Office, and the police. The list pertains to the counter-revolutionary period. It begins on 7 February 1909 (16 Muharram 1327), the day the committees defeated the government forces in Rasht, seized the city, killed the governor and reproclaimed the constitution. Its extensive funds and allocation roster clearly indicate the capacity of the committees to transform themselves into quasigovernmental institutions that controlled the city and administered its affairs. The provincial committee became the “government” in Rasht after the takeover.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Ahmad Kasravi Tabrizi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah-i Iran* (Gilan: Amir Kabir, 1330/1951), p. 569. Ihtisham al-Saltanah *Khatirat* p. 606. The latter is closer to Lambton's estimate of 100. “Political Societies,” p. 47. Muradi Maraghah'i's recent research similarly puts them at 80 to 130. *Istibdad-i Markazi*, p. 92 which is similar to Adamiyat's estimate of 70 to 150 *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 2, p. 132.

¹³⁵ Lambton, “Political Societies,” p. 47. For the names of some of the committees, one can refer to Nazim al-Islam, Majd al-Islam, and Habl al-Matin. See also Bayat for a useful description of elite and popular committees. *First Revolution* pp. 161–166.

¹³⁶ This is a conclusion that is also shared by Lambton. See “Political Societies,” p. 50.

¹³⁷ Majd al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Inhilal*, pp. 43–44. For another indication of the close relation between guilds and popular committees see *Majlis*, 17 August 1907/8 Rajab 1325, p. 250 and *Majlis*, 21 August 1907/12 Rajab 1325, pp. 256–257.

¹³⁸ They were dismissed after branding them traitors to the nation and state, *Anjuman*, No. 72, 1 May 1907/18 Rabi' I 1325, p. 2.

¹³⁹ For one of the many examples see *Anjuman*, No. 75, 6 May 1907/23 Rabi' I 1325, pp. 1–2.

¹⁴⁰ Rasht, after Isfahan, was the second major city seized by resistance (according to Browne on February 8). Tehran was seized on July 13, 1909. See H. L. Rabino *Mashrutah-i Gilan*, ed.

To claim that all committees were dominated by the guilds would be a stretch, however. Even the Rasht provincial committee at inception gave greater representation to the merchants and notables. (It was severely criticized for this by others, such as Tabriz, and later transformed its makeup radically.¹⁴¹) Much to the dismay of the constitutionalists, in some smaller regions the official committees were founded or dominated by the regional elite who thus took advantage of the new situation or settled accounts with old rivals.¹⁴² In this respect, they were no different than the CUP experience. And even when dominated by the guilds, the popular committees included other social strata, such as young graduates of modern schools and clerical students.

In Azarbaijan and Gilan, another significant factor came into play. Revolutionaries poured in from the Caucasus, from Russian Azarbaijan and Georgia in particular, bringing with them organizational skills, combat hardware, techniques, and ideas along with the violent tactics of Russian revolution. These could be divided into four distinct groups: the organization of Iranian Social Democrats in Baku, composed of Iranian merchants and workers (Firkah-i Ijtima'iyun-i 'Amiyun, 1905 or 1906); the organization of Muslim Social Democrats of Baku (Himmat, 1904), an outgrowth of Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (RSDWP) in Baku all with overlapping membership; the Tiflis RSDWP; and the Armenian Dashnak party (in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Iran). In touch with one another and with committees in northern Iran, these committees were a boon to the Assembly. Their help in mobilization of local committees significantly bolstered the Assembly's clout, radicalized the movement, and also contributed a good deal to the escalation of violence.¹⁴³

COMMITTEES IN ACTION

One can confidently claim that the official committees played a significant role in keeping governors and other provincial administrators and magnates in check. To compensate for lack of access to levers of power, the Assembly legally empowered the committees with many administrative functions and made its

Muhammad Rawshan (Rasht: Intisharat-i Ta'ati, 1989) pp. 235–346; Fakhra'i, *Gilan*, pp. 113–117, 129–145.

¹⁴¹ After demanding greater representation for the guilds in Rasht, the Tabriz committee cynically remarked that the committee in Rasht might not accomplish its tasks with its current makeup. *Anjuman*, the organ of the Tabriz committee, gave the following incomplete breakdown for its 40 members: guilds 6, merchants 10 to 12, clergy 4, clerical students 3, notables 4, and 5 to 6 from an "invisible" constituency. The Tabriz committee especially criticized the large number of notables, who purportedly numbered 20 to 30 in all of Rasht. See *Anjuman*, No. 63, 6 April 1907/22 Safar 1325, p. 2. For composition of Tabriz Committee, see *Anjuman*, No. 43, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 2.

¹⁴² For example see the incident in Maku. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 46, 19 June 1907/8 Jumada I 1325, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Afary, *Grassroots Democracy* pp. 73–92; Bayat *First Revolution* 76–105, 148–149, 189; Spector, *The First Russian Revolution*, p. 39; Muradi Maraghah'i, *Istibdad-i Markazi*, pp. 179–184; Houri Berberian, *Armenians*, pp. 116–156; Fakhra'i, *Gilan* pp. 115–117; Adamiyat, *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 2, pp. 107–148. Lambton, *Political Societies*, p. 51.

presence known through institutions partially and legally integrated into the state. The Assembly used the provincial committees to enforce the new laws and regulations and to deter the local power holders, official or otherwise. They were given the right to request any and all kinds of information from the heads of various administrative offices, which the latter was obliged to abide (article 67); and such communication could take place directly and without the intermediation of the governor (article 68).¹⁴⁴ They were empowered to supervise the enactment of laws in the provinces, issue warnings, and propose reforms for the security and progress of the province (article 87). They could investigate all complaints about the governors and subprovincial governors, and to issue warnings in case of legal infractions. They reported the matter to the central administration and asked for redress of grievances if the problem remained unresolved (article 89). They heard complaints against the rulings of *urfi* courts and made appeals in the same courts, with the authority to pursue the matter in central courts (article 90).

To relieve the burden of erratic, inconsistent, and heavy taxation, provincial committees were authorized to supervise tax collection, ensure its conformity with the law, and settle complaints. They also investigated requests for tax relief and discerned damages caused by natural calamities (articles 91, 92). According to circumstances, the official committees were permitted to levy new taxes for public works projects such as the construction of bridges, schools, and roads, or to take a loan from the province (articles 93, 94, 95, 96).¹⁴⁵ Browne argued that the Assembly viewed the provincial committees as “the chief mechanism whereby it was hoped to relieve the taxpayer from the intolerable exaction.”¹⁴⁶ The provincial committees frequently assumed greater functions and kept the local administrators under close scrutiny. With a strong sense of “popular justice,” they strove to restore the public’s violated rights.

In practice, the committee operated as a Council of Grievances or a House of Justice, a notion dear to the guilds. In Tabriz, for example, the city’s inhabitants and residents of the province at large brought concerns to the committee meetings, which took place in a public space. The members, almost invariably in sympathy with the aggrieved, deliberated in public. Typical were the protests of Maku inhabitants against the local landlords, or those of Maragah inhabitants against the provincial officials. In response to the first, the committee contacted the governor immediately and demanded official intervention against the local

¹⁴⁴ Exceptions were offices under direct supervision of governors, in which case the committee was obliged to address the governor directly. *Musavvat, I-II*, p. 73.

¹⁴⁵ *Musavvat, I-II*, pp. 73–77. The law with regard to provincial and subprovincial committees has 122 articles and the above were simply illustrative of the newly acquired responsibilities of the official committees, and by extension, the Assembly, against the provincial governments. Browne also mentions the right to supervise elections of all kinds, although it does not receive mention in the enacted laws. Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 245.

¹⁴⁶ See Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 245.

landlords; and in the second case it contacted the officials' superiors to demand their removal.¹⁴⁷

The Tabriz committee took it upon itself to set prices for essential commodities – prices had been the subject of most complaints from the guilds and inhabitants.¹⁴⁸ Chief among these was the price of bread. As a lesson to hoarders, the committee confiscated and sold the grain holdings of a wealthy merchant at a “fair” price; and to distinguish this noble act from robbery, it delivered the proceeds to the merchant. The committee changed its ways, however, when admonished by the Assembly and began to resolve price disputes with merchants by inviting them to committee meetings, where lower grain prices were negotiated, undoubtedly through some level of intimidation.¹⁴⁹ In another instance of reproach by Assembly on behalf of some officials, it claimed to have only halted bribery and dismissed their complaints as the work of officials “whose unusual allowance is acquired from the pockets of ordinary folks, and the prosperity of their houses has come from the ruin of homes of widows and orphans. Praise be to God that for the [committee’s recent undertaking], winds have stopped blowing and ships have run aground.”¹⁵⁰ The description by some historians of committees as an autonomous government within the government of Tabriz is certainly accurate.¹⁵¹ Actions surprisingly similar were repeated in Anzali, Rasht, and Isfahan.¹⁵² In Rasht and Anzali in particular, provincial committees moved to set taxes of their own and took over some government monopolies.¹⁵³ The sense of “moral economy” was clearly evident.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁷ *Anjuman*, No. 42, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 4. *Anjuman*, No. 46, 19 February 1907/6 Muharram 1325, p. 1. For additional similar complaints of inhabitants of Qarachadagh, Qarachaman, Ardabil and the provincial committee’s actions see *Anjuman*, No. 53, p. 3, No. 69, pp. 11–4, No. 74, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ For example see *Anjuman*, No. 38, 2 February 1907/18 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 1–2. *Anjuman*, No. 39, 4 February 1907/20 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 3–4.

¹⁴⁹ *Anjuman*, No. 41, 9 February 1907/25 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 2. *Anjuman*, No. 42, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 4. *Anjuman*, No. 47, 26 February 1907/13 Muharram 1325, p. 2. *Anjuman*, No. 62, 4 April 1907/20 Safar 1325, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ *Anjuman*, No. 41, 9 February 1907/25 Dhu al-Hijja, 1324, p. 2. In the same issue, in response to one of the earliest admonitions of the clerical leaders, the committee in Tabriz responded by making an indirect reference to Tabataba’i and Bihbahani, alluding that they should tone down their criticism.

¹⁵¹ Bayat, *First Revolution*, p. 151. Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 89–92.

¹⁵² The price setting activities in Tehran were directed by the municipal committee. For one of the most detailed looks at Isfahan, see Maraghah’i Muradi Istibdad-i Markazi, pp. 149–175.

¹⁵³ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 16, 16 May 1907/3 Rabi` II 1325, pp. 3–4. Lambton, “Political Societies,” p. 48.

¹⁵⁴ E. P. Thompson’s discussion of “moral economy” was situated in the context of advent of capitalism and industrialization. It appears that destruction of crafts in the cities in response to the large volumes of imported cheaper and higher quality European goods was a major cause of guilds’ and trades’ discontent as indicated by demands (e.g., emphasis on domestically manufactured fabric) and opposition literature. See E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” in *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York: New Press, 1993), pp. 185–258. See also Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

Keeping an eye on the local governors, rulers, and magnates, the committees regularly filed reports for the Assembly and to Tehran popular committees. Many Assembly sessions were devoted to reading these reports and discussing complaints from one or another of the provincial committees. When the Assembly did not respond readily, or if the complaints were particularly severe, they engaged in a distinctive form of collective action. First, the bazaars and places of trade shut down, followed by taking sanctuary in the telegraph office while the militia engaged in symbolic military drills. Occupying the telegraph office was a way to converse directly with the source of justice – for now, the Assembly at Tehran and the shah. They left only after a positive reply, a matter that sometimes could take weeks. The following, on 16 May 1907, called for ratification of the Supplement to the constitution in Gilan province:

Gilan had shut down for three days. In Rasht and Anzali the bazaars and shops were closed and most people of Anzali and its environs came to the city, took sanctuary at the telegraph office, and raised the cries of Oh constitution, Oh laws, Oh ratification, Oh implementation to the heavens. The group of Mujahidin and Fada'iyān, whose numbers were many, put on military attire, paraded in the city and performed military drills in the compound of the telegraph office. People from the surrounding areas entered the compounds in companies carrying red banners. The students paced the compound with red banners and delivered lengthy speeches. The notables, the clergy, and others also came to the telegraph office and sent telegraphic petitions (*'arizah-yi tiligrafi*) to the Assembly and to His Majesty in Tehran, persistently demanding and requesting the completion of the constitution, ratification of other laws, and their implementation. There was a marvelous commotion until yesterday afternoon, the 20th of the present month, an answer came from Tehran indicating that in a week's time all matters will be rectified and [the Supplement] ratified. However, the Fada'iyān were still not content with this answer and left the telegraph office in their military uniforms and headed for Rasht to join the Fada'iyān there so that they might devise a plan for ratification and implementation of laws. They were not convinced by the courtiers' threats and promises. By whatever means at hand, they were returned half way and given assurances of Tehran's telegraphic reply. Today the shops in the bazaar are open and people are attending to their own businesses. Also the customs administration, which had been prevented from business by the public and Fada'iyān, has started to operate today. God willing, all affairs will be rectified soon and the municipal and provincial protocols arrive so that the duties of every social rank will be specified and the public can rest in comfort.¹⁵⁵

Tehran committees were no different. As an unsympathetic observer put it, the committees interfered in all matters, “discussed the price of foodstuffs, corresponded directly with the ministers about government affairs, dismissed, appointed, and changed governors and officials without missing a beat, communicated with the governors in an official capacity and provided prescriptions in accordance with their desires, quarreled with the representatives over their

¹⁵⁵ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 16, 16 May 1907/3 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 3–4. For descriptions of similar incidents in Tabriz see *Anjuman*, No. No. 44, 14 February 1907/1 Muharram 1325, pp. 1–4. *Anjuman*, No. No. 45, 17 February 1907/4 Muharram 1325, pp. 1–4; *Anjuman*, No. 75, 6 May 1907/23 Rabi' I 1325, pp. 1–2. And especially *Anjuman*, No. 91, 2 June 1907/20 Rabi' II 1325.

speeches, . . .” and the list went on.¹⁵⁶ In a historian’s opinion, the provincial committees vied for local autonomy and the “governors were showing themselves powerless to deal with them.”¹⁵⁷ Although in some places the governors and local magnates did successfully resist establishment of committees, or created rival ones when that was not possible.¹⁵⁸

Committees and the Assembly

Within the Assembly, there was a broad range of opinion about the committees. The radicals sought their assistance, cooperated with them, and defended their rights, much to the dislike and disapproval of the moderates and conservatives. The relation between the two was strained at best, especially as the committees consistently sought to steer the Assembly in a more radical direction. In turn, the Assembly found itself in a legal bind – even if it glorified laws and called for the separation of the legislative from executive, it was frequently forced to defend the committees that violated this balance openly.

The official committee in Tabriz, about which we have the best information, mimicked as best as it could the Assembly in Tehran, perhaps a common practice elsewhere. It addressed its members as *vakil*, and commonly called itself the “Sacred National Committee,” a close take on the “Sacred National Assembly.” When the representatives in Tehran attempted to dissociate the National Assembly from a Council of Grievances, the Tabriz committee mimicked its words but without any real intention to stop being a place where the public grievances were attended to, in words or in action.¹⁵⁹ The Tehran Assembly for its part had a hard time dismissing the idea of the Council of Grievances, partly because its deliberations were open to the public and took place in the presence of an animated crowd, with frequent interjections. In this respect it did resemble the provincial committees; its frequent interference with the executive by relying on committees further complicated the attempt at dissociation.

The Tehran popular committees had their headquarters at the *Sipahsalar* school, adjacent to the Assembly, with easy access for sanctuary in its grounds.¹⁶⁰ With growing activities of the counterrevolution, the committees urged the Assembly for more decisive action. For example, they sought confiscation of the religious opposition’s lithographic press at their place of sanctuary in ‘Abdul‘azim, as well as the repulsion of the assembled crowd by force to preempt plans to shut down the bazaar. They threatened that if the Assembly failed to act on their demands within three days, the committees would shut

¹⁵⁶ Majd al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Inhilal*, pp. 42–43. ¹⁵⁷ Lambton “Political Societies,” p. 54.

¹⁵⁸ Muradi Maraghah’i *Istibdad-i Markazi* pp. 129–147.

¹⁵⁹ See for example *Anjuman*, No. 42, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 4. *Anjuman*, No. 53, 13 March 1907/28 Muharram 1325, p. 3. *Anjuman*, Nos. 77–78, 4 May 1907/21 Rabi’ I 1325, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ A typical example may be found in *Habl al-Matin*, No. 218, 29 January 1908/25 Dhu al-Hijja 1325.

down the pro-constitutional guilds and take sanctuary at the Shah mosque.¹⁶¹ In the course of this growing conflict, after citing the apparent failure of the police to enforce the law, the popular committees urged the Assembly to create a National Guard and to leave the city's protection in their hands.¹⁶² They also asked for permission to collect the monetary sums that the Assembly had ordered from princes and high-ranking officials, who had as yet refused to pay. These and similar suggestions were not particularly welcomed by the Assembly.¹⁶³

The shah and his ministers detested public interference with matters they considered their own. The ministers and officials repeatedly asked the Assembly to stop the provincial committees and questioned their right to petition the government as an instrument for pressure. Even the more sympathetic ones warned the Assembly about being overshadowed by the committees, a second Assembly that threatened the survival of the first; without disparaging them as integral to the Assembly, they suggested improving education and industry as more constructive avenues for the committees' energies, rather than meddling in politics.¹⁶⁴

The frustration prompted the shah to address the Assembly on late November 1907. In an angry, cleverly crafted letter that employed the rhetoric of constitutionalists, he commanded the Assembly to confine itself to the legislative, stop interfering with the executive, and blamed the commotions on the Assembly's confusion about the separation of powers. He further added:

The people [of Tehran] do not have sleep or comfort day and night with their lives and property insecure. The seditious, under the pretext of committees, have each assigned a location to themselves and disturb the inhabitants' peace and the city's order. They defame the upright committees, and intrude into all affairs political, governmental and parliamentary. I implore you, under which republican government, let alone constitutional ones, do we see such intrusions? If it is to protect the Assembly, such a responsibility, according to the oath I have taken on the Qur'an, is my personal responsibility and not the subjects'. Then what are these acts and why does no one prevent the few committees that disturb the peace and create a tumult and disorder every day? From this day all committees that intend to create disorder and generate sedition should be strictly banned. Until the laws concerning the committees are not written and followed closely they may not convene and deprive the nation of comfort and cause disorder in the country. The government should bring order and restore security to this city with utmost strength . . .¹⁶⁵

The Assembly in turn responded by blaming the court, the large land owners, the executive, some clerical leaders, and finally the shah; it would not accept any

¹⁶¹ *Majlis*, 17 August 1907/8 Rajab 1325, pp. 250–252. *Majlis*, 21 August 1907/12 Rajab 1325, pp. 256–257.

¹⁶² *Majlis*, 18 November 1907/12 Shawwal 1325, pp. 389–390.

¹⁶³ *Majlis*, 18 November 1907/12 Shawwal 1325, pp. 389–390; *Majlis*, 20 November 1907/14 Shawwal 1325, pp. 390–391.

¹⁶⁴ Muhtashim al-Saltanah, *Majlis*, 10 May 1907/27 Rabi' I 1325, p. 163; *Majlis*, 8 August 1907/28 Jumada II 1325, p. 237. Hidayat, *Khatirat va Khatarat*, p. 159.

¹⁶⁵ *Majlis*, 27 November 1907/21 Shawwal 1325, p. 398.

blame for the committees or itself. Its letter to the shah denied ever stepping beyond its sphere of responsibility and instead accused the executive of having done so.¹⁶⁶

Not all Assembly members were in principle opposed to the shah's opinion.¹⁶⁷ For the high-ranking, pro-constitutional clerics Tabataba'i and Bihbahani, these arguments rang a sympathetic chord. Like many sympathizers, the clerical leaders were neither prepared for nor approved of the radical mass outbreaks unfolding before their eyes. The more conservative Bihbahani expressed his disapproval through sparse attendance and quietism. Tabataba'i vocally attacked the committees for creating disorder, taking matters into their own hands, and intending to destroy the Assembly. Without naming anyone, he also reproached the representatives with intimate connections to them, and questioned the legitimacy of their election to the Assembly.¹⁶⁸ Many conservatives agreed with Tabataba'i and criticized harshly newspapers such as *Habl al-Matin*, which echoed committee opinions, and expressed great anger at anonymous leaflets (*shabnamah*), which scolded the clergy and government officials, or ordered them to stop their activities, like one that was directed at the Ministry of Interior.¹⁶⁹ Provincial committees were also object of scorn, especially the Tabriz committee. In an early instance of fissure between Tabriz and the Assembly, the committee defended its role in preventing the return of tyrannical and unjust officials and described its four-days-a-week gatherings as providing a flicker of hope for the helpless inhabitants. It blamed the insecurity and disorders on the officials instead.¹⁷⁰ It even alluded to Tabataba'i and Bihbahani, asking them to tone down their criticisms.¹⁷¹

More than a few times did the representatives complain about being harassed, haggled with, and beaten by the committees, and there was even report of an assassination attempt on a representative who had been branded as a tyrant (*mustabid*).¹⁷² The committees' most dramatic action against the Assembly came during the last months of its operation in April 1908, when they forced Ihtisham al-Saltanah, the (second) head of the Assembly, to resign. Not content with the announcement, a group of armed committee men forced their way into his house to confront him with a signed demand from fifty-five Tehran committees for a written statement.¹⁷³ Ihtisham al-Saltanah found their leaders in the

¹⁶⁶ *Majlis*, 27 November 1907/21 Shawwal 1325, pp. 398–404.

¹⁶⁷ For discussions over this particular letter between the conservatives headed by Imam Jum'ah and radicals headed by Taqizadah see *Majlis*, 30 November 1907/24 Shawwal 1325, pp. 403–404.

¹⁶⁸ Taqizadah seems to have been the main target. *Majlis*, 26 March 1907/11 Safar 1325, p. 117; *Majlis*, 1, 9 April 1907/25 Safar 1325, p. 130; *Majlis*, 28 August 1907/19 Rajab 1325, p. 266.

¹⁶⁹ *Majlis*, 9 April 1907/25 Safar 1325, p. 130; *Majlis*, 6 August 1907/26 Jumada II 1325, pp. 229–231; *Majlis*, 30 October 1907/23 Ramadan 1325, p. 362; *Majlis*, 4 November 1907/28 Ramadan 1325, p. 369.

¹⁷⁰ *Anjuman*, No. 40, 7 February 1907/23 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 1–4.

¹⁷¹ *Anjuman*, No. 41, 9 February 1907/25 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 2.

¹⁷² *Majlis*, 3 July 1907/22 Jumada I 1325, p. 203.

¹⁷³ *Majd al-Islam, Tarikh-i Inhilal*, pp. 49–51. Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat*, pp. 642–644.

Assembly rootless, without substantial family or property to be in fear of chaos and financial or physical harm.¹⁷⁴ In this sense, he reflected the fears of many pro-constitutional high officials with strong connections to, or in this particular case, members of, the Qajar household who had developed a strong distaste for radicalism of the public and some representatives. This included the likes of Sani` al-Dawlah, Mukhbir al-Saltanah, and Mustashar al-Dawlah, among others.¹⁷⁵ But certainly such distaste extended to many representatives and publics beyond officialdom, like clerics, merchants, and others.

As the more radical members consolidated their position, the Assembly became a bolder and more vocal advocate, which forced the conservatives into silence, even in the face of actions far more disturbing.¹⁷⁶ The radical faction had close ties to the committees and championed their cause with its informal leader, the young and charismatic deputy from Tabriz, Taqizadah.¹⁷⁷ In the session that the conservatives denounced the committees for making an assassination attempt against one of their own, the radicals appealed for their help to disperse the growing counterrevolutionary crowds. The same divergence of opinion could be found during the radicals' defense of the committees against government crack-downs.¹⁷⁸ But perhaps the most direct sign of affinity came when Taqizadah, in face of intensified counterrevolutionary activities and physical attacks on the Assembly building, threatened the opposition with the National Guard (*Quva-yi Milli*) in the name of the "nation." In anticipation of a larger regular official militia, he proposed the formation of a small force to protect the Assembly.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat*, pp. 618–619.

¹⁷⁵ This is also the view adopted by the most celebrated historian of this movement, Adamiyat, in his final work on the question. He essentially blames the demise of the movement to the radicalism of a few supported by violence of committees, a claim he substantiates by reference to views of constitutionalist statesmen in particular. See especially *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 2, pp. 107–148, 203–215, 269–286, 295–301.

¹⁷⁶ The champions of committees' cause were not the guild representatives who remained silent on this and many other issues. Their silence may be attributed to their status consciousness. In fact, they had elected a non-guild member, Vali Allah Khan, as their spokesperson. It is also possible that the scribes' elite-oriented bias may have left their voices unrecorded. The scribes certainly failed to record audience interjections, and the proceedings are more concise than the Ottoman Chamber proceedings.

¹⁷⁷ Majd al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Inhial*, pp. 40–41. See also Adamiyat, *Nabzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 1, pp. 364, 366. Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat*, p. 615.

¹⁷⁸ For the first incident see *Majlis*, 3 July 1907/22 Jumada I 1325, p. 203. The government had claimed that the Assembly had approved a general crackdown on the committees. The radicals, still in a defensive posture, disagreed strongly with a general clampdown and argued that only with respect to a few lawless committees had they approved of such actions. Later, when the activities of the committees had reached a new height and the radicals were gaining the upper hand, they argued that the government should confine itself to arrest of a few who may have acted illegally. See *Majlis*, 15 April 1907/2 Rabi` I 1325, p. 137 and *Majlis*, 26 August 1907/17 Rajab 1325, pp. 263–264.

¹⁷⁹ *Majlis*, 16 November 1907/10 Shawwal 1325, pp. 385–386; *Majlis*, 18 November 1907/12 Shawwal 1325, pp. 389–390.

The Popular Militia

In the winter of 1906–1907, the provincial committee of Tabriz began organizing a popular militia and used the growing city and provincial disorders as an excuse to extend operations and gradually to dominate the city. On Fridays, the bazaars closed down by committee order and crowds gathered in three mosques. From the pulpit, popular, lower-ranking clerics delivered sermons in defense of constitutional government to the crowds; in populist language, they spoke of the country's weakness and its previous military defeats by neighboring Russia, and encouraged people to take up arms and learn the military arts.¹⁸⁰ On Fridays early in the afternoon and on week days after the closing of the bazaar, guild members of all sorts put on special uniforms made of domestic fabrics and at the city outskirts performed martial drills and target practice to prepare “for holy war, one of the precepts of Islam.”¹⁸¹ The Tabriz militia repeatedly reacted to the news of anti-constitutionalists from Tehran or provinces through symbolic displays. In late spring 1907, in response to news from Rahim Khan and his sons, who were raising havoc in Azarbaijan province, the militia organized in several units of one thousand and marched with its banners and martial bands to the telegraph office where the crowds had convened, and from there to the exercise ground, where they put on display their military prowess.¹⁸² The committee, with the increased need for city protection, used the opportunity to muster more resources and build stronger organizations as they began to patrol the city neighborhoods.¹⁸³

An undated 18-point guideline for the duties and responsibilities of the *mujahidin* (*taklifat-i mujahidin*) in Tabriz provides a window onto their organizational structure: The *mujahid* operates under the command of the committee, and the committee is under the command of its chief and the war commission. The *mujahid* should devote himself entirely to the public welfare and be known as a constitutionalist. He may belong to any religion or creed, but should act according to the prescriptions of his religion. The *mujahids* should practice their respective professions and take leave only when a meeting is called to discuss matters. They are obligated to abide by every decision taken at the meeting, and should unconditionally abide by the chief's orders. In case of deviation, punishments will be meted out against the particular *mujahidin*, their family members and acquaintances, and they should report on such deviations and arrest perpetrators without regard to their affiliation.

It seems that the *mujahidin* were divided into ten member cells, their immediate leaders referred to by the military rank title of *dahbashi* or corporal, who

¹⁸⁰ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 234–235.

¹⁸¹ *Anjuman*, No. 67, 19 April 1907/6 Rabi` I 1325, p. 3. *Anjuman*, No. 75, 6 May 1907/23 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 1–2. Quote from No. 67. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 234–237. The government complained to the Assembly particularly about the armed uniform men in Tabriz. *Majlis*, 10 May 1907/27 Rabi` I 1325, p. 163.

¹⁸² *Anjuman*, No. 91, 2 June 1907/20 Rabi` II 1325, p. 2.

¹⁸³ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 357, 394–399.

were chosen from the most talented and obedient members. The rank and file were under the strict command of leaders and forbidden to act without their permission. They reported to the chief of the war committee and made requests only through their corporal. The regulations left no doubt that *mujahidin* salaries were collected primarily from the public as they were obliged to remit the entirety of the “legitimate salaries” they had collected on each assignment to their corporal for submission to the chief, who then distributed these sums among the committee. The *mujahidin* were strongly discouraged against black-mailing the public with threats of punishment, and as an internal check they were obliged to report to the chief costs and expenditures prior to each assignment. Their arms (guns, revolvers, glaives, daggers, knives) were stored under their names in the armory of the war commission. They retrieved their arms only for assignments that required their use after submitting receipts, and were obliged to return them at the conclusion of assignments. On a personal level, they were to be honorable, of good reputation, and holders of positive characteristics. In this particular instance, the head of the *mujahidin* was a certain “monsieur” Is-haq, most probably a revolutionary with experience from the Caucasus.¹⁸⁴

The popular committees in Tehran soon followed Tabriz, Rasht, and Anzali. Their activities, with the outbreak of counterrevolutionary disorders, also escalated to new heights.¹⁸⁵ Some Tehran committees, no doubt under the influence of the young revolutionary intelligentsia, self-consciously modeled their militia after the French National Guard and used the French appellation or various Persian renditions.¹⁸⁶ An early newspaper announcement that encouraged volunteers read as follows:

O patriotic honorable fathers and dear brothers, the present state of Iran is what you now see. Remember that for one hundred and twenty years we were enslaved by oppression and tyranny. And now that for nearly a year we have intended to free ourselves from the shackles of tyranny, they have besieged us from all sides, have built entrenchments against us shepherdless lambs, and have [evil] intentions for us. O braves, zealous, and those who refuse to fall victim to tyrants: Why was the National Guard banned? Are you lesser than the Tabriz inhabitants who at the moment have thousands of soldiers with weapons and uniforms and are ready to sacrifice their lives for the nation and their kind . . . It is then time for the brave residents of Tehran to follow their example and have one person from each household perform military drills three times a week in a [designated location].¹⁸⁷

One hundred and twenty years corresponded roughly to the Qajar reign (ca. 1795), and its use was reminiscent of the Young Turks’ reference to thirty-three years of Hamidian rule.

Initially, the advocates of the National Guard used the pretext of the necessity of defense against Britain and Russia, which had recently divided Iran into

¹⁸⁴ KMT, Doc. no. 1180, n.d. The place of publication is unstated, but most probably Tabriz.

¹⁸⁵ The increase was particularly noted after the Tupkhanah incident.

¹⁸⁶ They went by various names such as *Garde Nationale*, *Gard-i Milli*, *Quwa-yi Milli* or *Nizam-i Milli*.

¹⁸⁷ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 101, 26 August 1907/17 Rajab 1325, pp. 4–5.

northern and southern spheres of influence (31 August 1907), or against the Ottomans, who in the chaos had encroached upon the northern territories.¹⁸⁸ Yet the real purpose for which the Guard was created could not be concealed, nor was the government convinced by the scenario of national defense. In any event, with the intensification of internal disorders the pressure for creation of an armed National Guard mounted,¹⁸⁹ and its advocates soon professed its goal of defending the constitution against internal enemies, as the French revolutionaries had purportedly done with the National Guard.¹⁹⁰

The Assembly moderates shied away and argued against the need for an armed volunteer militia composed of various ranks of the public. Many mocked the appellation “Garde National” as a shallow reenactment of the French Revolution and their members’ desire to play Robespierre, substitute for Marat, or impersonate Danton. A military force that opposed the government could only antagonize the shah and the court, they objected, and played into their hands. The radical associates, on the other hand, cited the shah’s repeated unwillingness to cooperate with the “nation,” not putting into effect the Assembly-approved laws. The stronger the National Guard was, they argued, the more fearful would be the shah, which bolstered their chances of success.¹⁹¹

That the Assembly on its part never legally approved the formation of the National Guard did not stop the committees. With the help of a few army officers, the militia began to drill and organize in special uniforms.¹⁹² They also began to extort money from the wealthy for arms and setting up neighborhood militias.¹⁹³ However, we do not have even partially accurate assessments of their numbers. Contemporary estimates range from two thousand to one hundred thousand.¹⁹⁴ But regardless of the discrepancy in the reported numbers, the contemporaries were in agreement that the shah, the court, and the government were enraged and horrified at the National Guard’s formation.

¹⁸⁸ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 157, 9 November 1907/3 Shawwal 1325, p. 1. On the Anglo-Russian convention and its immense negative ramification for the constitutional movement, see Bonakdarian *Britain*.

¹⁸⁹ *Majlis*, 18 November 1907/12 Shawwal 1325, pp. 386–387, 389–390; *Majlis*, 20 November 1907/14 Shawwal 1325, pp. 390–391.

¹⁹⁰ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 222, 4 February 1908/1 Muharram 1326, pp. 1, 3; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 223, 5 February 1908/2 Muharram 1326, pp. 1–2; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 236, 25 February 1908/22 Muharram 1326, pp. 2–3. These pages are replete with references to the French Revolution. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, pp. 201–202.

¹⁹¹ *Majlis*, 18 November 1907/12 Shawwal 1325, pp. 386–387, 389–390; *Majlis*, 20 November 1907/14 Shawwal 1325, pp. 390–391; Majd al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Inbilal*, pp. 81–82; Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, pp. 202–203; Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat*, pp. 618–623.

¹⁹² The popular preacher Malik al-Mutakallimin also seems to have played a large part in the affair. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, pp. 201–202.

¹⁹³ Majd al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Inbilal*, pp. 84–86.

¹⁹⁴ The larger estimate is that of Majd al-Islam. See *Tarikh-i Inbilal*, p. 84. Dawlatabadi and Arjomand, who accepts his estimate, put the figure at 2000. See *Hayat-i Yahya*, p. 203. Arjomand, *Turban for the Crown*, p. 39.

The Battle Over the Supplement

In the midst of intensifying anti-Assembly agitation, uncooperative government, and the fight over the ratification of the far-reaching Supplement, the shah appointed Prime Minister Atabak (Amin al-Sultan), a reputedly ardent anti-constitutionalist who turned out to be a moderate bent on compromise. Atabak, who was touring Europe at the time of his recall, met strong resistance even before setting foot on the Iranian soil. On his way to board a ship heading for Iran in the city of Baku, he escaped an assassination attempt.¹⁹⁵ Once at the port of Anzali, committees prevented him from disembarking before he swore allegiance to the constitution. Even then, the Assembly in Tehran had to intervene to allow his safe passage.¹⁹⁶ He was introduced to the Assembly on 3 May 1907, but the Assembly still felt the need to assure committees in all of Azarbaijan, Rasht, Anzali, Qazvin, Mashad, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Kirmanshahan of Atabak's pledge to cooperate.¹⁹⁷

During Atabak's stormy four-month tenure as prime minister, the main conflicts resurfaced in a more contentious form. The government was definitively tied to the growing counterrevolution. The representatives pointed to instances of direct collaboration between government troops and officials during various incidents, which, framed in the constitutional language, were presented as further proof of the executive's uncooperative stance toward the Assembly.¹⁹⁸ The Assembly, on its part, interpellated the ministers more intensely and warned that they must deal with the counterrevolution or be dismissed as a group. Constitutionally, however, it did not yet have such authority.¹⁹⁹ Committees accused Atabak of delaying ratification of the Supplement, which was to confer extensive powers on the Assembly.²⁰⁰ The Assembly itself blamed other ministers, especially the war minister,²⁰¹ who did not bother to respond to a single interpellation and was a favorite target for the venting of the Assembly's anger. Although they did not have the power to dismiss him, the radicals demanded his dismissal and even took a vote to this effect.²⁰²

¹⁹⁵ Hidayat, *Khatirat*, p. 152.

¹⁹⁶ Burujini, *Asr-i Mashrutiyat*, p. 12; Hidayat, *Khatirat*, pp. 152–153; Fakhra'i, *Gilan*, pp. 65–67.

¹⁹⁷ *Majlis*, 3 May 1907/20 Rabi' I 1325, p. 158; Burujini, *Asr-i Mashrutiyat*, p. 12; Sadiq Mustashar al-Dawlah *Khatirat*, Vol. 2, p. 32. Despite the tensions, both sides had adopted conciliatory language on the day of introduction to the Assembly. For his newfound moderation after European and Japanese trips, see Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat*, p. 575. Adamiyat, *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 2, pp. 51–64.

¹⁹⁸ *Majlis*, 10 May 1907/27 Rabi' I 1325, p. 164; *Majlis*, 13 May 1907/30 Rabi' I 1325, p. 165. *Majlis*, 6 June 1907/24 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 183–185; *Majlis*, 12 August 1907/3 Rajab 1325, pp. 242–245.

¹⁹⁹ *Majlis*, 21 May 1907/8 Rabi' II 1325, p. 172; *Majlis*, 5 July 1907/24 Jumada I 1325.

²⁰⁰ Although Nuri was also blamed for the delay, ultimately Atabak was considered the major culprit. *Anjuman*, No. 99, 14 June 1907/3 Jumada I 1325, pp. 3–4.

²⁰¹ Mirza Hasan Khan Mustawfi al-Mamalik was the minister of war under Atabak.

²⁰² *Majlis*, 16 May 1907/3 Rabi' II 1325. *Majlis*, 10 June 1907/28 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 186–187. *Majlis* 6 July 1907/25 Jumada I 1325, pp. 206–207. *Majlis*, 1 August 1907/21 Jumada II 1325, p. 222. *Majlis*, 9 August 1907/29 Jumada II 1325, p. 239. *Majlis*, 26 August 1907/17 Rajab 1325, pp. 263–264.

The end of Atabak's prime ministership marked a turning point. On 30 August 1907 (21 Rajab 1325), as he was descending the stairs of the Assembly compound in the company of representatives, after a session during which he and the entire cabinet had promised closer cooperation, a young man approached him and fired a number of fatal shots at close range. After a short chase by the Assembly guards, the assailant took his own life. The identification card recovered from the body revealed him to be Abbas Aqa of Tabriz, member No. 41 of the money-exchangers' committee. Later investigation confirmed Abbas Aqa's membership in the money-exchangers' guild, but no committee with that name existed. The established bazaar guilds and committees were quick to distance themselves. They condemned the killing and demanded the arrest of the perpetrators.²⁰³

The expressions of grief and fear of guilt by association did not last long. On the contrary, the incident became an occasion for further confrontations. Notwithstanding endless speculation by generations of historians, it did not really matter whether the assassin was a committee member, an agent of radical representatives, a government lackey, or anything else. That he was zealously venerated as a committee member and a martyr for the constitutional cause was what counted.²⁰⁴ The first surprise came when the prime minister was not mourned in public ceremonies. Instead, the committees compelled the government to surrender Abbas Aqa's secretly buried body, gave it a martyr's ablution, and mourned him publicly.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, the representatives of at least forty-three committees, including all the major ones, demanded the release of Abbas Aqa's apprentice after he took sanctuary at the Assembly compound.²⁰⁶ In Shiraz, in a copycat incident, the notorious anti-constitutionalist magnate Qavam, was assassinated in public by a committee member who then committed suicide.²⁰⁷

On the fortieth day of mourning for Abbas Agha (6 October 1907), the Tehran committees and a large number of students came in groups to adorn with flowers the grave of their martyr, now commemorated as a national hero. The two popular preachers tied intimately to the guilds, Sayyid Jamal al-Din Isfahani and Malik al-Mutakallimin, eulogized him in many sermons for a crowd estimated at one hundred thousand.²⁰⁸ Thereafter, the newspapers used

²⁰³ *Majlis*, 30 August 1907/21 Rajab 1325, p. 267. *Majlis*, 31 August 1907/22 Rajab 1325, p. 269.

²⁰⁴ Some have disputed Abbas Aqa's committee credentials. The Assembly discussions certainly established that he was a member (see above). This view is shared by Kasravi and Browne. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 445–450; Browne, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 150–151. That he was perceived to be a member by the government and opponents alike was far more important.

²⁰⁵ Dawlatbadi, *Hayat-i Yabya*, Vol. II, pp. 142–143.

²⁰⁶ *Habl al-Matin*, 4 October 1907/26 Sha'ban 1325, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 26, 23 April 1908/21 Rabi' I 1326, pp. 3–6. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, p. 545.

²⁰⁸ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 135, 7 October 1907/29 Sha'ban 1325, pp. 5–6. Browne, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 151–154. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 464–465. The number 100,000 reported by both authors comes from *Habl al-Matin* and seems to indicate very large crowds – a figure of speech, rather than a real estimate. For the astonishing contrast between the funerals of Abbas Agha and Atabak see also Ihtisham al-Saltanah, *Khatirat*, pp. 579–582.

the incident as a lesson to the ministers and courtiers. When in early January 1908, the most reputable opposition newspaper, *Habl al-Matin*, dedicated an entire issue to Abbas Aqa as an explicit lesson to the opposition, the intent to intimidate was clear. A full cover picture commemorated him as the bravest soul born of Iran's wombs in the last hundred years. Included were a series of forged letters from the assassin to the prime minister, urging his future victim to stop betraying the "nation" and to begin cooperating with the sacred Assembly in accordance with the constitution, or expect punishment from the nation in return.²⁰⁹ The historian Edward Browne's British informant related that the incident "showed that this was no child's play, that there was a grim determination somewhere, that Persians were ready to remove any minister whom they believed to be plotting against their newly won liberties . . . Since then no one has dared to oppose the *Majlis* openly, and the Assembly has at last been able to achieve some useful work."²¹⁰ The affair also made the divisions within the Assembly more pronounced and consolidated the position of the radicals. Furthermore, it brought them into direct confrontation with the shah. I will return to the symbolic significance of the chief minister's murder at the end of this chapter.

Following the assassination, the Assembly deliberations of the new cabinet selection showed an increased intensity. Although the drafted Supplement could strengthen the Assembly's hand, it had not yet been approved. The Assembly did collide with the shah over the selection of the new cabinet even without the formal authority to do so. This and the struggle over the type of statesmen who were worthy of the new regime brought out the events' affinity with the Young Turk revolution. The weakness of the bureaucratic class in Iran was on display.

The radical view, articulated by Taqizadah and approved by the majority, was to allow the shah to select the prime minister, as was his right, but only on the condition that the latter should appoint the ministers without the shah's interference and the Assembly should be given the right to approve or dismiss the prime minister and his cabinet. This argument was presented in a pointed fashion using a family metaphor. If a father (the shah) employed an inept doctor (the prime minister) to heal a dying mother (the Iranian nation), argued Hisham al-Islam, a child (the Assembly) who was aware of the doctor's incompetence had the right to act against the father's will. The dissenting minority thought that the shah should at least be given the chance to suggest a few ministers to be accepted or rejected by the prime minister.²¹¹ The most radical suggestion came from the newspaper *Habl al-Matin*; like *Tanin*, *Habl al-Matin* thought the ministers should be selected from among the representatives.

²⁰⁹ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 205, 12 January 1908/8 Dhu al-Hijja 1325, pp. 1-2.

²¹⁰ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 150-151.

²¹¹ These arguments were presented in the following two sessions. *Majlis*, 7 September 1907/29 Rajab 1325, p. 278; *Majlis*, 9 September 1907/ 1 Sha'ban 1325, pp. 279-280. The more conservative viewpoint was voiced only by Mirza Abul Hasan Khan.

Much to the representatives' disappointment, the shah handpicked the cabinet. Before the news became official, the Assembly urgently sent a telegraphic request for negotiation to the shah through an intermediary on 7 September. Surprisingly, two days later (9 September) the shah responded that he could receive representatives in person, as there was no animosity between him and the Assembly and no need for an intermediary. Upon this gesture of goodwill, a six-member delegation was selected to express the Assembly's official position on cabinet selection in general and on the chosen cabinet in particular. In the meeting on the afternoon of 9 September, during which the negotiators were in constant fear of arrest, the shah made no secret that he had handpicked the entire cabinet, adding that he had done so only after the Assembly's failure to suggest anyone for more than a week after the assassination. To this, the representatives responded by pleading with him for trustworthy and reliable individuals who were accustomed to modern administration. They politely implored him not to appoint the same old ministers from among high officials with great wealth, but to consider filling the posts with the educated. The new head of the Assembly, Ihtisham al-Saltanah, even insisted on a list of Western educated officials dubbed the "Young Persians" after the Young Turks. The shah disagreed, but added that after a ten-day trial period the Assembly could request a minister's removal in case of any transgressions. He reiterated that he himself remained in charge of future dismissals and appointments.²¹² When the negotiators reported this to the Assembly, the representatives voiced their disapproval of the incompetent cabinet, but admitted that constitutionally they had no choice and immediately began planning tough questioning at the initiation ceremony on 15 September.²¹³ When on that day the prime minister was asked if he had selected the cabinet on his own, he replied positively and accepted full responsibility. However, when the ministers were grilled about their program of reform, especially with regard to finance, the representatives were astonished to find not a hint of such a program.²¹⁴

The new government lasted less than six weeks. This time, much to the shah's dismay, the Assembly dismissed the cabinet on 16 October 1907 and chose for the first (and last) time a largely pro-constitutional cabinet headed by Nasir al-Mulk. This they did by invoking the Supplement that had been approved only nine days earlier on 7 October 1907 under great pressure.²¹⁵ The newspaper

²¹² *Majlis*, 11 September 1907/3 Sha'ban 1325, p. 282. Nusratallah Fathi *Zindaginamah-'i Shabid-i Niknam Thaqat al-Islam Tabrizi* (Tehran: Bunyad-i Nikukari-i Nuriyani, 1973) p. 213. The original speaks of the Young Persians only. Adamiyat correctly points out the connection with the Young Turks. *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyat*, Vol. 2, p. 198.

²¹³ *Majlis*, 11 September 1907/3 Sha'ban 1325, p. 283.

²¹⁴ *Majlis*, 15 September 1907/7 Sha'ban 1325, pp. 315-316. Zargham Burujini, *Asr-i Mashrutiyat*, p. 15.

²¹⁵ *Majlis*, 16 October 1907/9 Ramadan 1325, p. 349. Nasir al-Mulk, an Oxford-educated former Minister of Finance, was quite sympathetic to the Assembly cause. Not every new cabinet member had such sympathies. Asif al-Dawlah, the minister of internal affairs who was chosen as a gesture of goodwill toward the shah, was an object of scorn, and the minister of war

Habl al-Matin hailed it as the first “scientific” cabinet, composed of ministers who, with some exception, were “all educated and aware of global circumstances and ministerial organizations in civilized nations,” adding that progress was not possible nor would defects be remedied until knowledgeable and intelligent ministers administered the country in a scientific fashion.²¹⁶ The shah was furious and made no attempt to hide it.²¹⁷

The final and most fierce confrontation was yet to come. For now, I would like to investigate the circumstances under which the Supplement was approved, and what prompted many to change allegiances and begin cooperating with the government and the counterrevolution.

COUNTERREVOLUTION, SUPPLEMENT, AND THE CLERICAL ESTABLISHMENT

It would be careless to reduce the religious establishment’s critique to religion – this was also a battle of cultures, with the clerics posing as the repositories and preservers of traditional culture and dearly held values, Iranian or Ottoman. Here constitutionalists were portrayed as superficial mimics of Western values, customs, dress, and morals without a solid identity. When it came to a purely religious critique, however, in Iran the conservative clerics argued that since *shar`* was a complete code of law, the constitution should be strictly subordinated to it. Later, they concluded that it should be abandoned. Law-making in the Assembly was challenged and its tight supervision by the clerics, with the power to revoke bills, was demanded. In the Ottoman Empire, the conservative clerics, a less influential group to begin with, did have issues with the Chamber – for example, its affront to the penal code, and the participation of non-Muslims in law-making – but they did not oppose it in principle, did not consider constitutionalism affront to religion, and sought for ways to reconcile the two.

Yet in both contexts the language of religion played a broader role beyond the clerics and religious critique. Those unhappy with the Assembly adopted the clerical criticism and language that had the most serious delegitimizing effect upon the complex claims of the constitutionalists. In the coalition that was held together by religious critique, many had nothing in common but hostility toward the Assembly; by adopting this language, they forged a broad-based coalition and gained a coherent vantage point for challenging the constitutionalists. This brought to the fore at least one similarity to the revolution: actors were not united over a single cause; but each had his own particularistic concerns; yet opposition was finally expressed in one general language.

remained unchanged. Burujini, *ʿAsr-i Mashrutiyyat*, p. 16. For a slightly different assessment of Asif al-Dawlah see Adamiyat *Nahzat-i Mashrutiyyat*, Vol. 2, p. 199.

²¹⁶ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 152, 4 November 1907/28 Ramadan 1325, pp. 2–3.

²¹⁷ For pressure over the signing of the Supplement and shah’s anger over the introduction of this cabinet, see Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, pp. 151–153, and Hidayat, *Khatirat*, pp. 159–160. Taqizadah spoke of difficulties of forming the cabinet that was to their liking; *Zindagi-i Tufani*, p. 83.

The Supplement and Religious Institutions

So far, I have paid little attention to the relations of the Assembly with the clerical establishment in general, and to the challenges posed against the passage of the Supplement in particular. The Assembly as a law-making body was a threat to traditional legal authority. As a law-making institution, it acted as a third body, in distinction from the clergy who interpreted the religious laws (*shar'*) and the shah who, using the independent legitimacy derived from his role as the Shadow of God Upon Earth, introduced monarch-centered, nonreligious laws under *'urf*. This law-making was more systematically practiced in the Ottoman Empire, where the sultanic laws were collected in *kanunnames*, which in theory were compatible with *shari'ah*. The law-making basis of legitimacy for the Iranian shahs and Ottoman sultans derived from the same source: the pre-Islamic Iranian notions of kingship (combined with Turco-Mongolian tradition of *yasa*), even though the concept of *kanun* was not worked out or practiced as systematically in the Iranian context and never collected in *kanunnames*. The series of European laws that were introduced in the nineteenth century were also fitted under *'urf*. The Assembly had now entered this already conflict-ridden, confused, and contested early-twentieth-century scene of *'urf* and *shar'* as an institution that threatened to encroach upon the territory of both the traditional secular and religious domains and ultimately overtake both. Its insistence that European laws should be translated and adapted in a wholehearted fashion weighed heavily upon the conservative clerics, who began to argue at this time that *shari'ah* was a complete code of law open to interpretation by them alone. In theory, they claimed to be the sole administrators of justice; in practice, they were bestowed with extensive responsibilities in the judicial realm. The constitutionalists saw no place for religious courts. More threatening to clerical institutional interests was the Assembly's policy of free, mandatory education under state supervision, which promised an end to their role in these important spheres.

When the Assembly began drafting the Supplement to the constitution, it encountered the wrath of conservative clerics who challenged the law-making activities of the Assembly in general and the use of the Belgian constitution (as the Ottomans had done) as the main source for the Supplement in particular.²¹⁸ The conservatives thus began to organize an extensive campaign against the Assembly and the Supplement specifically.²¹⁹ Their opposition was expressed in

²¹⁸ For the Supplement see below. The Belgian constitution of 1831 was the main inspiration in Iran. The similarities with the Ottoman constitution were stronger as the Iranian constitution also drew upon the Bulgarian constitution of 1879. Its other influence was Russia of 1906. See the excellent analysis by Said Amir Arjomand, "Constitutional Revolution III. The Constitution," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, pp. 187–192. One can clearly point to the Ottoman constitution of 1876 as another source of inspiration. I have confined my discussion of the constitution and its Supplement mostly to the relations between the legislative and executive and for reasons of space ignored its contribution to the formation of citizenship and civil society.

²¹⁹ *Majlis*, 16 May 1907/3 Rabi' II 1325, p. 167; *Majlis*, 21 May 1907/8 Rabi' II 1325, p. 171. *Majlis*, 8 June 1907/26 Rabi' II 1325, p. 183.

a variety of ways, but substantively, the main thrust of their concern was creation of a five-member clerical council to supervise the compatibility of legislation with the laws of religion. This council was to have the power to demand revision of or to revoke the bills it deemed to be in contradiction with religion.²²⁰

This demand delayed the approval of the Supplement for a few months, leading to intensified hostilities. To protest the delay, some representatives refused to leave the Assembly grounds. Similarly, the central committee in Tehran, the representative of 140 popular committees in the city, took sanctuary at the Assembly compounds.²²¹ In Tabriz, the committees and trades, guild members and inhabitants took sanctuary at the telegraph office in support of the Supplement for nearly a month.²²² Their populist newspaper wrote excitedly of the schoolchildren, who in a show of support came in groups to the yard of the telegraph office with teachers while singing revolutionary songs and carrying red flags; some youngsters had worn shrouds or adorned themselves with red signs to announce their readiness for martyrdom.²²³ Also, women, some cuddling newborns, had joined men in mosques to demand the drafting of the Supplement.²²⁴ Telegraph offices in Rasht, Anzali, Isfahan, Shiraz, and other cities witnessed similar gatherings by crowds demanding the passage of the Supplement. When telegrams in solidarity and sympathy from various national protest sites were read out to the crowd in Tabriz, they yelled in unison “long live our brave compatriots, long live constitutionalists and the constitutional government of Iran.”²²⁵ Before the start of their month-long sanctuary, the crowds in Tabriz had asked the Assembly about the reasons for the delay in approving the Supplement. The Assembly, caught between the radical committees and the onslaught of the conservative clergy, had responded that the delay was caused by precautionary measures to detect the slightest deviations in the Supplement from the laws of religion.²²⁶ Against this unsatisfactory answer, the protestors asked, “has the nation demanded religious and prayer laws from the state for there to be need for religious discussions?” They added, “we [only] demand constitutional monarchical laws that are prevalent among all constitutional nations.” Joining and defending the protesters at the site, the well-known cleric *Thaqat al-Islam* argued that they did not intend to create a new religious law or to revoke the old one and that no one but the clerics could concern themselves with the laws of religion.²²⁷

Privately, despite his stellar constitutionalist credentials, *Thaqat al-Islam* almost resented regular obligatory visits to the telegraph office and the riotous

²²⁰ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 370–372; Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, pp. 108–109.

²²¹ Taqizadah, *Sih Khitabab*, p. 54.

²²² The newspaper was reporting an incident that had started on 12 May 1907. *Anjuman*, No. 84, 20 May 1907/7 Rabi` II 1325, pp. 1–2; *Anjuman*, No. 97, 11 June 1907/29 Rabi` II 1325, p. 2; Taqizadah, *Sih Khitabab*, p. 54.

²²³ *Anjuman*, No. 85, 4 June 1907/22 Rabi` II 1325, p. 4.

²²⁴ *Anjuman*, No. 87, 26 May 1907/13 Rabi` II 1325, pp. 1–4.

²²⁵ *Anjuman*, No. 85, 4 June 1907/22 Rabi` II 1325, p. 4.

²²⁶ *Majlis*, 6 May 1907/23 Rabi` I 1325, p. 161. *Majlis*, 13 May 1907/30 Rabi` I 1325, p. 165.

²²⁷ *Anjuman*, No. 84, 20 May 1907/7 Rabi` II 1325, pp. 1–2.

atmosphere there. This he blamed on the committees, the ordinary public, and all kinds of trades, which he disparaged as an ignorant lot. While “anarchists,” by which he meant revolutionaries from the Caucasus, were partly to blame, the main source of trouble for him were the public and the trades that had taken affairs into their own hands, for example, confiscating guns from the royal artillery with ready excuses.²²⁸ His religious defense of constitutionalism, on the other hand, was quintessentially clerical. Against conservative clerics he maintained that constitutionalism only limited the authority of the government and the monarch, and if limiting injustice and transgression was against *shar`*, he added ironically, then one must conclude religion sanctioned injustice!²²⁹

Like the committees, the radical deputies and newspapers opposed the conservatives' request. Initially they objected to the council by arguing that two prominent clerical leaders, Tabataba'i and Bihbahani, attended the Assembly, and thus assured legislation's compatibility with the laws of Islam. The newspaper *Habl al-Matin*, in an article mockingly entitled the “Clerical Senate,” ridiculed the proposed council and declared its support for the radicals (such as Taqizadah) who opposed it. Instead of establishing a clerical council, it suggested imitating Egypt and publishing legislative bills in the newspapers a few weeks before the vote, to allow ample time for the clerics and the learned to consider them and express their views before passage. This solution allowed more intelligent and relevant discussions in the Assembly when bills were considered, it argued, and permitted sufficient time for the clergy to oppose them if deemed necessary.²³⁰

The Assembly as a whole took a defensive posture whenever it was challenged by accusations of irreligion in its first ten months. A representative (Sa'd al-Dawlah) retorted that the shah's final decree had included the transliteration of the word constitution from French as well as the Islamic word *shar`*, and claimed that “what we want, say and write is according to the latter” which was not, in spirit and principle, in contradiction with the former.²³¹ Even the radicals like Taqizadah were to add that their laws were the laws of Islam, or that law was the Qur'an and nothing would be approved against Islam.²³² Initially the Assembly asked for the arrest of a few “seditious” and not the banning of all public gatherings against it,²³³ like its half-hearted request for the arrest of the cleric Mula Muhammad Amoli, who had denounced the representatives for blasphemy.²³⁴ They attempted to appease the clerical opposition by meeting with the leaders, especially Ayatollah Nuri. But by 21 June, against the insistence

²²⁸ See *Namaha-yi Tabriz*, pp. 18–42 (25 March 1907/10 Safar 1325; 1 April 1907/17 Safar 1325).

²²⁹ See *Namaha-yi Tabriz*, pp. 8–10 (28 February 1907/15 Muharram 1325).

²³⁰ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 43, 16 June 1907/5 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–3.

²³¹ *Majlis*, 5 March 1907/20 Muharram 1325, p. 103. Others were to give conciliatory speeches in defense of the Supplement and its compatibility with *shar`*. See *Majlis*, 6 May 1907/23 Rabi' I 1325, p. 161. *Majlis*, 13 May 1907/30 Rabi' I 1325, p. 165.

²³² *Majlis*, 19 May 1907/6 Rabi' II 1325. *Majlis*, 21 May 1907/8 Rabi' II 1325, p. 171. *Majlis*, 8 June 1907/26 Rabi' II 1325, p. 184.

²³³ *Majlis*, 16 May 1907/3 Rabi' II 1325, p. 167.

²³⁴ *Majlis*, 8 June 1907/26 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 183.

of many representatives, including Bihbahani, who had played go-between and negotiator with the conservatives, they finally abandoned the idea of further meetings after citing violations of earlier agreements. As long as the conservatives received assistance from an outside source – by which they meant the monarchy – meetings were futile, in the opinion of Taqizadah and others.²³⁵

21 June was also the day on which many clerics relived the revolution and took sanctuary in the shrine of `Abdul`azim. This followed a physical confrontation between pro- and anti-constitutionalists and proved to be a turning point.²³⁶ From the confines of their sanctuary, which lasted for three months and grew by several thousands, the conservative clergy headed by Nuri launched a campaign against the Supplement. This was complemented by a cultural onslaught against their adversaries' brand of modernity. The contemporary Dervish Vahdeti and his associates in the Ottoman Empire, while making similar arguments, never went to such depths and were even obliged to disparage the extremism of Nuri and company. Vahdeti's mocking of conservative opposition in Iran aimed in part to disarm the CUP that warned of the affinity between the Ottoman and Iranian reactionaries.

Nuri and like-minded clerics expressed their opinions through crude lithographed pamphlets that in appearance, and sometimes content, were close to the many leaflets that appeared around town. They were joined by groups who had turned against the Assembly for various reasons and adopted the language of religion to confront the sophisticated, and seemingly superior, constitutional arguments they were bombarded with. The main tenet of their argument was defense of Islam against the internal threat of the infidel constitutionalists. Aside from clerics and seminary students, the ranks of counterrevolutionaries swarmed with court members (a group hardly known for its piety), owners of *tuyul*, many governors and provincial officials, government employees, members of the Palace household, and some guilds.²³⁷ The shah and government remained active supporters, both morally and financially.²³⁸

The conservatives demanded an Assembly based on Islam that did not approve bills opposed to the Qur'an, the *shari`ah* and shi'ism.²³⁹ They insisted that the

²³⁵ *Majlis*, 21 June 1907/10 Jumada I 1325, pp. 194–195.

²³⁶ The confrontation took place on 20 June 1907/9 Jumada I 1325. For an account see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 48, 22 June 1907/11 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–2 and *Sur Israfil*, No. 5, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–4.

²³⁷ The opposition consistently denigrated the counterrevolutionaries as riffraff and disreputable. See for example *Habl al-Matin*, No. 89, 12 August 1907/3 Rajab 1325, p. 4. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 90, 13 August 1907/4 Rajab 1325, p. 2. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 265, 6 April 1908/4 Rabi` I 1326, pp. 1–3. The guild association called on the government to stop the conservative clergy, yet some sectors of bazaar were joining the camp. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 131.

²³⁸ For financial support of the shah through the Russian Bank, see Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, pp. 129–130.

²³⁹ The clerical “newspaper” has been collected in a valuable two-volume set by Turkaman. The reader should be warned, however, about the chronological ordering of the undated material which appears biased. See Muhammad Turkaman, *Rasa'il, Flamiyahha, Maktubat, . . . , va Ruznamah-i Shaykh-i Shahid Fazl Allah-i Nuri*, Vol. I (Tehran: Mahtab, 1983) (dated 23 July 1907/12 Jumada II 1325), pp. 245–247.

Assembly was not a European parliament but an Islamic Consultative Assembly, which the enemies of Islam were to be prevented from joining. They challenged the constitutionalists' "invention" by arguing that the Assembly had no precedent in Islamic history and was an imitation imported from Europe. They thus demanded a close supervisory role to ensure the compatibility of legislation with Islam. It was their duty to safeguard the "nation's" beliefs and to prevent Iranians from becoming like Europeans who had lost all religious belief, particularly when the constitution was being written based on European laws.²⁴⁰

The laws of religion handed down by the Prophet some thirteen hundred years earlier, they argued rigidly, were a complete code of law and not subject to change according to the mere exigencies of time; and the clerics were the only ones able to interpret and reveal such law. They rejected the compromise offered to them over the five-member clerical council. In the yet to be approved Supplement, the constitutionalists had suggested a clerical council whose five members were to be chosen through an Assembly vote from a list of twenty names offered by the clerics. The conservatives rejected the offer, for no one but themselves was qualified to choose such a council's members. They also demanded the inclusion of the word *mashru`ah* (religiously legitimate) in conjunction with the word *mashrutah* (constitutional) in the title of the drafted Supplement. Also demanded was a new clause dealing with cleansing the press of blasphemy and of insults against religion and clerics.²⁴¹

Particularly interesting was the after-the-fact rejection of ambiguities in the constitutionalists' language that had misled the clergy into cooperation. They presented a fairly accurate, if highly polemical, account of the constitutionalist attempt to gain ideological hegemony. They had made believe that the constitution and its integral components, equality (*musavat va barabari*) and liberty (*azadi*), brought security by putting an end to the lawlessness and transgressions of officials. Security in turn led to prosperity and wealth (*abadi*) for the nation, as it allowed for the establishment of commercial houses, the building of roads and bridges, and the increase of land under cultivation. Furthermore, the constitution saved Islam because a strong state prevented Iran from falling under colonial domination.²⁴² One could hear clearly the echoes of the language of the Circle of Justice and of modern concerns, such as the colonial threat, but also the general clerical understanding of constitutionalism as limited government.

The conservatives cried deception and blamed their mistake on the sweet words and attractive language that had served to conceal the obscenity and hideousness of what the constitutionalists had learned in the schools of Vienna and Paris.²⁴³ This begged the question of why such "hideousness" had originally appeared so "sweet" and "attractive." According to them, equality (*musavat*) could not mean

²⁴⁰ Turkaman, *Rasa'il*, (dated 3 August 1907/23 Jumada II 1325), pp. 277–281.

²⁴¹ Turkaman, *Rasa'il*, pp. 231–232.

²⁴² Turkaman, *Rasa'il* (29 July 1907/18 Jumada II 1325), pp. 260–269, (13 August 1907/4 Rajab 1325) pp. 318–321.

²⁴³ Turkaman, *Rasa'il*, pp. 260–269, 318–321.

equality of all religions and creeds before the law, but that of Muslims alone. In addition, by citing liberty (*azadi*), the Assembly had no right to pass laws on freedom of opinion or speech.²⁴⁴ The Assembly, and the slogans “liberty,” “equality,” and “fraternity” were clothes cut for a European figure and for the most part in contradiction to the holy law.²⁴⁵ They expressed anger at the change from “Islamic Consultative Assembly” to the “National Consultative Assembly” at the request of the British Legation gathering, despite the use of the first in the shah’s decree.²⁴⁶ In a similar vein, they protested the change of the clerics’ original demand from an Assembly of Justice (*majlis-i ma`dalat*), intended to put into effect the laws of religion, to the National Consultative Assembly and a constitution; these were unfamiliar words and concepts that again had originated from the British Legation gathering.²⁴⁷ In the clerics’ opinion, the Assembly was the Islamic Consultative Assembly, established by the efforts of the Islamic clergy, for service and assistance to the court of the Islamic government and the preservation of the rights of followers of shi`ism. As such, it should not have been influenced by the French or British parliaments.²⁴⁸ The conservative clerics were in full agreement with our assessment of contingency and agency: the intelligentsia’s move to the Legation in the absence of clerics had transformed demands into far-reaching constitutional ones.

The conservative clerics, in their new alliance with the monarchy, now referred to it as the Islamic government. Such a usage was not new but its consistent employment served to buttress their threatened ally, the monarchy, against their common foe, the Assembly.

Furthermore, they branded the opponents as Babi religious heretics, materialists, and naturalists, who rejected God’s existence; or as European mimics whose dress and behavior were alien to indigenous traditions. The celebrations of the first anniversary of the constitution on the nights of 25 and 26 July 1907 (14–15 of Jumada II, 1325) were held up repeatedly as proof of anti-Islamic and alien behavior. On those nights, the constitutionalists had purportedly extended the meaning of equality (*musavat*) so far that all nationalities and religions, foreign or native, Jews and Christians, European men and women, and especially Babis and naturalists, had congregated in one place. At the celebrations, the Europeans had congratulated the clerics by shaking hands while uttering “long live liberty and the constitution.” Above the entrance a banner had read “long live fraternity and equality,” and during the ceremonies they had all sung “long live the Zoroastrians.”²⁴⁹ Especially blamed were the heretic Babis and naturalists,

²⁴⁴ Turkaman, *Rasa’il*, pp. 241–242, 287–288. ²⁴⁵ Turkaman, *Rasa’il*, pp. 318–321.

²⁴⁶ Turkaman, *Rasa’il*, pp. 260–269. ²⁴⁷ Turkaman, *Rasa’il*, pp. 318–321.

²⁴⁸ Turkaman *Rasa’il* pp. 241–242. Even some reformists close to clerics agreed with the bulk of conservatives’ criticism. The clerics, “the main pillars of the movement,” had only asked for the establishment of a House of Justice, a demand that constitutionalists had turned into National Consultative Assembly with the help of leaflets and newspapers. This was how the unfortunate present state of affairs was reached, according to Majd al-Islam. *Safarnamah-i Kalat* Vol. I, pt. II, pp. 419, 435.

²⁴⁹ Turkaman *Rasa’il* pp. 287–288, see especially 296–297.

those responsible for eliminating “Islamic” from the Assembly’s name, expanding the meaning of freedom so that women could dress as men and walk freely in the streets or bazaars, and holding Galileo, Newton, Kepler, Hugo, and Rousseau in higher regard than the clergy or prophets. They were further accused of contaminating young children’s temperaments in their modern schools and converting them to naturalism.²⁵⁰ Their European eyeglasses, walking sticks, pants, top hats, frocks, and habit of urinating upright were also mocked.²⁵¹ With the establishment of the Assembly, they held, it was possible that they were reaching the end of the age of clerical leadership and the overthrow of the state of Islam, after which absolute freedom would be in vogue, the proscribed allowed, intoxicants permitted, narcotics explored, the holy law annulled, and the Qur’an forsaken.²⁵²

The Assembly and the Press Respond

The Assembly was deeply alarmed by accusations of undermining *shar`*. When the realization sank in that the government was not going to suppress the clerical opposition, it took a defensive position, at least in rhetoric, if not in its activities through the committees. Shortly after the move to `Abdul`azim, the Assembly demanded the arrest and punishment, and confiscation of the lithographic press, of “seditious individuals,” who in clerical cloaks deceived the common folk. These remarks were sanctioned and repeated by Ayatollah Tabataba’i in support of the Assembly.²⁵³ Later, in his strongest condemnation of the conservatives, Tabataba’i added that they did not consider them, nor had they ever regarded, the leaders of opposition as clerics. They had failed to perform anything of value for their country and now that the Assembly was struggling to save Islam and Iran they agitated against it.²⁵⁴

The newspapers each adopted a slightly different strategy in disparaging conservatives. *Habl al-Matin* held on to the compatibility, even identity, of religious precepts and constitutional principles. It dismissed arguments about constitutionalism’s origin as imported and European.²⁵⁵ Radical religious newspapers such as *al-Jamal* similarly dismissed arguments about the European pedigree of the constitution, or the law-making endeavors of the Assembly, and in a populist tone retaliated by condemning Nuri and his supporters as

²⁵⁰ Turkaman *Rasa’il*, pp. 240–241, see esp. 260–269, 287–288, and 331.

²⁵¹ Turkaman *Rasa’il*, p. 331.

²⁵² Turkaman, *Rasa’il*, pp. 149–151. Dated Jumada I 1325. For a doctrinal interpretation of Nuri’s argument see Martin, *Islam and Modernism*, pp. 178–186.

²⁵³ *Majlis*, 9 August 1907/29 Jumada II 1325, p. 240. *Majlis*, 16 August 1907/7 Rajab 1325, p. 248. *Majlis*, 17 August 1907/8 Rajab 1325, pp. 250–252. *Majlis*, 21 August 1907/12 Rajab 1325, p. 256.

²⁵⁴ *Majlis*, 1 July 1907/20 Jumada I 1325, pp. 201–202. *Majlis*, 28 August 1907/19 Rajab 1325, p. 266.

²⁵⁵ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 83, 6 August 1907/26 Jumada II 1325, pp. 1–3. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 111, 7 September 1907/29 Rajab 1325, pp. 3–4. They even justified the gatherings and associations by citing passages from Qur’an. See *Habl al-Matin*, No. 104, 30 August 1907/21 Rajab 1325, pp. 1–2.

irreligious.²⁵⁶ *Sur-i Israfil* tried the same strategy for some time and defended the “true” Islam against the beliefs of “old fogey” clergy.²⁵⁷ Once under severe attack, however, it began to disparage religion openly. Its twelfth issue, in particular, created an uproar in the capital when it alluded that Islam was nothing but old fogeyism, that it had created superstition among the Iranian people, and that it was the cause of Iran’s backwardness. The clergy interpreted the adjective used to describe them – *kuhnab-parast* (old fogey, literally worshipper of the arcane) – to mean that clerics worshiped the arcane – that is, Islam; they thus concluded that in *Sur-i Israfil*’s opinion, Islam, like all matters arcane, should be discarded. These controversies led to the shutting of the newspaper for more than six weeks after its fourteenth issue on 18 September 1907.²⁵⁸ *Sur-i Israfil* went even further by glorifying the pre-Islamic past and daring to associate the height of Iranian civilization with the period before the advent of Islam (hence the clerics’ sensitivity to Zoroastrians and Zoroastrianism), an argument that was articulated late in the nineteenth century with the emergence of modern Iranian nationalism. This thinking, especially in the context of the fight with clerics, gathered momentum during the constitutional movement, and had a profound impact on the later generations of nationalist discourse.²⁵⁹

The leaflets, in their typically virulent language, did attack the clerics, but some ventured further toward the alleged real source: the monarch. During the conflict over the ratification of the Supplement, a leaflet that carried the emblem of the Tabriz central branch of the Iranian Mujahidin of Caucasus equated the Supplement with the constitution (*qanun-i asasi*), an interpretation that was by this time universally agreed upon. The implication was that the fight was over the constitution and its rejection by the government amounted to a rejection of the constitutional administration.

If previously the government refused to grant the Assembly unless it was called Islamic, it wrote, now the resistance to the constitution’s (i.e. the Supplement’s) approval was the second act of the same play. The constitution benefited the Muslims by preventing the transgression of borders and subjugation to infidels,

²⁵⁶ At most they argued Assembly was only interested in introducing European administrative and taxation laws to prevent injustice. Yaghma’i *Shahid-i Rah-i Azadi*, pp. 102, 149–150, 220–223.

²⁵⁷ For defense of constitutionalism based on Islamic principles see *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 5, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–4; *Sur-i Israfil* No. 6, 3 July 1907/22 Jumada I 1325, p. 1.

²⁵⁸ The same issue, however, still argued that the doctrine of natural right may also be found in Qur’an, but the clergy had not understood it and failed to talk about freedom. *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 12, 4 September 1907/26 Rajab 1325, pp. 1–3. *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 13, 11 September 1907/3 Sha’ban 1325, pp. 1–3. *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 14, 18 September 1907/10 Sha’ban 1325, pp. 1–5. The next issue appeared on 5 November 1907/29 Ramadan 1325.

²⁵⁹ As Mottahedeh has remarked, for centuries Iranians had drawn equally from pre-Islamic and Islamic imagery. In the late nineteenth century, however, an emerging nationalist discourse juxtaposed the “Iranian” against the “Islamic” at the expense of the latter. See Roy P. Mottahedeh, *The Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran* (New York: Pantheon Press, 1985). For territorial basis of Iranian nationalism see Firoozeh Kashani Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

as had happened in India, Egypt, Morocco, Caucasus, and Algeria. The constitution did not speak of religion and beliefs, or create a new *shar`*, or grant freedom of religion to play into the hands of infidels. Laws were to be written by the nation's learned to protect the state and nation of Islam; and unlike what was disorderly, arbitrary, and whimsical under the reign of tyranny, matters would be orderly and without exception under the constitution. It asked the clerics why they insisted on approving laws now and not back during the reign of tyranny? Were the crimes of the regime of tyranny according to *shar`*? If they had been silent then they should remain so now, for it invited condemnation for their past inactivity and misdeeds. In all this, the leaflet viewed the shah and the court as the real reason behind the recent conflicts. Turning to the shah, it asked, if the clerics approved the constitution would he leave the throne (i.e., become a constitutional monarch) or would he return to the old tyrannical ways and collect taxes and customs and monies for certificates without clerical permission and approval? If so, he risked overthrow. At the end it pleaded with the shah not to listen to the traitor ministers and not to create a rift between the clerics and the public, or within the public. It asked the shah not to assign the clerics a duty not theirs, not to play with the *shari`ah*, and not to invite the public to rebellion. More directly, it told the shah that he could not prevent matters from going forward by trickery (*dasayis va hil*), and could not prevent the flood before him with a dam of hay and straw (*khash-u-khashak*). "If the country does not become constitutional, and the constitution is not granted, we swear upon the God of heaven and earth, so long as life remains in the body of Iranians, they will put on a man's attire and strive not to succumb to servility and not to lie down in the dirt of contempt."²⁶⁰

The religious opposition also caught up with the use of anonymous leaflets to their advantage as evinced by leaflets in Tabriz that came out in Shuturban (Davachi) and Surkhab (and a few smaller ones) that condemned the anti-Islamic, nationalist proclivities of their opponents, who were creating disunity among Muslims by blasting clerics and religion's holy symbols. The newspaper/leaflet *Nafkhab-i Sur* condemned the opponents' use of leaflets to spread lies but defended the constitutionalists' use of them to keep the public informed of the truth by saying things that could not be said out in the open.²⁶¹

Outraged by the armed sieges of neighborhoods, the leaflet writers blamed *mujahidin* for deceiving the youth and recruiting them into fighting units. Particularly condemned for violence were the Caucasus revolutionaries and

²⁶⁰ KMT 1193, Internal Center (Tabriz) of Iranian Mujahidin of Caucasus.

²⁶¹ KMT, *Nafkhab-i Sur* no 4, 28 March 1908 [26 March]/24 Safar 1326. *Nafkhab-i Sur* was an underground newspaper/anonymous leaflet that parodied *Sur-i Israfil* with a title that bore the same meaning. The name of its imaginary editor, purportedly a 12-year-old, was a play on Mirza Jahangir Khan Shirazi, the editor of *Sur-i Israfil*. Its stated purpose was to defend the poor and peasants and to advance the constitutional cause. Despite its satirical take on *Sur-i Israfil*, it spoke very highly of it. The place of publication appears to be Tehran.

leaders, such as Ali Monsieur (so named for his knowledge of French and the French revolution), whose adeptness at bomb-making and ease in eliminating opponents had escalated the violence. Lamenting the Muslims' helplessness, the leaflets related that while the naturalists received backing from their secret headquarters – the “hidden center” – the Muslims could only take solace in the “hidden imam.” The leaflets were particularly enraged at two “lunatic” Azarbaijan representatives in contact with Tabriz committees, especially Taqizadah (whose name was not mentioned). Another claimed that the religiously observant representatives did not speak out for fear of being killed by the Caucasians. The leaflets consistently denied their opposition to the constitution, and one even claimed to be a supporter of it but with the added qualification: so long as it conformed to the *shari`ah*. It also took issue with the charlatans, the self-proclaimed constitutionalists who branded their opponents indiscriminately as supporters of absolutism (*mustabid*), while accusing opponents of being on the shah's pay-roll for agitating against the constitution.²⁶²

Some constitutionalists, for their part, were also weary of the popular confrontations in the city and issued leaflets that called their opponents to unity, claiming that at that moment there was nothing more threatening to Islam than the possibility of subjugation to foreign powers.²⁶³ Others also condemned the attacks on neighborhoods, but insisted that violence had originated from Nuri's supporters, a matter that they claimed was corroborated by pro-constitutionalist leaflets in the troubled Shuturban neighborhood. They warned Nuri's supporters in Tabriz to stop their dangerous game in view of the defeat that their far larger and more resourceful compatriots had suffered in Tehran. The leaflet, after publishing the names of some of the financial backers of Nuri and the anti-constitutionalist agitators in Tehran and Tabriz, claimed that modesty obliged them not to reveal more names!²⁶⁴

Although the clerics repeatedly condemned the press and anonymous leaflets, they rarely found them worthy of mention by name. Of the two that were named, one was *Habl al-Matin* – perhaps the most popular of the time – and the other *Sur-i Israfil*, which also suggested its popularity and import. These were singled out as advocates of tampering with the *shari`ah* to make it compatible with circumstances. For the clergy, this amounted to permitting intoxicants, the spread of prostitution, and the establishment of schools for women. The constitutionalist publications were also accused of calling the occulted twelfth imam illusory, and of having discouraged the public from wasting their money on useless religious ceremonies and pilgrimage, encouraging them instead to spend it on building roads, establishing factories, and attracting European industries.²⁶⁵ Indeed, some publications had more than alluded to these.

²⁶² KMT, uncat., n.d. ²⁶³ KMT, uncat., n.d. ²⁶⁴ KMT, Doc. no. 1192, n.d.

²⁶⁵ Turkaman, *Rasa'il*, pp. 262–263, 329–330, 333.

THE SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDAMENTAL LAWS
AND CONTINUED OPPOSITION

Religious Institutions

The Assembly was finally forced into major compromises with religion and gave in to a less radical version of the Supplement that was ratified on 7 October 1907. This change is apparent from surviving early draft copies circulated among the representatives.²⁶⁶ The most significant addition, article 2, stated that the clergy could nominate twenty clerics to the council. From these the deputies, by vote or by drawing, were to choose at least five to supervise the legislation and prevent the passage of any law in contradiction with *shar`*. The Assembly thus agreed to the five-member council – the “clerical senate” – with the right to veto legislative bills, but allowed itself some leeway about its makeup. This arrangement continued to be rejected by the conservatives.²⁶⁷ Shi`i Islam was now the official religion of state (article 1), although, contrary to the agitations against equality, adherents of all recognized religions were declared equal before the law (article 8). Another compromise was over the courts of law. According to the draft version, the state courts presided over all civil and political disputes, save those excepted by the law. Religious laws and the religious courts failed to receive as much as a mention and in fact no courts other than the state’s were legally recognized, and no other court had the right to convene under any name at any place.²⁶⁸ If the draft fell short of announcing the abolishment of religious courts, in effect it had done just that. Yet the Supplement now spoke of *shari`ah* courts with respect to matters pertaining to *shari`ah* and state civil courts with respect to *urfi* matters (article 27). The public complaints were presided over by the Ministry of Justice and state civil courts, but qualified clerics were responsible for matters related to religion (*umur-i shar`iyah*, article 71).²⁶⁹ Finally, secular principles were ignored in the bill of rights as “freedom to publish ideas (article 18), to form associations (article 21), and to learn and teach sciences and crafts (article 18) was made contingent on conformity with the interests of established religion.”²⁷⁰

The Supplement still contained enough threatening clauses and maneuvering space to remain a menace to the clerics’ institutional power. For one, article 19 made education both free and mandatory and brought all schools (including private schools) under the supervision of the Ministry of Education.²⁷¹ Furthermore, the

²⁶⁶ For copies of two earlier drafts of the Supplement (with additional commentary on the margins) that did not include many of the later compromises, especially article 2, see Iraj Afshar ed. *Qabalah-i Tarikh* (Tehran: Talayah, 1989), Doc. 67, pp. 91–100.

²⁶⁷ *Musavvat I-II*, pp. 15–33, see esp. pp. 15–16. This source gives an incorrect date for the passage of the Supplement. See also *Habl al-Matin*, No. 138, 10 October 1907/3 Ramadan 1325, pp. 2–6.

²⁶⁸ Afshar, *Qabalah-i Tarikh*, pp. 94, 99. ²⁶⁹ *Musavvat, I-II*, pp. 28–31.

²⁷⁰ Arjomand “The Constitution,” p. 190.

²⁷¹ In effect, for the first time the state became the primary purveyor of education. *Musavvat, I-II*, p. 18.

imprecise wording of the Supplement could not guarantee the clerics a secure role in judicial affairs.

The Legislative and the Executive

The Supplement did not bracket the shah out of politics. Given the nature of the Iranian state and monarchy, this would hardly have been possible. What it did instead was to clarify, as much as it could, the nature, functions and responsibilities of various branches of government, and to empower the Assembly against the cabinet, which in effect curbed the power of monarchy. The powers of the realm were divided into three branches: legislative, judicial, and executive. Within the legislative branch, the Assembly, the Senate, and the shah all had the right to issue legislative bills. To become law, a bill needed approval of both houses, compatibility with shari'ah, and ratification by the monarch (article 27). If the shah requested reconsideration, he was obliged to ratify after review and reconsideration by the Assembly and approval by a two-thirds majority (article 49). The Supplement considered the shah to be the head of the executive, which was qualified to mean that the ministers and officials executed the laws and ordinances in his name in the manner specified by the law (article 27). The shah was exempted from responsibility, and the ministers were responsible toward the lower and upper houses (article 44). The shah retained the right to not only appoint the ministers, but even the heads of departments of state (article 46, 48). He was also the commander of the army and navy (article 50). The ministers were responsible toward both houses, individually, and collectively. They were obliged to be present when requested, could be interpellated and brought to trial, and could not avoid responsibility by invoking the shah's written or oral decrees (article 59, 60, 61, 64, 65). If the original constitution had easily allowed the dismissal of the Assembly, and not given the latter the right to dismiss ministers, now it was the Supplement drafters' turn to make it right: the dissatisfaction of a majority in either of the legislative houses was sufficient condition for dismissal of a minister or the entire cabinet (article 67) even without legal infraction or the shah's consent. The Iranian Assembly could now dismiss the cabinet far more easily than its Ottoman counterpart. The patrimonialism was toned down somewhat by forbidding first-class princes to become ministers (article 59) but the shah still granted military titles, decorations, and other honorary distinctions (article 47). Although the latter was to be done within the bounds of the law, this was a contentious issue and its inclusion could not put an end to its abuse. Finally, the source of sovereignty remained somewhat murky. If the Supplement was explicit that the powers of the realm derived from the people (article 26), it also stated that monarchy (*saltanat*) is a trust confided as a divine gift by the nation to the person of the king (article 35).²⁷² The appearance of the notion of divine gift is a source of confusion and harked back to divine pretensions of

²⁷² There are no easy ways to translate this clause, and here I have relied mostly on the translation provided in Shuster, *Strangling of Persia*, p. 349.

kingship. In fact it was added by the shah in his own handwriting against the wish of the drafters.

The Supplement also contained many additional clauses with respect to property rights and civil freedoms. Among these was the right to meeting and association, yet, contrary to the committee practice which received sanction from the Assembly, the bearing of arms was explicitly banned in such gatherings (article 21). With the Supplement, “many elements of international political culture were introduced into Persia.”²⁷³ And here, as elsewhere, the diffusion made its way in negotiation with local peculiarities, concerns, and lineups of forces.

FALL OF THE ASSEMBLY

The final confrontation was significant for two reasons. First, it clearly demonstrated that with the chief minister as the buffer between the shah and his “loyal subjects” gone, the shah was now targeted directly. Furthermore, the power of committees was put on display.

Although Nuri had ended the sanctuary at `Abdul`azim on 16 September, not long after the assassination of Atabak, the law-making Assembly and the Supplement in particular (especially the unsatisfactory selection procedure for the five-member council), left the religious establishment polarized. According to Kasravi, a gradual division developed between the lower ranks and upper ranks of the clerical establishment and the clerical support for the constitutionalists was substantially weakened. For now only a few higher-ranking clerics, some lower-ranking ones (*pishnamazan* and *va`izan*) with intimate ties to the guilds, and some religious students continued to support the constitutionalists.²⁷⁴ *Habl al-Matin* and other newspapers gave defensive assurances about clerical support, and especially the support of religious students. It is hard to estimate how extensive this support may have been; it was probably exaggerated under pressure.²⁷⁵ The support of some prominent clerics from `Atabat was key at this time. While in Tehran many prominent popular preachers – including some whose genuine devotion to Islam has been questioned by some contemporary scholars – continued to lend avid support to the constitutional cause, the two high-ranking clerics who were important symbols of religious legitimacy for the Assembly were steadily pressured by the newspapers and committees to end their quietist stance and be more emphatic in defense of the Assembly and the Supplement.²⁷⁶ Bihbahani in particular seems to have not been opposed to the

²⁷³ Arjomand, *The Constitution*, p. 189. Ihtisham al-Saltanah, the second head of the first Assembly, considered the passage of the Supplement its biggest achievement.

²⁷⁴ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 263, 358–360, 375–376, 415–423, 628–629.

²⁷⁵ For a report showing the support of the Society of Religious Students for the constitutionalists (*anjuman-i ittihadiah-i tullab*) see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 184, 10 December 1907/5 Dhu al-Qa`da 1325, p. 3.

²⁷⁶ *Musavat*, No. 4, 13 November 1907, p. 2. *Musavat*, No. 9, 12 January 1907, pp. 6–7. For inactivity of Bihbahani and Tabataba'i in face of counterrevolutionary activities, see also Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, p. 263.

conservatives' suggestions in principle, but he was forced to reconsider after receiving death threats from the committees.²⁷⁷

With the escalation of conflict, the Assembly refrained from making open attacks on anti-constitutionalist clerics, at least in its open sessions, and as a whole it took on a defensive posture. Even the radical leader, Taqizadah, justified the Assembly's existence in religious terms.²⁷⁸ What made the conservative challenge particularly threatening was the adoption of their language by the shah, who justified his animosity as part of a fight to save Islam from the heretics and infidels.²⁷⁹ In return, he received the conservatives' praise as the shah of Islam and the savior of religion. The conciliatory language of the Assembly was an attempt to appease the conservatives; however, this was combined with more hostile rhetoric toward the shah.

The Assembly strategy of clerical appeasement was not collectively followed. *Musavat*, a radical newspaper that had begun publication shortly after the ratification of the Supplement (13 October 1907), likened the clerics to advocates of idol worship and described them as ignorant, dishonest, intolerant, self-interested cheats, worshippers of tyranny, and the devil in men's skins. It attacked their wealth, their opportunism, and their political power. And finally, it argued that the history of Islam in the East and West demonstrated that the clergy had destroyed the true, democratic Islam by cooperating with tyranny, and consequently had given birth to a political system that was a mixture of Oriental despotism and American slavery.²⁸⁰

The first serious physical confrontation happened on 15 December 1907. A group marched on the Assembly, pelted the building with gunshots, and proceeded south to Tupkhanah square, where they raised tents for a large gathering that lasted a few days. There, constitutionalists were harassed; some were robbed and beaten and a few were even killed and their bodies left hanging from trees. As in Istanbul, the crowds yelled that they did not want constitution or the Assembly but the Prophet's religion. The event was joined by some prominent conservative clerics, among them Ayatollah Nuri, who was brought in by the crowd.

On the same day of 15 December, the shah summoned the cabinet to his palace for negotiation; in a startling move, he put the pro-constitutional prime minister and a few other ministers and high officials under arrest. Those arrested were members of a cabinet that had seriously intended to cooperate with the

²⁷⁷ Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 150.

²⁷⁸ *Majlis*, 21 December 1907/16 Dhu al-Qa'da 1325, p. 414. *Majlis*, 27 May 1908/25 Rabi' II 1326, p. 562.

²⁷⁹ The clearest examples that indicate shah's acceptance of counterrevolutionary clerical discourse were his letters to the clergy at Najaf, and his telegram to his prime minister, both of which were issued after bombarding the Assembly. See the Berlin edition of *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 1, 23 January 1909/1 Muharram 1327, p. 8; Dawlatabadi *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. I, pp. 358–359; Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Masbrutab*, pp. 616, 757–758.

²⁸⁰ *Musavat*, No. 2, 27 October 1907, pp. 1–2. *Musavat*, No. 3, 4 November 1907, p. 3–5. *Musavat*, No. 5, 18 November 1907, pp. 7–8. *Musavat*, No. 18, 22 March 1908. *Musavat*, No. 27, 30 January 1909, pp. 2–5. *Musavat*, No. 29, 22 February 1909. *Musavat*, No. 30, p. 5.

Assembly, the only group of its kind. The prime minister escaped death after the British embassy interceded, allowing him to leave for Europe along with two ministers.

On the following day, the shah asked the Assembly to dissolve itself temporarily; after receiving strong objections, he tempered his demands and asked for the removal of a few radical representatives and popular preachers. The strong response of provincial committees to these demands, including the dispatch of an armed militia in support of the Tehran committees, forced the shah to give in.²⁸¹

The event lasted for a week and ended when the shah backed away from full-fledged attack on the Assembly. The crowds that had come to the Assembly's defense dispersed; but the Assembly was left with a hostile new cabinet that had been handpicked by the shah in place of a sympathetic chief minister.²⁸² The alarmed constitutionalists started to protect the Assembly grounds around the clock and the committees set up barricades against possible attack.²⁸³ The newspapers kept a close watch and reported on hostilities.

The shah, the high officials, and the court were clearly implicated in the Tupkhanah incident. In a letter to the shah, along with other demands, the representatives asked for the punishment of the instigators and requested that the shah take an oath, sealed on the *Qur'an*, that he would no longer oppose the constitution. In return, the representatives promised to take a pledge of loyalty toward the throne. The shah accepted all demands and appeared at the Assembly in person with the new cabinet to take an oath of loyalty toward the constitution. On the inside cover of the *Qur'an*, the following appeared in his handwriting:

Because of the upheavals in the past few days in Tehran and the provinces, the nation suspected that, God forbid, We have breached promises and opposed the constitution. Thus, to remove this suspicion and for public assurance, We take an oath to this *Qur'an* to protect, support and abide by the constitutional principles and constitutional laws in their entirety, and not to exert heedlessness in implementing them in any manner, and to punish severely whomever has acted against the constitution. Whenever We breach our promises and oppose [the constitution] We are responsible toward God (*sahib-i Qur'an-i majid*) according to the oath administered by the representatives of the nation.²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ Browne, *Persian Revolution*, p. 165–166. For condemnation of the court and high officials and obstruction of reforms by killing or banishing reformist prime ministers, see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 199, 5 January 1908/1 Dhu al-Hijja 1325; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 202, 8 January 1908/4 Dhu al-Hijja 1325, pp. 1–2.

²⁸² The constitutionalists claimed their opponents were under orders to kill those in European attire. For the Tupkhanah incident see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 189, 24 December 1907/19 Dhu al-Qa`da 1325, pp. 1–2, 7; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 190, 25 December 1907/20 Dhu al-Qa`da 1325, pp. 1–2; *Musavat*, No. 9, 12 January 1908, pp. 4–5; Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 505–512, 521–522; Browne, *Persian Revolution*, pp. 162–163; Hidayat, *Khatirat va Khatarat*, pp. 160–161. Hidayat, himself part of the arrested cabinet, reported 19 December 1907 (14 Dhu al-Qa`da 1325) as the day of the incident.

²⁸³ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 191, 27 December 1907/22 Dhu al-Qa`da 1325, p. 1–3. Dawlatabadi *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. I, p. 167.

²⁸⁴ *Majlis*, 21 December 1907/16 Dhu al-Qa`da 1325, p. 413. The letter is dated one day later. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. I, pp. 176–177.

The clever wording mentioned the constitution and the nation's representatives, but avoided accepting responsibility toward them, and considered the shah accountable only toward God. Despite his promises, the high officials were never punished, although their names did appear in the newspapers with demands that they be put on trial.²⁸⁵

The Assembly continued to plead with the shah to fill ministerial positions with the new breed of educated youth. The radicals criticized the circulation of jobs among a closed circle of anti-constitutional officials; they advocated ministerial appointments from the lower social tiers. Until this change was effected, they concluded with regret, demand for cabinet changes was futile.²⁸⁶ These complaints came despite the inclusion of two prominent constitutionalists, the former head of *Majlis*, Sani` al-Dawlah, and his brother in the later reconciliatory cabinets.²⁸⁷

The conflicts with the monarchy culminated in a daring act. On 28 February 1908, a group of revolutionaries from the Caucasus, in close contact with Rasht and Azarbaijan committees and using the expertise of contemporaneous Russian upheavals, carried out an assassination attempt by throwing handmade bombs at the shah's car. The shah, who was not in the car but riding in the royal carriage behind it, escaped unscathed; a few guards and members of entourage were killed or injured.²⁸⁸ Immediately, the Assembly dispatched a delegate to the shah to dissociate itself (and the committees) from the incident, which the Assembly blamed on foreign powers.²⁸⁹ Nine days later, with the attackers still at large, the shah addressed the Assembly in a letter that was widely interpreted as an ultimatum. In an angry tone the shah indirectly accused the Assembly of the attempt on his life, and challenged the representatives to prove their loyalty by arresting the attackers; it promised a severe response if the culprits were not found.²⁹⁰

For reasons I will discuss later, the incident was of less significance than the assassination of the chief minister. Once more, the power of committees was proven – not by the act itself, but by the incidents that followed.

Habl al-Matin accused the government of being against the “nation” and unwilling to grant subjects their rights. Without mentioning the shah in person, a letter read:

²⁸⁵ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 223, 5 February 1908/2 Muharram 1326, p. 3.

²⁸⁶ *Majlis*, 16 February 1908/13 Muharram 1326, pp. 454–455. *Majlis*, 27 March 1908/23 Safar 1326, p. 492. Dawlatabadi remarked that his radical friends insisted on filling ministerial positions with unknown educated youths from the lower social ranks (“third rank”). He found this premature under the prevailing social conditions. Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. II, p. 237.

²⁸⁷ Arjomand, *Turban for the Crown*, pp. 43–44.

²⁸⁸ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Masbrutab*, pp. 542–543; Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yahya*, Vol. I, pp. 199–200; Hidayat, *Khatirat*, pp. 150–151.

²⁸⁹ *Majlis*, 29 February 1908/26 Muharram 1326, p. 469.

²⁹⁰ The letter appeared a few days later in *Sur-i Israfil* No. 25, 13 March 1908/9 Safar 1326.

[T]hose dense and severe pledges the government officials have repeatedly made and the oaths taken on the Qur'an in support of the constitution in the sacred Assembly and in the presence of the clergy and nation's representatives were all lies and untrue.²⁹¹

It continued to publish accusations of all sorts.²⁹² When, in April, the government did arrest a few men in connection with the attempt on the shah's life, the committees could arrange their release and safe escape. They did so after gathering at the headquarters (*Sipahsalar* school) next to the Assembly and protesting the "unconstitutionality" of the arrests by Tehran's chief of police: the houses had been entered without legal warrant – a somewhat startling argument, given the crime. Upon questioning, the petrified ministers denied having given such orders. This enabled the committees to gain the immediate release of three or four detainees and to continue to press for the release of the rest.²⁹³

In a late session of the first Assembly, Taqizadah put forth a view that went a long way in clarifying what he and other like-minded constitutionalists understood by the new system. In contrast to the two- or three-hundred-year-old European parliaments that simply supervised the government, argued Taqizadah, the Iranian Assembly had the additional duty of establishing a new administration and therefore could not take the contemporary European parliaments as a guide. In such extraordinary times as Iran was facing, he added, the Assembly was to act far more radically than the placid European parliaments, which by the early years of the twentieth century had already passed through the tumultuous waves of revolutionary turmoil to establish parliaments. This meant that the Assembly could not supervise the government passively, because, even in the absence of any wrongdoing, the same governmental structures remained intact and progress was impossible. The Iranian Assembly was to proceed unconventionally, to implement reforms and create a new state administration by means of an iron fist, in the same manner that Muhammad Ali had done in Egypt and Napoleon in France.²⁹⁴ Here on display was the affinity with the Young Turks, and strong hints about the Assembly as something beyond a legislature.

The last official communications between the shah and the Assembly unmasked the shah's fury at the new definition of sovereignty. On May 15, in a seemingly conciliatory address, he blatantly challenged popular sovereignty by repeatedly calling Iran his house, and the subjects, loving children in his trust. He forgave the Assembly's misbehavior as fatherly love toward a child obliged him to do, and, mimicking the Supplement in language but not spirit, let it be known that monarchy and the ruler's duty toward the country were a divine grant. The

²⁹¹ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 258, 26 March 1908/22 Safar 1326, p. 2.

²⁹² *Habl al-Matin*, No. 273, 15 April 1908/13 Rabi' I 1326, pp. 1–3.

²⁹³ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 273, 15 April 1908/13 Rabi' I 1326, p. 3; *Habl al-Matin*, No. 274, 16 April 1908/14 Rabi' I 1326, p. 3.

²⁹⁴ *Majlis*, 17 May 1908/15 Rabi' II 1326, p. 550. For other suggestions regarding active state intervention by major constitutionalists, described as the "road to salvation," by which was also meant the railroad, see Sani' al-Dawlah *Rah-i Najat*, ed. Homa Rizvani [Tehran: Nashr-i Tarikh-i Iran (1907/1325)], 1984.

address failed to generate a single reaction and was passed over as soon as it was read.²⁹⁵ A month later a commission hand-delivered the Assembly's final address to the shah in which he was reminded that the public had changed the principle of monarchy (*taghyir-i maslak-i saltanat*) according to articles 26 and 35 of the Supplement; that, unlike the ministers, he was without responsibility, but so long as he made decisions that were the ministers', it defied logic and justice to hold Zayd responsible for `Amru's misdeeds. And finally, that the pure and benevolent monarch had been turned against the constitution by the traitors who insinuated that abiding by it degraded the monarchy.²⁹⁶ His response to the Assembly, two days later (June 20), opened by showcasing Muhammad Ali as sixth in line of Qajar sultans, and declared the monarchy to be his absolute right and an inheritance relegated to him by the swords and historic sacrifices of his ancestors as a divine grant. Still claiming to be a constitutional monarch, he meant by that allowing the public to partake in affairs of the realm out of generosity and nothing more. (For a copy see Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutiyat*, pp. 619–622).

The exchanges that led to the bombardment of the Assembly were not unpredictable. The last two exchanges took place when the shah and the Cossacks had already left (June 3) for the royal garden (Bagh-i Shah) outside the capital in preparation for an assault. Shortly after his move, in a public declaration distributed in the city on June 8, while posing as a defender of the constitution, he accused his opponents of fooling the common folk with various tricks for the sake of power and only so that they could become ministers and officials themselves.²⁹⁷ Likewise, adopting the discourse of the counterrevolutionary clergy, in a letter addressed to the Najaf clerics on 18 June, he argued that despite being a stern supporter of the constitutional system, he could no longer tolerate the abuse of freedoms under the constitution for selfish ends by the seditious.²⁹⁸ Addressing the governors and provincial rulers on 22, June one day before the final attack, he accused the Assembly of violating the constitution and promised severe punishment for any provincial ruler who disobeyed his orders.²⁹⁹ In response to his public declaration, the shah became the object of most virulent attacks by the committees, and was called a betrayer of the nation and the state. The committees expressed surprise that despite all wrongdoing and open expressions of animosity toward the Assembly, the latter continued to consider the shah legitimate. According to Kasravi, the Assembly received five hundred telegrams from around the country to this effect.³⁰⁰

When the siege came on 23 June 1908, the armed committees proved to be no match for the modern Russian-trained-and-commanded Cossack Brigade. The Assembly fell easily and several prominent constitutionalists, among them Mirza Jahangir Khan, the young editor of *Sur-i Israfil*, and Malik al-Mutakallimin and

²⁹⁵ Majlis, 15 May 1908/13 Rabi` II 1326, p. 550.

²⁹⁶ Majlis, 16 June 1908/16 Jumada I 1326, pp. 579–580.

²⁹⁷ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 598–603. *Majlis*, 16 June 1908/16 Jumada I 1326, pp. 578–80.

²⁹⁸ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, pp. 584–86 (esp. p. 574).

²⁹⁹ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, p. 616. ³⁰⁰ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah*, p. 623.

Siyyid Jamal al-Din Isfahani, two popular religious orators with connection to guilds, along with a handful of activists, were executed in the next few days. The constitutional movement seemed to have been defeated. And in fact, had it not been for the efflorescence of committees under the Assembly, the constitutional movement could have been all but gone. With the physical destruction of the Assembly and the dispersing of the Tehran committees, Azerbaijan (especially Tabriz) and Gilan province, where committees were the strongest, took the lead. Meanwhile, the shah, following a series of meetings with Ayatollah Nuri, reached the conclusion that constitutionalism was incompatible with Islam and should never be restored. Instead he promised to establish the *majlis-i shura-yi kubra-yi dawlati*, a fifty-member council composed of courtiers, notables, and merchants, with the goal of discussing state affairs.³⁰¹ This council came much closer to what the old regime originally had had in mind when it issued the final decree in August 1906.

The counterrevolution was triumphant for more than a year. During this time, Tabriz initiated a legendary resistance that, despite major divisions within the city between pro- and anti-constitutional factions, managed to drain most of the fighting energies of the central government.³⁰² The resistance was assisted by a “multinational” coalition. This included the Sa`adat Society of Istanbul, composed mainly of the longstanding Iranian merchant community in Istanbul and recent political exiles, aided by the Young Turks; the Persian Committee in London, with its high-level access to British parliamentarians and government circles, with influence over European public opinion; and lastly, revolutionaries from the Caucasus, that is, Azarbaijanis, Armenians, and Georgians.³⁰³ The disorders in Azarbaijan provided Russia with the pretext of protection of European city residents, for which purpose it issued an ultimatum about its intention to cross the border and enter Tabriz. To disallow this development, the besieged fighters in the starving city opted for what they considered to be the lesser of two evils. After ten gruelling months, they conceded defeat on 24 April 1909 and began negotiations with the central government. Shah ordered an end to the city blockade the next day. The agreement, however, had come too late. Russians entered the city on 29 April and effectively ended its blockade. Yet the fall of Tabriz could not break the constitutional resurgence that had started to gather momentum around the country in winter 1909 after Tabriz had engaged the majority of government forces. This resurgence culminated in the formation of two armies of resistance, the first in the south under the leadership of Sardar As`ad, the head of the Bakhtiari tribesmen.³⁰⁴ The second was formed in the city of Rasht under the leadership of Sipahdar. The latter army

³⁰¹ Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutab*, pp. 826–827.

³⁰² Kasravi provides a detailed account of struggles in Azerbaijan, and Tabriz in particular in his *Tarikh-i Mashrutab*, pp. 676–906.

³⁰³ Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 228–254. Berberian, *Armenians*. For comprehensive analysis of formation and activities of Persian Committee, and a broader range of groups mentioned here, see Bonakdarian, *Britain*.

³⁰⁴ Sardar As`ad was in Europe when the Bakhtiari forces began their march on Tehran, but returned in time to assume the leadership of one of the Bakhtiari divisions entering Tehran.

mobilized the many popular militias in the north and northwest, including those from the Caucasus. The two groups converged in the city of Karaj near Tehran on 8 July 1909, before launching the final attack on the capital. The fighting, which began on 13 July, concluded on 16 July with a constitutionalist victory; the shah took refuge in the Russian Legation. His eleven-year-old son, Ahmad, under the guidance of a Qajar regent, was proclaimed the new shah on 18 July 1909 and was recognized by Britain and Russia. Shaykh Fazl Allah Nuri, the most religiously learned cleric among a handful of ayatollahs in Iran, was among those executed by the new government in retribution for his role in the counterrevolutionary movement.

Although the constitutionalists emerged victorious, the central government was too weak to exert its control over the existing localized centers of power and to contain or suppress the decentralizing forces that the revolution itself had unleashed. The disorders that had interfered with the work of the first Assembly continued during the second legislative period. Not only had the turmoil of revolution and counterrevolution further weakened the government, but the revolutionary mobilization itself had also created new actors who jockeyed for influence. This opened the door for greater Russian and British presence, increasing the chances of Iranian partition.³⁰⁵

With the restoration of the constitutional system, political parties were established in earnest, most prominently the radical Democrat and the conservative Moderate parties.³⁰⁶ The Democrats, initially the weaker of the two, pursued a program of state centralization, weakening of regional authority of rulers and tribes, industrialization, centralization of taxation, free and compulsory education, universal male suffrage, and secularization of the judiciary. It also took a hostile stance toward the irregular forces and committees which it sought to demobilize in favor of a standing army and police.³⁰⁷ This seemingly surprising development was consistent with the state-building agenda of Democrats. The tax program in particular proved to be unpopular with the public and created many enemies for the Assembly. Furthermore, the disorders the constitutional movement had initiated, especially tribal disorders, compounded by the former shah's attempt to restore his throne, made the task of central government quite difficult.³⁰⁸

When Morgan Shuster, the American advisor, was invited to Iran to reorganize the financial administration, taxes in particular, he was confronted with these problems. Forming a strong alliance with the Democrats, and given extensive powers in the financial administration, he began the task of bringing order to taxes with initial success. Yet his programs were deemed too harmful to the interests of Russia and Britain.

³⁰⁵ Bonakdarian, *Britain*.

³⁰⁶ Mansoureh Etehadieh Nezam Mafi, *Paydayish va Tahavvul-i Ahzab-i Siyasi-i Mashrutiyat: Dawrah-i Auval va Duvvum-i Majlis-i Shura-yi Milli* (Tehran: Nashr-i Gustarah, 1982). Muhammad Taqi Bahar, *Tarikh-i mukhtasar-i ahzab-i siyasi: Inqraz-i Qajariyah* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1944).

³⁰⁷ Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 269, 299–302, 314–315.

³⁰⁸ Arjomand, *Turban*, pp. 55–58. Afary, *Grassroots Democracy*, pp. 315–316.

Russia, not having left northern Iran, issued an ultimatum that it would occupy Tehran unless Shuster was dismissed. The Assembly, in its public posturing, remained steadfast in support of Shuster, even though many Moderates were in favor of his removal. In response, the regent, the Bakhtiari-dominated cabinet, and the Bakhtiari forces stationed in Tehran moved to shut down the Assembly and avert the possibility of Russian take-over of the capital. The Bakhtiari “coup” had come with tacit approval of British and Russians.³⁰⁹ Henceforth, Russia continued to consolidate in the North until the Bolshevik revolution while Britain found it easier to establish a presence in the South. Generally this is regarded as the end of the constitutional movement in Iran. The state-building achievements of the Iranian state, as indicated by the amount and kind of legislation approved by the first and second Assemblies, remained meager when compared with those of the Young Turks.³¹⁰

CONSTITUTIONALISM AND KINGSHIP: THE OVERLOOKED PARADIGM

The Iranian revolution can be thought of as the advent of legal constitutional democracy, the struggle of religion with secularists and freethinkers, the rise of the public sphere and the flourishing of popular democracy, with anti-authoritarian and even social egalitarian overtones; or it can be thought of as in continuity with state-building measures of the previous century. Each of these highlights a dimension of this complex phenomenon. Given that revolutions are a conjunction of various independent rebellions that come together and inflect one another, their complexity should be taken as a given. The comparative approach can help us disentangle the complexity by fleshing out revolutions’ various layers, and to go even further to highlight layers that have been neglected. A focus on global, regional, and local layers of interaction has served to organize this comparative narrative.

Global constitutionalism channeled conflicts and demands on the ground toward the establishment of a legal framework. The echoes of historical and contemporary democratic movements around the globe were heard during the dramatic emergence of public spheres, elections, establishment of the Assembly, struggles between the legislative and the executive and the fall of numerous cabinets, and finally, the writing of the constitution and the Supplement. The Assembly went beyond a mere legislative body to interfere with the executive. In this sense, it participated in the same irony found in many other constitutional revolutions that were forced to violate legal principles if they were to survive and remain relevant.

Beyond these familiar themes, the Iranian intelligentsia and their Young Turk counterparts shared many local challenges to which they sought answers in constitutionalism. More than the creation of civil society and public sphere, constitutionalism meant continuity with the state-reformist projects that had

³⁰⁹ Bonakdarian, *Britain*, pp. 275–296.

³¹⁰ This conclusion is based on the comparison of *Musavvat*, I-II, in Iran with voluminous legislation and temporary laws reflected in *Düstur*, I-X, in the Ottoman Empire.

begun a century earlier in legal rationalism, and institutional transformation to culminate in a modern, interventionist state. As was the case for the Young Turks, the creation of a modern state guided the actions of statesmen and intelligentsia; this was a central aspect of the Iranian revolution that has not received the attention it deserves. I have treated counterrevolution to be primarily a reaction to the rationalizing reformist program of the Assembly, and thus have deviated from the narrative that considers the battle between religion and secularism as the central theme of this revolution. If the religious establishment felt threatened, it was because it was part of, and not at the center of, the reformist challenge the constitutionalists posed against the traditional social order.

Constitutionalism was also localized – or rather regionalized – with its Islamization to garner legitimacy. Beyond legitimacy, this strategy attracted major clerical allies in Iran whose participation was a double-edged sword; the clerics' presence brought new challenges over correct interpretation. The struggle over the movement's leadership became reasons to challenge the constitution's Islamic pedigree; it also brought into question the meaning of national sovereignty, legal equality, and law-making. It was here that the movement was transformed to the fight between religion and irreligion, sacred and profane, Islam and Western constitutionalism. This partially undid the success that the Islamization strategy had enjoyed. Surprisingly similar developments took shape in the Ottoman Empire, but with less damaging repercussions for this delicate synthesis.

Comparison highlights also the relative strength of the paradigm of kingship in revolution in Iran. As I insisted before, its greater relevance to Iran was not because the idea of the sultanate was weak in the Ottoman Empire, but because the movement in Iran drew from a much broader cross section of society than did the managed-from-the-top Young Turk revolution. The shah-centered universe in Iran could not be subsumed under religion. This local notion informed a good part of the dynamics of the confrontations with the monarchy or support for the Assembly, and it cannot simply be reduced to an appendage of the struggle of the legislative against the executive, a movement for radical democracy, or social democracy, or a fight over religion. Something additional and more complex was at work that mediated public participation in the revolution and its views of constitutionalism and the Assembly.³¹¹ Its presence highlights the irreducibility of the Iranian event to global or regional dynamics, and makes it unique in the final analysis, in the same way that the politicized multiethnicity of the Ottoman Empire and its ideology of Ottomanism with its peculiar challenges made that event unique.

In investigating the dynamics of kingship, we also encounter another manifestation of agency that is more complex than what we have seen so far. In the Ottoman Empire, revolutionaries exerted their agency by forging ties between external and internal organizations and acting upon the clues received from

³¹¹ In developing this neglected theme of the Iranian constitutional movement, I have benefited immensely from conversations with, and the work of, Cyrus Amir-Mokri. See his *Redefining Iran's Constitutional Revolution* (unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, Dept. of History, 1992).

the Russian Revolution. In Iran, constitutionalists were similarly inspired by the Russian Revolution and a fortuitous contingency allowed them to turn a familiar-sounding revolt into a constitutional revolution in the Legation gathering. In these exceptional circumstances, men made history as they pleased. Yet, beyond the elite and among the public, agency made its appearance in another form. Here the outcome did not match intentions. The public manipulated the idiom of kingship as a cover for its revolt but it ended in inadvertently transforming, or at the least destabilizing, the culture of kingship. It was then, in the course of constitutional movement, not later (e.g., 1979) or sooner (e.g., assassination of Nasir al-Din Shah), that the idea of monarchy became irreparably damaged and lost its magical aura. Later, the void left by damaged kinship was filled with the ascendance of republicanism on the one hand and religion on the other. The background to this transformation was presented in [Chapter 6](#); here I pick up the story from where I left off, to take account of the transformation of culture of kingship.

The National Assembly or the House of Justice

Throughout the revolution, if the intelligentsia strove to abide by the global logic of constitutionalism, the public grounded it by acting on local logic. The public cry was for “justice.” In conformity, the clerics at first called for the creation of a House of Justice in every province, “to attend to the subjects’ petitions and grievances and to treat them with justice and equity.”³¹² The ideals embodied here were monarchical and the demanded institution resembled many others that brought shah and subjects together, albeit mostly in the abstract. The obsession with ‘Ayn al-Dawlah, the chief vizier who was deposed for the misdeeds of the Tehran governor, and the powerful symbolism that threatened to bring the uprising to a premature end, communicated the divergence of goals and visions between the Legation gathering leaders and the crowds. As a House of Justice, the Assembly was a source of tension for the constitutionalists. The public “reproduced” the Assembly through hitherto familiar categories of politics.³¹³

To come in direct contact with the source of justice, the public flooded the Assembly with petitions. The constitutionalists discouraged this, and spoke dismissively of the petitions’ trivial content. As a representative put it, the Assembly was to organize finances, demarcate borders, and meet with the Minister of Foreign Affairs in place of listening to the complaints of a teacher against a principal. He advised the public to address petitions (*tazallumat*) to the Ministry of Justice instead.³¹⁴ He implored the newspapers and colleagues for help in educating the public to understand that “the meaning of Assembly is not what you have understood it to be”³¹⁵ and “this Assembly is not a House of

³¹² Nazim al-Islam Kirmani, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, p. 358.

³¹³ Marshal Sahlins *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Island Kingdom* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), pp. 8, 33, 67–68.

³¹⁴ *Majlis*, 3 February 1907/19 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 73.

³¹⁵ Sa’d al-Dawlah made this request from Taqizadah. *Majlis*, 3 February 1907/19 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 73.

Justice.”³¹⁶ Another complained that “every day at this place we are encumbered by someone’s grievances – one day the people of Kirmanshah, another, the inhabitants of Tunikabun and the like. What should we do about these?”³¹⁷ Others concurred that after six months they had only dealt with petitions, which was not their job, and suggested that such petitions be addressed to a special Assembly council created for the purpose.³¹⁸ The council was to review and forward petitions to relevant ministries for an answer; it was to bring to the Assembly’s attention only the most important petitions for consideration in public sessions.³¹⁹

Tellingly, the special council was named the Council for Investigation of Grievances (*anjuman-i tahqiq-i `ara’iz*), a clear attempt to dissociate the Assembly from the House of Justice, both symbolically and institutionally. The name was identical to that of a nineteenth-century council.³²⁰ Nonetheless, the Assembly agreed to recite and discuss some petitions in its open sessions, and in practice, even entire sessions were devoted to them.

Most representatives, however, opposed relegating the task to a special council or the Ministry of Justice. The deputy of the guilds of the perfumers and spice traders (*atar*), druggists, tea sellers, and wholesale spice dealers (*saqat furush*), for example objected that “for years the public have set their hopes on this Assembly, but now you intend to suspend it. How will the public petitions be attended to?”³²¹ When response came that the commission demanded answers from various ministries, that the Assembly was a place to enact laws for the nation and was not to waste its precious time reading petitions, and that only one day of the week would be allocated for reading the most vital ones, they met the angry protest of the deputy of coppersmiths, gunsmiths, coach builders, glaivesmiths, founders, and whitesmiths guilds: “Then what is this Assembly established for? Is it in vain?” The deputy of the grocer, wholesale dealer, dried nuts seller, fruit seller, corn chandler, and rice seller guilds added in support that a mere one day would not satisfy the public, who had long awaited the Assembly.³²² In the same spirit, a deputy urged the Assembly to attend to petitions to prevent the public from losing faith.³²³ The symbolic similarity to the shah’s practice of allocating one (or two) days for attending to grievances is worthy of note here.

³¹⁶ *Majlis*, 2 April 1907/18 Safar 1325, p. 124.

³¹⁷ *Majlis*, 11 September 1907/3 Sha`ban 1325, p. 286.

³¹⁸ This statement was by Taqizadah and in sharp contrast to his earlier position. *Majlis*, 23 March 1907/8 Safar 1325, p. 115. Compare with *Majlis*, 3 January 1907/18 Dhu al-Qa`de 1324, p. 42.

³¹⁹ Such a council was planned very early as attested by clause 59 of the Internal Regulations of the Assembly. *Majlis*, p. 33. The above duties were not specified in clause 59 but regularly discussed in the Assembly. On one occasion, the council claimed to have forwarded 2,800 letters to various ministries and received answers to 1,500. *Majlis*, 17 April 1907/4 Rabi` I 1325, p. 142.

³²⁰ The nineteenth-century Council used the word *mazalim* in reference to petitions and grievances. The Assembly used the identical term *`arai`z* for the appellation of the new Council. With this exception, their names were the same. In the Assembly debates the terms *`ara`iz*, *tazallum*, and *mazalim* were used interchangeably for petition.

³²¹ *Majlis*, 3 January 1907/18 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, p. 41.

³²² *Majlis*, 3 January 1907/18 Dhu al-Qa`da 1324, pp. 41–42. (quote from p. 42).

³²³ *Majlis*, 28 February 1907/15 Muharram 1325, p. 97.

Tabataba'i, the liberal cleric, also agreed. In his view, the Assembly had confused the public and failed to assign a proper place for addressing petitions.³²⁴ In a more frustrated mood, in April 1907, he interrupted discussions on municipality to say: "you should think of something for the petitioners so that I may be relieved. If attending to public grievances has nothing to do with the Assembly, then inform them, so that they may leave me alone. Otherwise think of something . . . for the present situation is intolerable. Every time I come to the Assembly, from the entrance to here,³²⁵ ten to twenty people hinder and annoy me. This place is not for enacting laws alone! You should finally think of a measure for the petitioners. Now a petitioner downstairs claims his son was murdered. Investigate, see if it is true and take action."³²⁶ In an oft-repeated response, the representatives invoked inability to interfere with the executive, adding that the already-established Council was to attend to the people's petitions. Taken aback, Tabataba'i conceded the Assembly's limitations, yet he insisted on public lack of understanding which had forced them to take refuge at the Assembly because of government unresponsiveness. As a clever solution, he suggested that the Council and the Assembly meet separately but during the same hours.³²⁷

The symbolism of petitioning occasionally took on a militant form around the country. In these instances the bazaars and places of trade shut down followed by the public taking of sanctuary at the telegraph offices while the militia engaged in martial drills. Occupying the telegraph offices was a means to petition the source of justice *directly*. After sending telegrams to the Assembly and the shah, they awaited a positive reply, a matter that sometimes could take weeks.³²⁸

For a long while, the ministers were branded as traitors and Assembly enemies, but the shah's implicitly acknowledged animosity was explained away by pointing to malicious ministers. The traitor ministers separated the "nation" from the "state," the "body" from the "head," or the "children" from the "father." Mi'mar bashi, representative of the well-diggers', builders' (mi'mar), brickmakers', charcoal makers', tilers', potters', and pot-sellers' guilds, blamed the government animus and the destitute, pathetic circumstances of the country on the ministers. "None of the Qajar shahs acted unjustly toward us. Whatever done was by the

³²⁴ *Majlis*, 26 March 1907/11 Safar 1325, p. 117.

³²⁵ The large garden of the Assembly compound was a common site for sanctuary by the aggrieved.

³²⁶ *Majlis*, 17 April 1907/4 Rabi' I 1325, p. 142.

³²⁷ *Majlis*, 17 April 1907/4 Rabi' I 1325, p. 142. The confusion of Tabataba'i about the executive functions of European parliaments was apparent, for example, during his leadership of the Islamic Assembly of Progress in 1902. This Assembly's declaration confounded various issues and showed its authors were not entirely aware of the functions of the European consultative assemblies they praised, and the confusion remained throughout the constitutional movement. The announcement not only attributed executive functions to Western parliaments; it also showed stark unawareness of the representative, popularly elected composition of their members, and it confused them with any goal oriented organization, such as missionary councils. SAMI, uncat.

³²⁸ *Habl al-Matin*, No. 16, 16 May 1907/3 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 3-4. And especially *Anjuman*, No. 90, 1 June 1907/19 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 1-4; *Anjuman*, No. 91, 2 June 1907/20 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 1-4; *Anjuman*, No. 92, 3 June 1907/21 Rabi' II 1325, pp. 1-4.

[ministers],” he related. “These ministers are all traitors and the nation is prepared to prove their treason.” According to a personal reliable source, he added, “the compassionate and affectionate shah is always busy reading and answering petitions and letters. Other than time spent eating or drinking tea, his time is spent entirely on work and toil. But these traitors and cheats who . . . have surrounded him and distract his blessed attention do not allow things to be done.”³²⁹ Many others, including a clerical leader, Aqa Sayyid Mahmud Mujtahid, agreed that the shah intended to cooperate but the ministers and high officials around him did not allow it.³³⁰ Bihbahani and Tabataba’i, albeit with greater reserve, also agreed that the shah was on the Assembly’s side but was surrounded by individuals who provoked him to act otherwise.³³¹ An Azarbaijan deputy echoed the same when he stated “the [ministers] do not pity the country or the nation. Only the shah does,” but they so consistently feign loyalty that the shah is led into error. He recommended advising the shah, “to distance yourself from these traitors and allow our petitions to reach you without an intermediary so that they may be presented to His Majesty without a mediator.”³³² The representative of notables and landowners of Tehran proposed a direct telephone line so that the Assembly could speak to the shah without an intermediary.³³³ Another suggested a permanent Assembly delegate who would make regular visits to the shah.³³⁴ Unmistakably, the new constitutional politics was in negotiation with the local culture of politics.

Loyalty with Limits

It is not argued here that loyalty to the shah had no bounds, or that the public accepted at face value the center’s self presentation. Indeed, to argue that the public followed the doctrine of kingship sheepishly would be to submit to the textual freezing of culture and actors.³³⁵ There was indeed disparity between the public’s professed loyalty and true belief. Scott’s distinction between “public” and “hidden transcript,” “front” and “backstage,” speech in the open that gives the illusion of hegemony, and actual belief that finds expression away from the gaze of power, are helpful analytical categories in this context.³³⁶ The declarations of loyalty at the expense of the grand vizier and high officials were the

³²⁹ *Majlis*, 22 January 1907/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 60.

³³⁰ *Majlis*, 22 January 1907/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, pp. 59–60. For a similar view see *Majlis*, 26 August 1907/17 Rajab 1325, p. 262.

³³¹ For similar statements by Bihbahani and Tabataba’i see *Majlis*, 29 January 1907/14 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 69. *Majlis*, 13 April 1907/29 Safar 1325, p. 132. Even Tabataba’i, who still defended the shah while blaming the ministers, was nonetheless forced to explicitly acknowledge that the shah opposed constitutional principles. See *Majlis*, 6 July 1907/25 Jumada I 1325, pp. 206–207. He also questioned the counterrevolutionaries’ connection to him. *Majlis*, 16 August 1907/7 Rajab 1325, p. 246.

³³² *Majlis*, 22 January 1907/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 60.

³³³ *Majlis*, 22 January 1907/7 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 60.

³³⁴ *Majlis*, 13 April 1907/29 Safar 1325, p. 132.

³³⁵ On textual freezing, a notion with close affinity to Said’s Orientalism, see Nicholas B. Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

³³⁶ Scott, *Domination*, pp. 2–4.

public transcript, yet (contrary to Scott) simply because the idea was not entirely hegemonic did not mean it had no hold over imaginations. In other words, the public did not reject wholesale in the “backstage” the idiom of the Circle of Justice. In fact, even when the public eventually became disloyal toward the unjust shah, it remained true to the idiom and strove to replace him with a just monarch. In short, it did not call for a radical reorganization of the functions and responsibilities of monarchy; it remained committed to a monarch-centered universe.

The radicals, on the other hand, more than challenging the “person” of the shah, contested the “position” of the shah in the local structure of rule.³³⁷ Armed with constitutional doctrine, they challenged the shah and government with accountability, responsibility, separation of powers, dominance of the legislative over the executive, and national sovereignty. In doing so, they progressively brought into question the right of the uncooperative shah to rule. What made them revolutionaries in place of mere rebels was the quest to construct an executive distinct from the monarch and transform the monarchy’s traditional meaning and functions. The Legation gathering had already given a taste of this. A leaflet read aloud to protestors attributed the shah’s disinterest in justice and prosperity for his worldly subjects to the shah’s otherworldly, nonhuman essence; it also remarked that the sums spent on frivolous pleasures for the shah and associates came not from the taxes of twelve million subjects, but were sums handed to him by angels from heaven.³³⁸ In the same vein, when the shah demanded an unconditional oath of loyalty toward the pillars of monarchy from the representative, the latter refused, citing the nation’s precedence. Such attacks on kingship, not merely the king, became only more open with time.³³⁹

For the general public, the break between the public and hidden transcript was more nuanced. The problem may be scrutinized by exploring relevant themes from Russia and the Ottoman Empire. The work of Daniel Field on the Russian peasantry shows that the popularly concocted notion of the Tsar the Deliverer had implications strikingly similar to those of the Circle of Justice.³⁴⁰ During uprisings in 1905, the Russian peasantry invoked it to profess loyalty to the tsar, and even the workers used it to legitimate agitation for the Duma. A

³³⁷ Here I follow Gluckman’s distinction between the “person” and the “position” of king. Max Gluckman “Rituals of Rebellion in South-East Africa” in *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London: Cohen and West, 1963). In general terms, Kantorowicz draws the same distinction between the mortal king and the immortal King, or between the person and the office. Ernst H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). One should however be careful in extending Kantorowicz’s distinction between “body natural” and “body politic” to Islamic-Iranian kingship. For a discussion see Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

³³⁸ Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi’at*, pp. 77–81.

³³⁹ For one of the most vivid attacks on the shah’s sanctity during the short triumph of the counter-revolution, see the famous article in the Switzerland edition of *Sur-i Israfil*, “Tabi’at-i Saltanat Chist,” 23 January 1909/1 Muharram 1327 No. 1, pp. 2–5.

³⁴⁰ Interestingly, Field’s work is one of the central texts employed by Scott to elaborate on his theoretical dichotomy.

nineteenth century Russian reformer described this myth from the peasants' view as follows:

The nobility has separated the common people from the tsar. Standing as an obstacle between them, it conceals the common people from the tsar and does not permit the people's complaints and hopes to reach him. It hides from the people the bright image of the tsar, so that the tsar's word does not get to simple people, or does so in distorted form. But the common people love the tsar and yearn for him and the tsar, for his part, looks fondly upon the common people, whom he has long intended to deliver from their woes. And some day, reaching over the head of the nobles, the tsar and the people will respond to one another.³⁴¹

At times of revolt, peasants argued that they were restoring the just and true tsar to the throne, and pretended that their uprisings were expressions of loyalty. Some conservatives and radicals took the "naïve monarchism" at its face value; others were skeptical but could not dismiss it outright. When resisting taxes and dividing the land, the peasants successfully delayed official response, created confusion and division between skeptics and believers, and often, by proving their "misguided" loyalty and "naïvete," reduced their punishment considerably.³⁴² Hence they used revolt instrumentally,³⁴³ but that was not all they did or understood by it.

Similarly, I argue that the Circle of Justice was the revolutionaries' public transcript. Two differences, however, should be noted. One, the Circle of Justice could indeed be used more effectively than the symbolic Tsar the Deliverer, because after all it was the official ideology of the center and not an invention by the rebels. In that sense, it was an inversion of the dominant ideology, which meant its imagery was immediately familiar to all parties. With the use of key-words from the discourse of the Circle, the knowledge of the "field" and the rules of the political game were immediately apparent to both the dominated and the dominant.³⁴⁴ Much as the Russian peasants had used the myth of Tsar the Deliverer to support a pretense of loyalty at the time of revolt, the Iranian public, and the committees in particular, manipulated the official ideology to advance their cause, to mitigate or delay the officials' harsh response, and to make room for defiant activities. The tacit knowledge of the political culture, what Bourdieu calls the community of unconscious, made communication between the two sides possible.³⁴⁵ By the same token, conformity to the strictures of the Circle of Justice was more binding for the center, which could not reject it in the name of falsehood and invention. Thus, the image projected from the center became a

³⁴¹ Daniel Field, *Rebels in the Name of Tsar* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 1. For other versions of the myth and emphasis on the "true" tsar, the deliverer, see Field, *Rebels*, p. 6.

³⁴² Field, *Rebels*, pp. 199–202, 210, 214.

³⁴³ Drawing on Field's "naïve monarchism," Scott speaks of Tsar the Deliverer as a public transcript invoked to advance the peasants' unspoken desires and goals and is interested primarily in its instrumental use. Scott, *Domination*, pp. 96–101.

³⁴⁴ For the concept of field see Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital," ed. J. C Richardson *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986), pp. 241–258. Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society* 14:6 (1985) pp. 723–744. Bourdieu, *Outline*, p. 80.

³⁴⁵ Bourdieu, *Outline*, p. 80.

resource in the hands of adversaries; the statesmen, and particularly the shah, were “called upon . . . to live up to their own ideological presentation of themselves to their subordinates.”³⁴⁶

The second issue concerned the use of this ideology. I find the binary distinction between the presence or absence of belief, and the purely instrumental use of dominant ideologies, problematic. In a multiactor, broad social movement, one could certainly find room for different gradations of belief along a spectrum. Further, the idea that the normative self-projection of the center could be rejected wholesale by the actors who used the rhetoric of loyalty purely instrumentally seems too reductionist. Accepting instrumental use and subversion should not entail rejection. Only for some it did, such as the Westernized intelligentsia, who could disparage loyalty to the shah and question the myth of monarchy in general, as they could, and did, with religion. On the other extreme stood many who felt unquestioningly loyal to the monarch and to monarchy. In between stood perhaps the majority; skeptical of the justice of the reigning monarch, and eventually convinced that his tyrannical rule should end but they still could not dismiss a monarch-centered universe and a body politic without it. To open that possibility, something more fundamental had to come along. For all these reasons, the revolution did not begin by questioning either the monarch or the monarchy. Most actors fixed on the theme of loyalty to the monarch for a long time.

In the Ottoman context, the notion of the Circle of Justice appeared with less force during the revolution and ultimately had no consequence, even though there too it was present. Yet, the debate among the Ottoman intellectuals about its instrumental manipulation against rulers sheds enormous light on the dynamics of the Iranian event.

The CUP attacked the sultan forcefully and directly for years from exile. Unlike the Young Ottoman predecessors, or the Iranian constitutionalists, it held the ruler responsible for every shortcoming. The bureaucratized, centralized, and intrusive state machinery had made the sultan a more visible figure at the helm of the state than his predecessors. In this sense, he shared more with the twentieth-century autocrats, or the Russian tsar, than with preceding sultans or the shah, and was more easily targeted by intelligentsia. Furthermore, Abdülhamid had personally abolished the first constitutional government shortly after assuming the throne, thus making claims about the ruler’s innocence more difficult.

In contrast, the Young Ottomans adhered strongly to the notion of the Circle of Justice.³⁴⁷ Although they criticized the state, they refused to blame the institution of the sultanate or the sultan. In fact, forceful anti-sultanism was not always typical of the Young Turk opposition either. The most prominent and popular figure of the earlier Young Turk movement, Mehmet (*Mizançı*) Murad, elicited strong sense of loyalty to the sultan.³⁴⁸ When Murad was discredited after returning from exile at the sultan’s invitation without acquiring any concessions, it cost him the movement’s leadership and with him went his

³⁴⁶ Scott, *Domination*, pp. 54–55 (quote from p. 54).

³⁴⁷ Mardin *Young Ottomans*. ³⁴⁸ See p. 55, fn 98.

style of critique. The Young Turk faction that became dominant after 1902 considered the sultan the obstacle to *all the* Empire's problems.

These differences among the Young Turk opposition sparked a rare and interesting exchange. Revelatory as it was for the Ottoman context, it was an equally penetrating commentary on Iran. Predictably, the exchange disclosed the Young Turks' unequivocal rejection of past traditions. More surprisingly, it revealed that the idiom of Circle of Justice had been used instrumentally by the previous generation of constitutionalists. Writing from Istanbul, a Young Turk critique mocked the CUP rhetoric:

Today the Ottoman government is about to disintegrate. The reason for this is the malicious desire and intentional maladministration of Abdülhamid who, after ruining the country and destroying it, jumps like an owl on top of the ruin and screams a nerve-wrecking laughter.³⁴⁹

After recounting a long list of causes for the empire's decline, he argued that the problems were not a product of the preceding twenty-five to thirty years but had roots in the past four hundred years. He considered it wishful thinking to base hopes for recovery from a centuries-old "disease" on the removal of a single person and the adoption of a constitution. Even though Abdülhamid may bear a large part of the blame, added the author, the Young Turks should realize the advantage of diverting criticism away from him. Yet, they showed insensitivity to popular sensibilities, and inadequately understood the Ottoman Empire's rich history of uprisings, the first lesson of which was that, almost always, uprisings began by targeting the grand viziers, the ministers, and the high ranking. The sultan was considered to be unaware of maladministration and innocent at all times.³⁵⁰

The author thought the sultan should not be attacked openly, even though ultimately he was to be deposed. This strategy he thought an absolute requirement because of the Ottomans' extraordinary ignorance and slavishness toward the sultan, a mixed product of the Byzantine and Iranian traditions of kingship, the Islamic caliphate, and the Turkish custom of obedience to authority. Under these influences, the sultan occupied a grotesque position between man and God in the public mind, and was considered the Shadow of God Upon Earth. It was thus impossible for ordinary Turks or the Empire's other Muslims to rise up against him, when there existed a thousand legends about him.³⁵¹

The author especially suggested looking back at the Young Ottomans, who depicted the sultan as innocent and directed criticisms toward the ministers and grand viziers or toward the "government" (*hükümet*). They even depicted the sultan as something of a captive, blameless and worthy of pity. In this style, he thought, the public could freely criticize the government officials who, like themselves, lacked divine qualities, and the movement could find widespread acceptance.³⁵²

³⁴⁹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 26, 13 April 1903/15 Muharrem 1321 "Şura-yı Ümmet Müdüriyet-i Aliyesine," pp. 1–2 (quote from p. 1).

³⁵⁰ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 26, p. 1. ³⁵¹ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 26, p. 2.

³⁵² *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 26, p. 2.

Astonishingly, the author was aware of the use of this strategy in the contemporaneous upheavals in Russia, which he thought had important implications for them. The Russian peasants elicited the same loyalty and slavishness toward the tsar, stated the author, and attributed to him a divine status, complete with numerous bizarre titles, such as White Emperor – a ruler who sat on his golden throne and accorded everyone their station in life. The Russian revolutionaries thus considered it useless to incite the peasants against the tsar and thus resorted to an almost identical tactic as that used by the Young Ottomans: they depicted the officials as the cause of all maladministration, of the peasants' poverty and destitution, of famine, and of unjust land distribution; they absolved the tsar of all responsibility and portrayed him as an innocent ruler who unsuccessfully struggled to rescue himself from detestable officials. The Russian revolutionaries, arguing that the tsar was hoping that the faithful peasants would rise up against the officials and punish the traitors, had thus incited important rebellions in the past few years.³⁵³

The CUP could not have disagreed more. It argued that the Turkish public considered it blasphemous to worship anyone but God, and they accused the author of having confused the Perso-Arabic title of Shadow of God Upon Earth, a title given by decree authors and court chroniclers seeking favor, with the real beliefs of ordinary Turks.³⁵⁴ In Young Turk opinion, a constitutional compromise between the “nation” and the Ottoman dynasty was possible, but there was no place for Abdülhamid in such an accord.³⁵⁵

This exchange was quite significant and bears directly upon several theoretical issues raised so far. Because of the substitution of the courtiers' texts for public belief in practice, for reducing the general Turkish public to unthinking royalists, the challenger's position was dismissed by the CUP for what today would be considered Orientalist fallacy. The Young Turks were obviously advising their friend against being duped by official ideology and suggesting that he not confuse real public beliefs with the center's self-portrayal. Yet they also dismissed the possibility that the concept may have been manipulated as a cover to rally the public, to legitimate revolts, and to depose sultans. The debate clearly showed contemporary awareness of the manipulative potential and use of this discourse in dissimulation. It also showed awareness of the distinction between the person and the position of the monarch, a crucial distinction.

The critical gathering of Albanians at Firzovik, for example, a crowd over which the CUP could not exert complete control, employed markedly loyalist language. Furthermore, when it came to mobilizing the public for revolution, the CUP itself was not immune from combining constitutional, Islamic, and kingship language to attain its goal, as attested by declarations that appeared on the walls of city of Monastir in early July:

³⁵³ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 26, p. 2.

³⁵⁴ *Şura-yı Ümmet*, No. 26, 13 April 1903/15 Muharrem 1321, pp. 2–4.

³⁵⁵ *Şura-yı Ümmet* No. 26, 13 April 1903/15 Muharrem 1321, pp. 2–4.

The band of fools and ignorant should know that the Ottoman government is made up of a single nation and its symbol, the sultan (*timsal-ı millet olan padişah*). In between the two, there is no place for the base, the lustful, the vile, and seekers of fortune. From now on, these lowly individuals should be removed from the community's (*ümmet*) sphere of life, and their ominous and inauspicious existence brought to an end. [It is from this moment] that the sultan will see the community and the community the sultan; in the absence of an intermediary they will fall in love and will be thrown into affectionate embrace of one another. In the sacred space of harmony and union between the two, there is no place and time for the evil-intentioned outsiders (*ağyar-ı bedsiret*).³⁵⁶

Old habits die hard. Although the sultanate was considerably weakened by the revolution, the notion of loyalty was a more complicated matter. Its persistence continued to create some embarrassing complications, if not very serious or consequential ones. Soon after assuming the opening of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies, the sultan invited the newly elected deputies, predominantly CUP members, to a formal dinner at his palace as a gesture of goodwill in which he declared himself the protector of the constitution as the caliph and the sultan.³⁵⁷ After dinner, despite the head of the Chamber's part in stirring up excitement over the aura of sultan caliph, he felt greatly embarrassed when a number of deputies accosted sultan and sought to pay homage by kissing the hem of his robe, prompting the ambushed sultan to exit the room in panic.³⁵⁸ Even Hüseyin Cahid, the arch-revolutionist, could not resist the populist appeal of the sultanic idiom. After dinner, he absolved the sultan of the speech from the throne, for on that night the sultan had redeemed himself by declaring Allah, and then the nation and the Chamber of Deputies, as protector of the sultanate, state, and nation. According to Cahid, the sultan had clearly removed the obstacle between himself and the nation and thus solved all the problems they had been grappling with for all this time.³⁵⁹ He was in for some back-pedaling the next day after the opposition jumped on the issue.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁶ Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim*, pp. 45–51 (quote from 47), dated 6 July 1908/23 Haziran 1324. Niyazi dates the same document one day earlier, see *Hatırat-ı Niyazi* pp. 123–125. See also Refik *İnkılab-ı Azim* pp. 84–86 (esp. 85).

³⁵⁷ Nuri, *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, pp. 1159–1162.

³⁵⁸ For the populist disingenuous speech of Ahmed Rıza in exaltation of early Islam see Nuri *Abdülhamid-i Sani*, Vol. 3, p. 1162; Ahmed Rıza Bey, *İlk Meclis-i Mebusan ve Ayan Reisi Ahmed Rıza Bey'in Anıları* (Istanbul: Arba (1950) 1988). Upon return from the dinner, the elated Sultan retold this incident to his family and associates, as related by his daughter. See Ayşe Osmanoğlu, *Babam Sultan Abdülhamid (Hatıralarım)* (Istanbul: Selçuk Yayınları, 1994, 4th ed.), pp. 140–141.

³⁵⁹ *Tanin*, No. 152 1 January 1908/8 Zilhicce 1326/19 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Nutk-ı Hümayun ve Hakimiyet-i Milliye,” p. 1.

³⁶⁰ Claiming that his comments were misunderstood, he was forced to retract his earlier statement. *Tanin*, No. 153, 2 January 1908/9 Zilhicce 1326/20 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324, “Yıldız Ziyafeti ve Tesirati,” p. 1.

The Unstable Language of Monarchism

In Iran, with time public expressions of loyalty became fainter and denouncements grew stronger in tone. Similarly, the farther away from public forums and the nearer to places where anonymity could be preserved, the harsher was the posture toward the shah. In these anonymous forums, strong denouncements were present from the start.

If Russia and the Ottoman Empire were any guides, so long as the revolt against authorities was putatively in the shah's name, it could be portrayed as an act of loyalty. The Assembly here acted as an institution that brought the subjects and monarch together. With this strategy the public bought time for itself and for the shah. By giving him room to maneuver, he could dissociate from policies he was all too responsible for without losing face. It was hoped that he would come around.

The unstable context generated schizoid rhetoric. It was fresh in everyone's mind that in 1896 a commoner, Mirza Riza, had assassinated Nasir al-Din shah, the grandfather of Muhammad Ali, in a public space. At his trial, the assassin recounted the hardship suffered in the hands of a ruthless high official, and justified his resolve to kill the shah by claiming to have struck at the source: "One had to uproot the tree of injustice rather than cut its branches and leaves."³⁶¹ Significantly, the radical newspaper *Sur-i Israfil* publicly aired the trial proceedings in 1907, eleven years after the incident. The editors justified its publication, at an untimely moment, as a gesture of unconditional loyalty toward the reigning monarch and a warning to the high officials surrounding him. For it demonstrated that the subject's hatred of Nasir al-Din was owed to the high officials close to him, the very same individuals who surrounded the present shah and continued their machinations, favoritism, and nepotism. Contrary to the editors' claim, however, the testimony appeared more to be a condemnation of the previous shah and a warning to the present one, than directed to officials who were described as the shah's extensions.

In the early days of the public protests of 1905, Muhammad Ali, still the crown prince but already known for authoritarian proclivities, was publicly ridiculed on several occasions. Less than a year before the death of his father, a courtier reported on scandalous acts of a Tehran crowd that paraded a large dog, dressed with a cornsilk mustache, sitting on a small carriage dragged by an ass. The crowd that ran with the dog, royal guard-style, swung sticks and clubs at the public to clear the way for the "crown prince" on the move.³⁶² In the same days, an anonymous leaflet signed by the "Nation's Awakened" called the shah an idiot for following the advice of his associates and speculated on his future response: "Would he kill everyone at once? He cannot! In case of a mass uprising and disturbance, his life and those of his ministers will be endangered."³⁶³

³⁶¹ *Sur-i Israfil*, No. 9, 8 August 1907/28 Jumada II 1325, pp. 1-8 (quote from p. 8).

³⁶² Vakil al-Dawlah to Atabak, Doc 7, Safa'i, *Asnad-i Masbrutab*, p. 77.

³⁶³ The letter seems to have been written in May 1905, Sharif Kashani *Vaqi'at*, pp. 21-22 (quote from p. 22).

From early on it was not uncommon for some commentators to portray the monarch as blameless, manipulated by a strong-willed chief minister and officials, whose subjects were confident of his innocence; then to question in the next breath the shah's character, and to acknowledge that he was indeed hated by his subjects and deserving of death for killing the innocent.³⁶⁴ More typical, however, were leaflets that at most called the shah a simpleton in the hands of his viziers,³⁶⁵ or an innocent ruler captive to his officials.³⁶⁶ With overwhelming emphasis on justice, they called upon the shah to fulfill his God-given duties.³⁶⁷

Newspapers and representatives also wavered. The hidden transcript ruptured the public one, for example, when the committee in Tabriz issued contradictory statements in both support and condemnation of the shah during protests over the Supplement. Of particular concern were the appointments of well-known "tyrants," "despots," and "betrayers of the nation and state" who had once again surrounded the shah and ascended to high positions after being driven from Tabriz. They expressed surprise at such occurrences under a constitutional government and did not hold back their anger at the Assembly for allowing it.³⁶⁸ The same issue added that all matters should come under Assembly control, because the affairs of twenty million inhabitants could not be managed by a single conceited person, who was not only surrounded by tyrants but also had been trained and raised by them (and thus was one and the same). The views of Tabriz representatives about the shah's opposition to the constitutional regime, which the representatives themselves had not dared to voice openly, were included.³⁶⁹ The newspaper still published a prominent cleric's letter that praised the shah for his support of the constitution and blamed the conflict on the short-sighted thieves surrounding him.³⁷⁰ The letters from Tehran caused a furor and prompted the public to gather in the telegram office. The following comes from the fifth day of protest.

On Monday the 27th, the swarming of the crowd was greater than other days and impossible to control. The thread of events was about to break loose from the hands of the prudent. The crowd wanted to confiscate the armory and distribute the arms and weapons among the people and to free prisoners from jail. The *mujahidin* went to the prison, took count of the prisoners and identified their names, gave them bread and water and returned. It was decided that the next day, after investigation, any one of them who was

³⁶⁴ Majd al-Islam, *Safarnamah-i Kalat*, pp. 96, 367. For attacks on Muzaffar al-Din shah's character, where he is described as weak, cowardly, oblivious to affairs, gullible, and superstitious, among other qualities, see p. 277. It is hard to judge whether the author wrote these words prior to the death of the ailing monarch, but if they were, as the author claims, then the contradictory assertions acquire even greater significance for what they reveal about the hidden transcript.

³⁶⁵ Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 40–45.

³⁶⁶ Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 63–64 (quote from 63, see also pp. 64–65).

³⁶⁷ Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi'at*, pp. 93–95, 99–101.

³⁶⁸ *Anjuman*, No. 42, 11 February 1907/27 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 1. *Anjuman*, No. 43, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 2.

³⁶⁹ Letters were addressed to the Tabriz committee and various constitutionalists in the city. *Anjuman*, No. 43, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 3.

³⁷⁰ *Anjuman*, No. 43, 13 February 1907/29 Dhu al-Hijja 1324, p. 4.

innocent would be freed. A great insurrection is in the making at the courtyard of the telegram office and the French and American nations' songs of liberty are heard. At that time, the students of Adabiyah school entered the telegram office with red banners, singing rhythmical songs with words that added to the people's excitement. They delivered a speech in Turkish about the oppression of tyrants and putting an end to them and about the incitement of the will to freedom and equality for all. The crowd became excited, their voices rose and uproar ensued . . . Then the students of [two schools] came to the telegram office while carrying red banners adorned with "long live the constitution," "long live the committee," and "long live Liberty." Because of lack of space, they went to the roof tops, lined up in orderly rows, affixed the banners and began singing the following . . .³⁷¹

The Tabriz commotions prompted the shah to address the protestors and pronounce his loyalty to the constitution. His letter was delivered to the National Assembly, and from there was taken to the scene of the gathering. The protestors, however, disputed the authenticity of the telegram, refused to leave or to open shops, and vowed to continue until certain viziers were dismissed. They were persuaded to disperse the next day upon assurances that the letter was genuine.³⁷²

The armed public displays and antigovernment acts, coupled with expressions of loyalty to the shah, certainly created an odd scene in need of explanation, lest the crowds be "misinterpreted." This they provided in a gathering:

[The *mujahidin's*] uniforms were frocks and white pants with green stripes, made of domestically manufactured fabric and their hats were nicely made from white sheepskin. When marching in beat, they yelled in unison "long live the committee." Truly, [the sight of] the *mujahidin's* drill, march and discipline and their posture, uniforms and zeal were laudable, arousing compassion and excitement among the spectators. From the depth of their hearts they yelled "O God, make His Majesty, the monarch of we Iranians, kind and compassionate toward his subjects so that with his regal instruction he may elevate this gentle and talented nation to high ranks in a brief time. Make the treasonous ministers who impede Iran's progress wretched and miserable, for Iran can no longer endure the weight of their tyranny and injustice . . . Let it not occur to the traitors and tyrants that this movement is a mere mockery and whimsical or that [the zealous youth and *mujahidin*] who wear military uniforms and learn the science of holy war (*jihad*) are, God forbid, rebelling against the state and nation (*dawlat va millat*). Far from it! Rather, they are all guildsmen, bazaar tradesmen, and our humble folks who diligently strive for the motherland (*vatan*), the glory of His Majesty Muhammad Ali Shah who is the king of Islam, and for the progress of the country and the advancement of the constitution."³⁷³

It took the Tabriz committee one week to claim that from the beginning the shah had not been on the constitutionalists' side and, in fact, that every day he had attempted to derange this divine endeavor.³⁷⁴

³⁷¹ *Anjuman*, No. 44, 14 February 1907/1 Muharram 1325, p. 4.

³⁷² Their leaders claimed the telegram contained the secret code of the Azarbaijan deputies. *Anjuman*, No. 45, 16 February 1907/3 Muharram 1325, pp. 1-2.

³⁷³ Twice they asked for God's help in bringing the monarch to his subjects' side. Thus, even in this context they acknowledged, although indirectly, that the monarch was not on their side. *Anjuman*, No. 75, 6 May 1907/23 Rabi' I 1325, pp. 1-2.

³⁷⁴ *Anjuman*, No. 80, 14 May 1907/1 Rabi' II 1325, p. 3.

Other populist newspapers in Tabriz vacillated too. Written in Persian and sometimes Turkish, they used pictorial displays to reach a broader audience. Before the murder of Atabak, he had been portrayed in these pages as a vile creature whose betrayals had opened Iran to pillage and plunder by internal and external enemies. Hope was expressed that once the shah was informed about the betrayals, presumably by the public and the constitutionalist press, he would put an end to them.³⁷⁵ One drawing depicted the shah as a lion sitting in a crowd of foxes identified as viziers and associates. Lying before them were bags marked as taxes; the foxes had grabbed one each and sat back in obvious good spirits socializing and smiling. The lion, on the other hand, sat in solitude, quiet, sad, with a wondering gaze.³⁷⁶ Another showed a flock of sheep in the midst of a raid, with a bystander shouting “Wolf!” while the shah stood next to his flock in wonder and indecision.³⁷⁷

Perhaps nothing showed the unstable rhetoric better than a three-part article that invoked the French revolution. If in February, the shah was innocent, by late May, the sole reason for all the faults, barbaric acts, and merciless bloodletting was a single treacherous, oppressive, whimsical, murderous and ignorant monarch. At his future trial, the nation was to ask him the same question that had been put to the bloodthirsty Louis XVI: What was the reason for so much injustice?³⁷⁸ In June, opinion had softened considerably about the poor “helpless” Louis XVI, who, “despite being by nature moral, kind and fond of his subjects,” had nonetheless been fought by his subjects. This was because of the endless tyranny and oppression of the few French ministers and parasitic elite, which resembled Iran at the time. The loyalist nation of Iran loved its shah, and thus it pleaded with the irreligious, despotic, and unfair elite, to let this nation unite with its monarch to bring the ship of the state to safety from the midst of whirlpools and stormy seas.³⁷⁹ Three months later, on the last day of September, when Atabak had already been killed, we were back at Louis’s trial, where Marat was doing his best to convince the crowd against softening toward the king and doing what was necessary for their salvation:

They say that the king is not guilty personally, and it is likely that he may not be, but we the nation of France will never forget the oppression of the Louis’s ancestors . . . They are those who have driven us to ruin and are spending the possessions of us the poor on their own debauchery. Gentlemen, do not allow this type of compassion and mercy, that is a weakness of sorts, into your hearts, for these are those who have brought us servility, and exposed our dear nation to thousands of calamities. Some say that Louis XVI is not guilty, and it is possible that he is not. But I respond that this person, like a dangerous sore in the

³⁷⁵ *Azarbaijan* No. 2, 28 February 1907/15 Muharram 1325, pp. 1–2. For many additional attacks on Atabak, where he was pictured as a dog, see *Azarbaijan* No. 6, 30 March 1907/15 Safar, p. 1; *Azarbaijan* No. 7, 6 April 1907/22 Safar 1325, p. 3; *Azarbaijan* No. 9, 20 April 1907/7 Rabi` I 1325, p. 1; *Azarbaijan* No. 11, 5 May 1907/22 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 1–2.

³⁷⁶ *Azarbaijan* No. 10, 28 April 1907/15 Rabi` I 1325, pp. 4–5.

³⁷⁷ *Azarbaijan* No. 2, 28 February 1907/15 Muharram 1325, pp. 3–4. See also Hasharat al-`Arz No. 6, 23 April 1908/21 Rabi` I 1326, p. 4.

³⁷⁸ *Azarbaijan* No. 13, 28 May 1907/15 Rabi` II 1325, pp. 1–2.

³⁷⁹ *Azarbaijan* No. 15, 26 June 1907/15 Jumada I 1325, pp. 1–2.

fundaments of our beloved nation, need be removed. These say that we are the Shadow of God Upon Earth . . . We are the sons of the earth and the sky, and the children of the moon and the sun. If so, it is necessary for Louis XVI to die to rid the world of these false beliefs. From their deaths, neither the heavens move nor will the earth tremble. Let the innocent Louis XVI die!! Here is the sacrificial lamb of ours, the nation of France . . .³⁸⁰

The same issue had a drawing of the shah and the tyrannical governor of Tabriz sitting in telegraph offices corresponding with one another: The shah could not be innocent.³⁸¹

The wavering continued even after the assassination of the chief minister in August 1907. With the assassination, matters did take a turn, and voices in defense of the shah became fainter.³⁸² Atabak's murder was rife with symbolic significance. From the confines of the *doxa* of local politics, or the shared unconscious of the community,³⁸³ removing a chief minister who had betrayed the shah could be a show of the subjects' loyalty. Had not the shahs removed the "traitor" chief ministers to prove their own innocence? Could it be that the celebrations for Abbas Aqa (Atabak's assassin), as daring and confrontational as they were, were also acts that exuded loyalty and submission? Removal of Atabak opened the possibility for unity of shah and subjects; it was his chance to back away and offer sympathy. That he decided otherwise was the final proof of hostility. Yet, this also meant that the public dissimulation – the pretense of loyalty at a time of revolt, or "naïve monarchism" – could no longer act as a protective shield. With the buffer gone, who and what could be blamed for the monarch's hostility? The stakes had been raised.

The assassination of Atabak was an "event" that transformed the conflict and with it, the culture of kingship.³⁸⁴ Following the assassination, the shah quickly introduced his handpicked cabinet, only to have it ousted by the disgruntled Assembly. When the Assembly introduced the chief minister (Nasir al-Mulk) and the pro-constitutional cabinet it had selected for the first time (October 1907), the shah had the key members arrested and banished by mid-December. This coincided with a major counterrevolutionary outburst in Tehran (the Tupkhanah incident) in which the shah was clearly implicated. From this moment, confrontations could no longer be mediated through the chief minister. The shah had firmly rejected the public's choice, after the latter had removed the "traitor."

An eyewitness confirmed the critical timing of these transformations. Until the chief minister's assassination, he wrote, all hostilities, disorders, and general chaos, internal and external, were attributed to him, but when the disorders

³⁸⁰ *Azərbaycan* No. 16, 30 September 1907/23 Sha'ban 1325, p. 2.

³⁸¹ *Azərbaycan* No. 16, 30 September 1907/23 Sha'ban 1325, p. 4.

³⁸² For the continued yet infrequent use of the language of Circle in newspapers see *Habl al-Matin*, No. 182, 8 December 1907/3 Dhu al-Qa'da 1325, pp. 1-4. *Habl al-Matin*, No. 189, 24 December 1907/19 Dhu al-Qa'da 1325, p. 7.

³⁸³ The effect of *doxa* is that the "established cosmological and political order is perceived not as arbitrary, i.e., as one possible order which goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned." Bourdieu, *Outline*, pp. 165-168 (quote from p. 166).

³⁸⁴ Sewell, *Logics of History*, chapters 7, 8.

continued unabated after his death, a new realization set in: the shah was the main instigator. Thus was explained the turn of public opinion against the shah, especially after the Tupkhanah incident, during which he came to confront the Assembly directly.³⁸⁵ Newspapers, the public, and the Assembly began to target the shah openly. Telegrams sent by the committees from around the country displayed the public loss of confidence and threatened the shah with the overthrow of the Qajar dynasty.³⁸⁶

An anonymous leaflet from an unspecified location, for example, read as follows:

We want to actualize our potential as humans (*adam bishavim*) – shah does not allow it; we want to prevent being oppressed – shah does not allow it; through unity, we want to provide the means for our comfort – shah does not allow it; we want to be the masters of our lives, property, and reputation, we do not want to be counted among the savages of the earth, we want to convene among ourselves and consult about our own affairs, we want to have a National Consultative Assembly, we want our religious leaders to be respected and holy – shah does not allow it; and, strangest of all, by means of unity we want to elevate Iran to the ranks of the most respected empires and states – shah does not allow it . . . O uninformed wretches – do you have the slightest notion that Muhammad Ali is a lackey of the Russians?”

The leaflet then strongly urged the public to open their eyes, learn from the inhabitants of Azarbaijan, and take their destiny into their own hands by rising up against the oppression of the shah and his functionaries.³⁸⁷ Similarly, a few weeks before the fall of the Assembly, the popular newspaper *Hasharat al-`Arz* made a graphic representation of the “Circle of Tyranny,” with the names of the cities suffering disorder written along its circumference. At the center was a clown-like figure responsible for tyranny and corruption in all of Iran.³⁸⁸ The newspaper did not shy away from naming the shah as responsible for all hostilities.³⁸⁹ The hidden transcript could no longer be kept backstage. The shah himself became the target of the committees’ next, ultimately failed assassination attempt.

The radicals, who had never displayed much sense of loyalty to the shah, were winning out. Within the Assembly, those who moved blame away from the shah became less visible.³⁹⁰ After the election of the first pro-constitutional cabinet, the radical leader Taqizadah for the first time rose to the ministers’ defense; he euphemistically pointed to the Palace, the courtiers, and the bureaucrats as

³⁸⁵ Nazim al-Islam, *Tarikh-i Bidari*, Vol. I, pp. 277–278.

³⁸⁶ For telegrams immediately following the Tupkhanah incident see Sharif Kashani, *Vaqi`at*, pp. 147–151.

³⁸⁷ The anonymous leaflet does not indicate origin or date of publication, although it seems to have come from outside Azarbaijan, and certainly prior to the counterrevolution of 1908. KMT, uncat. n.d.

³⁸⁸ *Hasharat al-`Arz* No. 9, 16 May 1908/14 Rabi`II 1326, p. 1.

³⁸⁹ *Hasharat al-`Arz* No. 9, 16 May 1908/14 Rabi`II 1326, p. 2.

³⁹⁰ For one of the last defenders of this idea, recommending an Assembly delegate to enter negotiations with the shah, see *Majlis*, 14 April 1908/12 Rabi` I 1326, p. 508.

barriers on the path of the legislature and prescribed their removal. The members of the shah's immediate circle were now identified as collaborators and not detractors.³⁹¹

Whither Kingship?

The majority's feigned loyalty did not amount to a rejection of kingship or the monarch's position, although the antihegemonic stance adopted by Scott and its radical separation of the public and hidden transcripts may lead to that conclusion.³⁹² Scott's questioning of total hegemony is of use in interrogating public defiance and highlighting its agency. Yet the myth of kinship was not an empty symbol, rejected offstage among the lower orders but dissimulated in public for advantage.³⁹³ Who believed in Shah Muhammad Ali's innocence? As time went by, very few, despite public proclamations to the contrary. This was not enough, however, to transcend the limits of the culture of politics and reject kingship. At most it was the shah who was rejected as a person, not monarchy as an institution. The ground for transcending the monarchy at the popular level was prepared only when the Assembly arrived on the shores of Iranian politics, thanks to the agency of the intelligentsia at the Legation, and the contingency of the absence of high clerics from Tehran.

The crowds' actions confirmed defiance, but also pointed to belief in large portions of the local culture of politics without transcending it.³⁹⁴ The public strove to replace an unjust ruler with a just one. In contrast, the counterhegemonic discourse of constitutionalists, repeatedly attempted to expose the doxic realm of the local culture of politics. If the English Puritans' cry was "We fight the king to defend the King,"³⁹⁵ the same could be more or less said about the greater number of Assembly supporters at the height of their radicalism. Their leaders, however, had no desire to save the King from the king; and if they had a war cry, it might

³⁹¹ His statement was euphemistic and should be read not as a call for the overthrow of the dynasty, but for removal of obstacles. *Majlis*, 25 November 1907/19 Shawwal 1325, p. 397.

³⁹² The conclusions Scott derives from Daniel Field's work are more than his work allows. Field wavers between peasants' "strategic" and "true" belief. As such, he does not recognize a radical dichotomous distinction between hidden and public transcripts. For a review of Scott's *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* by Daniel Field see *American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, no 1, (Feb) 1994, pp. 195-196.

³⁹³ Scott's notion of the moral economy of Islam in fact does not reject the salience of political culture and is treated as a hegemonic system. But this view is not reconciled with his challenge to the notion of hegemony. His wholesale rejection of hegemony is in fact at odds with his nuanced analysis, which acknowledges deep-seated belief in moral economy and adherence to the "paternalistic code," and hegemony of religion, which does amount to accepting a certain system of domination. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

³⁹⁴ Abu-Lughod's analysis of the Egyptian Bedouin Awlad Ali is one of the best demonstrations of resistance against a dominant culture while remaining within the doxic realm, of manipulating certain aspects to improve one's lot, but without transcending its bounds. Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments*, pp. 233-259.

³⁹⁵ Kantorowicz, *King's Two Bodies*, p. 18.

have been, “We fight the king to change the King.” This resulted in the clash of cultures of politics that destabilized the doxic realm.³⁹⁶ The new culture that emerged, as Sahlins has shown in another context, was unexpected, yet it was in many ways continuous with what had been there before.³⁹⁷

If the public did not question kingship, its practice of reproducing it according to existing norms ended in transforming it nonetheless. The introduction of the Assembly to the scene of conflict, and the crowds’ quest to come in contact with the source of justice, ended with substituting Assembly for the shah, thus destabilizing the monarchy. If the public started by petitioning the shah directly, or even more significantly, petitioning the shah through the Assembly, with time it became content with seeking redress from the Assembly alone.

This was particularly the case after the assassination of Atabak and its aftermath (the dismissal of the Assembly-elected cabinet and the Tupkhanah incident on the same day). From here on, the competition between the Assembly and the shah could no longer be a matter of dissimulation and there was no room left for compromise. This symbolic challenge to the shah’s sovereignty may be detected from his maneuvering in the Tupkhanah square gathering, where in competition with the Assembly, he ordered the setup of a telegraph machine to enable the anti-Assembly agitators to communicate grievances with the shah unmediated.³⁹⁸

The House of Justice or Council of Grievances was surely not what the Assembly had striven for. Yet, despite the constitutionalists’ repeated attempts to dispel this image, their efforts were not entirely successful. But nor were they entirely in vain, and the Assembly became a hybrid, part House of Justice and part legislative body. It also meant that the Assembly was not a mere intermediary for bringing subjects and the shah together while subordinated to the latter.

Repeated petitioning of the Assembly, and its treatment as the source of justice, placed the traditional practice of petitioning the source of justice at risk. Nothing like a justice-disseminating Assembly with claims of independence from the shah (and religion) had existed before, and no matter how insistently the public interpreted it within the traditional categories, the institution remained a novelty. Yet, the promise that the body could deal with public wants and restore justice in face of an unjust shah, ministers, and courtiers, made it a source of public attraction. Petitioning reproduced the ideal of seeking justice from the source, but when the petition’s recipient was not the monarch, it became a challenge to monarchy. “Everything that was done . . . was appropriately done, according to their own determinations of social persons, their

³⁹⁶ Appadurai *Modernity at Large*.

³⁹⁷ Sahlins’s framework, although weak when dealing with instances of cultural manipulation, provides the best analytical tools for observing cultural interaction and their synthesis. Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors*, and Marshal Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

³⁹⁸ See Dawlatabadi, *Hayat-i Yabya*, Vol. I, p. 114.

interests and intentions. Yet the effect of thus putting culture into practice was to give some significance to the actors and actions that had not been traditionally envisioned.”³⁹⁹ The “sacred Assembly” thus emerged as the restorer of justice.

With Atabak’s assassination, the challenged and at-risk structure of political culture did not crumble, but it began to shift. What emerged was something both familiar and unexpected. It was familiar because it was in continuity with local politics: the public did not demand representation, but justice. Yet, what emerged was unfamiliar and unexpected because it was not the shah’s justice that was solicited but an institution’s, an institution that was independent of him and with supposed power over him. The shah’s position had been destabilized, giving way to the Assembly, but this was not simply viewed as a legislative body. If the Assembly was not deemed to be a new shah, it was at least expected to intervene, as a modern executive would, on behalf of the aggrieved.

Thus, what started as reproduction ended in cultural transformation. The resulting synthesis, by being continuous with and divergent from the two political cultures, was “at once conservative and innovative.”⁴⁰⁰ The new discourse of politics, by inserting an Assembly with independence into the structure of the local political culture, transformed tradition. Yet, although it altered the monarchy, the new synthesis was in many ways still within its bounds.

The transformation amounted to replacing the person of the shah with a collection of individuals who were devoid of the mythical sanctity of the monarch (or almost devoid of it; the body was called the “sacred national Assembly”). The exercise of authority by such an institution and its popular acceptance was without precedent and could serve as a building block for a full-fledged legislative assembly in the future. Equally significant, the idea of monarchy became destabilized in Iran, and from this the Qajars never recovered. And neither did the Pahlavis, who started their rule at the crossroads of republic and monarchy. Despite the introduction of a new monarchy, the memory of the battered legitimacy of monarchy during the tumultuous events of constitutional revolution, and the rise of alternative possibilities, could not be erased from the public mind.

³⁹⁹ Sahlins, *Metaphors*, p. 35. ⁴⁰⁰ Sahlins, *Metaphors*, p. 67–68.

Concluding Remarks

As different as the Ottoman Empire and Iran were in social structure, population makeup, social classes, and problems, their revolutions had unmistakable affinities. Their timing was the principal reason for these affinities; at the beginning of the twentieth century, constitutionalism was the dominant revolutionary paradigm, as it had been since the French Revolution. The choice was consequential for the conduct of the Ottoman and Iranian revolutions, the institutions created, the nature of political transformations, and the redefinitions of sovereignty. Capturing the executive was not part of this message; instead, energies were directed toward creating a strong legislature to check the executive. The idea of fusing the two as the revolution's defining political moment was a Bolshevik legacy that had not yet become part of the historical agenda of revolutions.

The shared global master-frame endowed the Ottoman and Iranian revolutions with similar dynamics. These included their rather bloodless initial transition to a new democratic system, the sudden emergence of public spheres, the outbreak of classic struggles between the legislature and the executive, fights over writing, modifying, and interpreting the constitution, redefinitions of sovereignty, and the push for radical social and political transformations that was spearheaded from within the legislature. A peculiarly unstable context that was inherent to newly established constitutional systems was also shared; the new arrangements heightened rather than lessened tensions, thanks to the legalized platform that was now at the service of the opposition. Nonetheless, to materialize change, the opposition had to rely on the old-regime executive structure. This made the task difficult in the Ottoman Empire and nearly impossible in Iran. The situation underscored a major contradiction. On the one hand, revolution called for radical change, which required means that were either entirely unavailable or not adequately so. The constitutionalists thus mobilized organizations that resorted to extra-legal or illegal methods and means, when constitutionalism derived its legitimacy from, and called for, strict adherence to the law. The two were incompatible and constitutionalists remained guilty of many illegal infractions. The instabilities created by actual change, or the threat of radical change, combined with the inbuilt contradictions of the constitutional

revolution, culminated in backlash. The Ottoman Empire and Iran both experienced counterrevolutions, and similar dynamics applied more or less to 1905 Russia.¹ But beyond those globally shared characteristics, the Ottomans and Iranians were tied together in more intimate ways.

If the global master-frame endowed the revolutions with similar dynamics and institutional setup, each revolution was transformed in negotiation with regional and local realities on the ground. Ideologically there were adjustments to the shared cultural traditions in the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Indeed, the intelligentsia in the Middle East, the Young Ottomans more than others, had collectively engaged in a project of inventing a constitutional tradition for Islam. As subsequent revolutions in the Ottoman Empire and Iran showed, the effort was not in vain.

Another shared regional issue was state weakness and the possibility of disintegration or colonization. These pressures served to transform constitutionalism further into a hopeful doctrine of strength when it became associated with the modern interventionist states, legal rationality, and merit-based systems. The victory of Japan over Russia became an incontrovertible proof of these links. This thinking held enormous sway among the intelligentsia, heirs to a long tradition of reformist statesmen. For most, the state-centered notions took precedence over the liberal dimensions of constitutionalism, although liberalism was an integral part of its discourse and could not be simply forgotten. The Liberal critics and their allies in the Ottoman Empire were a constant reminder of that.

Beyond adjustment to regional peculiarities, constitutionalism was further transformed according to local challenges. In Iran, Western constitutionalism, religion, and kingship interacted to provide sometimes complementary, sometimes contradictory, notions of justice and institutional arrangements for its realization. Here, where a large section of the urban public was mobilized and the ideal of kingship was more than alive, the notion of monarchical justice remained relevant. In the Ottoman Empire, on the other hand, a location with overly politicized notions of ethnicity and religion, constitutionalism came to serve as a shorthand for equality of all Ottoman elements, or Ottomanism, a yet-to-be realized ideal of the reform era.

Although constitutionalism never had a fixed meaning in any setting, its assimilation to regional and local cultural notions added to its multivocality; it was able to say different things to different audiences with different problems, mostly in their own languages, and largely things that they wanted to hear. For peasants and artisans, constitutionalism meant justice and justice meant an end to exorbitant taxes. In some corners liberty and justice could mean an end to taxes altogether, or the right to avoid tolls, or freedom from prisons. For others it meant increased, not lessened, obligations toward the state. Equality signified for some identical rights and obligations for all citizens before secular law; it

¹ Sohrabi, "Historicizing Revolutions."

could be further tinged with notions of social equality by the radicals; for many religious conservatives it could only mean equality of Muslims before the holy law. Although many were attracted to constitutionalism's message of strength and protection against foreign domination, the Iranian clerics took it to mean a more limited government that allowed them an expanded role. If there were attempts to make Ottomanism synonymous with constitutionalism, for various Ottoman nationalities, whether the state was to be centralized or decentralized, with a culturally assimilationist agenda or tolerant of difference, still remained contentious issues. Across the board, the intelligentsia saw in it the promise for opened channels of mobility in a modern interventionist state that would give them pride of place.

The regional and local transformations enabled unity among the Iranian guildsmen, merchants, bureaucrats-intelligentsia, clerics, and tribes; or, similarly, among the Ottoman soldier and bureaucrat, or Bulgarian and Albanian band members in Macedonia. If they all rallied behind the cure-all constitution it was because revolution was a conjunction of multiple revolts unified under the abstraction of a modular global model. Yet if multivocality was a source of strength, once given life, constitutionalism did begin to slip into a monolingual existence, prompting some to feel fooled and disillusioned. Some even took up arms against the constitution they had fought for.

When parliaments began their work, the definition of constitutionalism came under increasing scrutiny. Questioned, for example, were the adoption of the Belgian constitution, the meaning of legislation, its process and implications for the laws of religion, notions of equality of Muslim and non-Muslim, and a host of other issues that were considered challenging to religion. Although the objections were presented with greater intensity and from a more rigidly doctrinal standpoint in Iran than in the Ottoman Empire, in both they came with a sense of shock and betrayal of the earlier promises for many. So powerful was the delegitimizing language of religion that it was soon adopted by the entirety of counterrevolutionary opposition, Ottoman and Iranian, and by a variety of actors not primarily concerned with religion. Used to counter the well-articulated language of the constitutionalists, it had a good deal of success in mobilizing the disaffected against the new system.

The meaning of constitutionalism was thus not entirely the same in each context and that made the revolutions different. But the greatest source of difference emanated from their social structures. The nineteenth-century institutional reforms in the Ottoman Empire and Iran remained inadequate to confront the internal and external challenges. If one had a centralized administration with a longer history of standing armies, the other was utterly decentralized and relied on tribal armies as its main fighting force. If one had constructed an independent executive, the other had still not managed to meaningfully separate the monarch from the "government." And finally, if one was a centralized, neopatrimonial, legal and rule-based bureaucracy, and hence had a modern administration (albeit with strong patrimonial overtones), the other was a decentralized patrimonial monarchy in which members of the royal household occupied many key

administrative and military posts. Nonetheless, both states were on the verge of financial collapse, with exorbitant foreign loans and facing significant foreign threat, and these features made them especially vulnerable to revolution.

One important result of reforms in the Ottoman Empire was the emergence of a modern middle class, absorbed in large numbers by the military and bureaucracy. This class felt the strains of blocked mobility, and it turned its anger into a critique of the (neo)patrimonial practices of the Hamidian regime, which it considered a reason for state weakness. The Committee of Union and Progress, the backbone of revolution, embodied that critique.² In the revolution's aftermath the CUP pushed for purges, assisted by its clubs, societies, and the broad network it established throughout the empire. By doing so, it made the army and bureaucracy more streamlined and efficient, relieved the blocked mobility of the emerging middle class, and consolidated its position. Drawing strength from the CUP, the Ottoman Chamber confronted the executive without fear; that the executive was increasingly dominated by advocates of change was certainly helpful. In the end, the CUP emerged as a "government within the government," a force that the Ottoman Chamber could rely on for successful legislation and its implementation. Despite their symbiotic relationship, however, the CUP's domineering attitude and legal infractions strained its relations with the Chamber, and these became more serious over time. Yet it should not be forgotten that adherence to constitutionalism contained the CUP from over-taking the executive, despite the clear ability to do so.

The absence of state-sponsored education in Iran meant a failure to produce a sizeable middle class. Elite statesmen's support for the movement proved critical, but they resembled more the Young Ottomans than the Young Turks. Their influence, strength, organization, and numbers were nowhere near those of the Ottoman middle class. In particular, Iran's army had not yet become a serious career path for an emerging educated middle class. To the contrary, Iran's small modernized military was under strict control of the monarchy and its Russian ally. The Iranian Assembly was thus compelled to rely on the armed committees, the popularly based gathering of urban guildsmen that came to its defense. This was also an unwieldy force with a mind of its own and not under the Assembly's full control. The Assembly's relative incapacity to implement reforms was owed to these factors.

Revolutions that happen in waves pose serious challenges to explanations that rely on social structural features alone. By definition, social structures in bounded national settings change slowly and cannot account for near-simultaneous occurrence of wave-like social movements. If social structures can fruitfully guide us in exploring the conditions of possibility of revolutions, a full explanation would require taking note of the idiosyncrasies of context. By this I mean attention to genuinely contingent events (beyond mere triggers) and

² For a recent study that lays emphasis on the middle-class character of the Young Turk revolution and its relevance to the officer corps, see Handan Nezir Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

modes of operation of agency. The latter are unpredictable, making revolutions essentially unpredictable as well.

The recognition of local idiosyncrasies should not detract from the exploration of causality. Rather, it makes narrative an integral component of our causal explanations. This entails recognizing path dependence, considering events as transformative and cumulative and time as irreversible.³ Such recognition calls for a balance between explorations of commonalities that can be generalized across cases, while keeping an eye on the particularities of each case as integral to its plot build-up. As Sewell notes, historians who specialize in narrative are sometimes chided by social scientists for myopia, for being too focused on minute details to bother with commonly shared features. To err in the other direction and ignore details that do not hold across cases has been the mainstay of the social sciences, which comes at the risk of distorting explanation and causality. This book's concern for causality, comparison, and generalization has resulted in an analytical narrative that departs from traditional histories, but shares with them a local focus that is attuned to narrative and contingencies.

As an example of contingency, one may point to the Russian Revolution of 1905 and the connected Russo-Japanese war, events external to both contexts that influenced them tremendously by altering the sense of possibilities.⁴ For the Young Turks, 1905 Russia gave greater credibility to the activists and to their desire to transform an evolutionist, military-oriented movement into a planned and executed, semipopular revolution. The agency of activists in the external branch of the CUP proved pivotal in this transformation. The activists used the favorable atmosphere created by the Russian revolution to sway the movement toward violence, mass action, and military uprising. They did so first in words and then by establishing ties on the ground and expanding their organization. In Iran, the protest movement had started with traditionalist demands that could hardly be construed as revolutionary. Yet, given that the idea of revolution was in the air – attested by all contemporary eyewitnesses, who frequently invoked 1905 Russia and the Russo-Japanese war – Iranian statesmen and the intelligentsia seized upon a major opportunity to demand a constitutional administration and force the government to accept it. This opportunity appeared when the major Iranian clerics moved away from the capital and ended in placing themselves at a disadvantaged position. The major negotiation site, the British Legation at the capital, was left in control of the numerically small Iranian intelligentsia, and the latter came to have an influence far beyond its numbers or social clout. Inspired by recent events abroad, the intelligentsia rose to the movement's leadership and turned a popular revolt with limited demands into a

³ William H. Sewell, Jr., "Three Temporalities: Toward an Eventful Sociology." In Terence J. McDonald, ed., *The Historic Turn in the Human Sciences* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 245–80. The argument is further developed in his *Logics of History*, pp. 81–123.

⁴ For the altered sense of possibilities in social movements in reference to nonlocal events, see Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

revolution. If this agent-driven contingency bore the results intended, agency also operated in ways that brought unintended results. This happened when the public manipulated the idiom of kingship and acted as if it believed in the justice of the reigning monarch. In the end, they transformed, unwittingly, the culture of kingship, robbing it of its sacred aura once and for all.

A full assessment of the Young Turk revolution should at the least take us to 1918. Similarly, the Iranian revolution is incomplete without a detailed consideration of the second Assembly up to the end of 1911. Yet, from the confines of the present analysis, and without consideration of these years in detail, it may still be possible to comment about the later fate of constitutional movements. It is customary for the social sciences to speak of outcomes, usually cast in the binary language of failure and success. History refuses to comply. Was 1905 Russia a failure? The events that led to the abdication of the tsar and the Bolshevik revolution were set in motion by the opposition of the badly weakened Fourth Duma in 1916. Had the constitutional revolutions of February and October ended in a strengthened legislative assembly, as they very well could have, it would have been specious to question the credentials of 1905. Closer to home, can we think of the Young Ottoman movement as a failure? Thanks to them, it was certainly easier for the Young Turks to ask for restoration of a tried and known entity.

If we refuse to take immediate outcomes for final results, matters may look a bit different. Can chronic weakness of the legislature, past and present, be considered failure? Can its birth, occasional revival as a major site of contention, and continued resonance be construed as success? A better approach than dichotomies of success and failure is a comparative one. Why was constitutionalism more resilient in Turkey? To this our investigation may provide some elements of an answer.

According to some accounts, the Russian ultimatum, the occupation of northern Iran, and the temporary dissolution of the Assembly at the end of the second legislative period in the closing days of 1911 also brought the end of the constitutional movement in Iran. Thus, Russian pressure, with British acquiescence, and their intervention in internal Iranian affairs, are argued to be the cause of the Assembly's failure.

If foreign pressure, and indeed the sabotage of the Assembly reformist programs,⁵ could end the constitutional movement in Iran, then why did it not have the same effect in the Ottoman Empire? Comparatively, the geopolitical pressures between 1908 and 1923 were by far more severe in the Ottoman Empire, leading to its piecemeal dismemberment.⁶

What brought the movement to a halt in Iran was a combination of factors, namely centrifugal forces at the periphery, weakness of the middle class, absence of a centralized modern military, and foreign intervention. The potential for

⁵ Shuster, *Strangling of Persia*.

⁶ See Mustafa Aksakal, *Ottoman Road to War; Zürcher, Turkey*, pp. 119–172.

disorder was already apparent during the first Assembly. When the constitutionalists relied on the tribal forces (and irregular militia) to defeat the counter-revolution, they ended in unleashing rivalry among competing tribes. Combined with the outbreak of several autonomy-seeking movements and the First World War, in the absence of a strong central authority, Iran was pushed into a decade-long period of chaos and disorder that brought it to the verge of disintegration. Russian consolidation in the north, and British penetration from the south, became possible in this context.

Despite all troubles, domestic and international, after the closing of the second Assembly all hopes for the survival of constitutionalism were not lost, as the important work by Stephanie Cronin amply demonstrates. In the midst of disorders, the institution of the Gendarmerie, the “brainchild” of the constitutional movement, could have rescued the constitutional administration if only it had not succumbed to the skillful maneuverings of Reza Khan, or in short Reza Khan’s agency. The Gendarmerie, coming out of the constitutional movement with its highly trained, educated, and nationalist staff, was much better positioned for leadership in a future republic. “Products of modern military academies, indeed often the same academy [as the Young Turks], the Harbiye in Istanbul,”⁷ its officers had affinity with the Young Turks and admiration for the Kemalist movement, viewing their role as analogous. Yet, as Cronin points out, the Gendarmerie’s officer corps hailed from the elite and was not part of a rising middle class, which spelled weakness in numbers.⁸ By early 1921, after the coup against monarchy in which it had participated, it was at the height of power and popularity, but by the end of that year it had given way to the unprincipled maneuverings of Reza Khan, the former commander of the Cossack Brigade. The latter represented the faction of the modern Iranian army whose professionalism and modern schooling of its officer corps paled in comparison to the Gendarmerie, and which additionally harbored a legacy of anti-constitutionalism.

Four years after the coup, Reza Khan, despite a brief consideration of republicanism, declared himself the new shah of Iran. His rule was characterized by increasing military dominance over civilian authority, arbitrariness, corruption, nepotism, and the accumulation of enormous wealth by the shah and his military commanders. The latter also became key administrators. Hence the regime contained many defects of the Qajar rule. After cooptation of the state-building programs of the constitutionalists and absorption and disempowerment of the Gendarmerie in subservience to the Cossacks, he dealt a severe blow to their liberal agenda, rendering the Assembly ineffective after 1926. This outcome was in fact surprising, given the better-trained, better-disciplined, better-organized, and numerically larger Gendarmerie, which was better positioned to assume power. Reza Shah was an outsider to the revolution; if the constitutionalists finally rallied behind him after the defeat of the Gendarmes, it was for lack of a

⁷ Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910–1926* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), p. 8.

⁸ Cronin, *The Pahlavi State*, pp. 27–28, 46.

better alternative. They settled on a candidate that could at the least bring to fruition the state-building dimension of that movement, which he partially did through greater centralization, forced sedentarization of tribes, construction of a new army and conscription, state sponsorship of mandatory free education, expansion of women's rights, infrastructural works, the beginnings of a welfare state, among other undertakings.⁹

Can it be argued that constitutionalism fared well in the Ottoman Empire? I have explored in some detail the emergence of a "government within the government" in the early years of revolution. Such undemocratic proclivities were present before the revolution, implemented almost immediately, and continued to worsen thereafter. Even if the CUP hesitated to capture the executive – mainly because the constitutional trajectory in which it was locked limited this possibility – it did its best to exert control over it. Matters got worse as time went by, especially after the infamous 1913 coup at the Sublime Porte and the emergence of the so-called CUP triumvirate. In addition, in the war years, the parliament was out of commission for long periods, during which government-issued temporary laws substituted for Chamber legislation. At the same time, the CUP was in full command of the sultan. This would certainly qualify as dictatorial rule. Nonetheless, as abusive as the CUP had become toward the parliamentary institutions, it did not have a theory of – that is a rational justification for – totalitarian rule, and tried to maneuver within the parameters of the constitutional system, as awkward as it was. They were illiberal constitutionalists who justified violations as temporary measures.

Atatürk, the military leader who emerged at the head of the national resistance movement in the aftermath of defeat in World War One and the disbandment of the CUP, was no different. Erik Zürcher has painstakingly traced the connections between the two movements and has shown the central role of the vast (former) CUP network in the war of national resistance. Mustafa Kemal joined the national resistance movement after it had gotten under way by his former CUP compatriots.¹⁰ If he maneuvered his way to its leadership by beating out rival blocs, he prevailed in a power struggle among like-minded CUP factions with similar commitments. Members of a rising middle class and former CUP officers, they were all children of revolution. His was a victory different from Reza Shah's over the Gendarmerie. Surprisingly, and despite the cult of personality surrounding him, Mustafa Kemal was thus much less of a unique

⁹ Cronin, *The Pahlavi State*; Touraj Atabaki and Erik J. Zürcher, eds., *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization Under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); Stephanie Cronin, ed., *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society Under Riza Shah, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003); Arjomand, *Turban*, pp. 59–74; M. Reza Ghods, "Iranian Nationalism and Reza Shah," *Middle Eastern Studies* 27: 1 (1991), pp. 35–45.

¹⁰ Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905–1926* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984). For ideological continuity between the CUP and the Republican regime, see Paul Dumont, "The Origins of Kemalist Ideology," in Jacob M. Landau, ed., *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey* (Boulder: Westview Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), pp. 25–43.

character than the lone figure of Reza Shah. But this was an advantage. He continued to represent the state and nation-building aspirations of the intelligentsia and middle class, which rallied to his support. From the beginning of his authoritarian rule, like the CUP, he came close to fusing the legislative and executive, and eventually he came to rule with the help of a single party, influenced by contemporary totalitarian examples that were then emerging in Europe that lent his authoritarianism greater legitimacy. Nonetheless, the disciplined, organized, extensive, and popular party structure he created (the Republican People's Party), became the training ground for the multiparty system of later generations. Furthermore, his rationalist orientation, his officer training, and his solid connections to the constitutional movement, despite the compromised liberal commitments,¹¹ were important differences from Reza Shah. Reza Shah did not enjoy popular support, and nor could he manage to build it. After a short experiment with party politics, he abandoned even the single-party alternative.¹²

Atatürk and Reza Shah have been credited with creating the modern nation states of Iran and Turkey singlehandedly. Yet their state-building programs were not uniquely, or even principally, theirs, but were part of the agendas of the preceding constitutional movements and must be seen in those contexts. There were major differences between the two, however. If one was an enlightened dictator, the other displayed despotic behavior. Unlike Atatürk, Reza Shah was not part of the grain of the constitutional movement and had no such previous commitments. Nor did he enjoy the support of like-minded officers or a bureaucratic cadre; he was a lone operator. Yet he did manage to co-opt that movement's state-building programs and to implement them with the help of begrudging constitutionalists. If the kernel of these undemocratic developments could already be sensed in the intelligentsia's overt concerns with state-building, constitutionalism could not be reduced to just that. In practice the Kemalist movement also came close to abandoning the democratic dimensions; however, at the level of ideology it remained faithful to its constitutional beginnings and built institutions for future realization of the liberal ideal. This can only be understood as an ideal in the making as the military "vanguard" turned "guardian" of constitution continued to cast its long shadow over Turkish political life. In Iran, by contrast, the democratic project was derailed almost entirely because of the institutional weaknesses that allowed the rise of a personality and an institution alien to the constitutional movement. Nonetheless, after these revolutions, constitutionalism had entered the streams of region's history more solidly in Turkey and for the first time in Iran. These major events were irreversible.

¹¹ Erik J. Zürcher, "Institution Building in the Kemalist Republic: The Role of the People's Party," in *Men of Order*, pp. 98–112.

¹² Matthew Eliot, "New Iran and the Dissolution of Party Politics Under Reza Shah," in *Men of Order*, pp. 65–97.

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Archive

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi

	<i>Abbreviation</i>
1. <i>Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası Sadaret Tasnifi (BEO)</i>	
BEO Nezaret Gelen-Giden Defterleri	
Dahiliye Gelen	BEO
Dahiliye Giden	BEO
Sadarete Gelen Şifre Telgrafların Kayıt Defterleri (Nos. 693–698)	BEONGG
Sadarettten Giden Şifre Telgrafların Kayıt Defterleri (Nos. 699–705)	BEONGG
Vilayetler Gelen-Giden Defterler	BEOVGD
2. <i>Dahiliye Nezareti</i>	
Dahiliye Nezareti Muhaberat-i Umumiye İdaresi Kalemî	DH.MUI
Dahiliye Nezareti Emniyet-i Umumiye Müdüriyeti Tahrirat Kalemî	DH.EUM. THR
3. <i>Meclis-i Vükela Mazbataları</i>	MV
4. <i>Rumeli Müfettişliği Tasnifi (TFR)</i>	
Manastır Evrakı	TFR.ıMN
Selanik Evrakı	TFR.ı.SL
Kosova Evrakı	TFR.ı.KV
Arzuhaller	TFR.ı.ŞKT
Sadaret ve Başkitabet Evrakı	TFR.ı.A
5. <i>Yıldız Evrakı</i>	
Yıldız Esas Evrakı	Y.EE.
Yıldız Esas Evrakı Sadrazam M. Kamil Paşa Evrakına Ek	Y.EE.Kamil
6. <i>Zabtiye Nezareti Evrakı</i>	ZB

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