The Balkan Revolutionary Age*

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In assessing the broad sweep of the "Age of Revolution" (1789–1848), the Ottoman Balkans offer the most significant resource yet to be tapped meaningfully by historians of modern Europe.[1] The continent's southeast is rarely mentioned in accounts of the era except as a somnolent Ruritania still in the crumbling grip of its sclerotic imperial master, whose decadent rule encouraged the emergence of the region as Europe's cockpit of nationalism. The "Serbian" (1804) and "Greek" (1821) revolts invariably illustrate this picture of the Balkan backwater.[2] When examined more closely, however, the Balkans reveal almost unremitting unrest from the 1790s through the 1830s. This turmoil affected Muslims as well as Christians, and it resulted not from nationalism but from pressures within Ottoman society created by state self-strengthening efforts. Such efforts involved squeezing from the population resources needed for military reform and ruthless disciplining of anyone suspected of obstructionism. These pressures had effects as revolutionary as anywhere on the continent, because popular unrest forced fundamental change in governmental practices, pushing the Ottoman Empire onto a path of state modernization similar to that seen in countries such as post-1789 France.

After 1839 the Ottoman Empire partook of a political "modernity" that had swept France and other countries subjected to Napoleon Bonaparte's system of European domination. This involved the rationalization and bureaucratization of administration, which underpinned the growth of governmental authority and its spread into areas that touched subject-citizens' lives in new ways. Partially in response to this growth in state power, political issues

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[1] On periodization under this rubric, see Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution: Europe 1789–1848* (London, 1962).

[2] Although ethnic and geographic terms that hold specific meanings today (e.g., Greece/Greek, Serbia/Serb) do not match the conditions of the early nineteenth century, they are used here in the interests of brevity and establishing links to what most readers are likely to know about Balkan lands and peoples.

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became "public affairs" in which the citizenry felt entitled to engage. Crucial to making this political modernization acceptable to both government and people was the construction of a sounder relationship between state and society based upon legal safeguards.[3] It must nevertheless be recognized that the Ottoman version of this program of modernization was "homegrown." Neither the French Revolution nor Bonaparte's expansionist schemes touched the Balkans significantly, and the ideological elements celebrated in some accounts of political activism in the era—liberalism, nationalism, and class interest—had little influence in stirring the unrest in the continent's southeast that prompted Istanbul to reform. The causes and setting of uprisings in the Balkans were specifically Ottoman, and most strove for a more secure, predictable future still within the Ottoman system. Political modernization thus had to be Istanbul's own solution to the specific pressures revealed in Ottoman society through popular movements such as those to be studied here: the Muslim military, Serbian, Greek, and Bosnian uprisings.

Several points relevant to comparative study of revolutionary Europe become clearer through the Balkan case. First of all, there was a common thread among the prerevolutionary situations in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, including France and the Habsburg domains, in that the growing expense of military preparedness did much to stoke pressures among the population; the Ottoman situation perhaps varied from those of other countries, however, in that discontent did not focus directly upon military burdens. Populations across Europe in this era resented rising taxes and conscription, but no group that took up arms in the Ottoman Balkans was a significant target for conscription, and state imposition of taxes was in most cases less an issue in itself than in relation to the purposes to which the revenues were put. Discontent focused rather upon the perceived vindictiveness of the imperial government in its search for military resources. This produced the second important parallel, in that Ottoman Christians and Muslims might have taken up arms in separate movements, yet they shared a focus of complaint: the failure of the imperial regime to uphold basic standards of justice. Protests of a similar nature featured in other European countries governed in absolutist style. The parallels between the preconditions, the foci of protest, and the effects of unrest thus support the validity of depictions of the 1789–1848 period as a continental, rather than essentially "French," Age of Revolution.

Because this broad argument for revolutionary pressures in southeastern Europe contradicts almost all of the relevant historiography, it requires examination of selected revolts that readers may recognize only from normative nationalist and class interpretations. This examination is prefaced by a brief

[3] In this article "state" refers to the impersonal institutions of government, whose powers in the modern period are often regulated legally by written or unwritten constitutions.

account of key facts concerning the empire, the uprisings, and the standard views of revolts in Balkan and Ottoman historiography. Discussion of the revolutionary unrest begins with recognition of the discontent evident among primarily military circles along the Danube at the end of the eighteenth century, which constituted a reaction against measures adopted by Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) to rebuild the empire's military strength after costly defeats in foreign wars. This leads to consideration of the uprising by Christians in Belgrade province (1804), who in the name of the sultan took up arms in self-defense precisely because the government still seemed too weak to fulfill its traditional function of upholding law and order. The regime of Sultan Mahmud II (1808–39) made concerted efforts to restore the state's supremacy over the provinces, and in this context the uprisings by Ottoman subjects in regions over which Mahmud's regime had reasserted its direct authority are discussed. These uprisings, by Christians in the Morea (Peloponnese, southern Greece) (1821) and Muslims in Bosnia and elsewhere (from 1829), were launched as much in self-defense as that in Belgrade but now against the central government, which seemed intent on rebuilding its power not through reforming itself but by crushing anyone whose loyalty was judged suspect. Capricious extrajudicial killings and seizures of property raised serious doubts that the state still had any interest in upholding law. The sultan lost the support of subjects in Europe and then in Asia and faced a serious threat of deposition in 1839, but he died before losing the throne. The discussion then turns to his successor's effort to restore legitimacy by instituting a program of "beneficent measures to instill order" (*Tanzimat-i Hayriyye*). The Tanzimat began true modernization of the Ottoman state: imperial self-strengthening intensified but, as the state grew in power and reach, it took care not to exceed an expanding legal framework of state-society relations that the state supported both in codifying law and in following due process. Consideration of the implications of this altered picture of revolutionary activity for Balkan, Ottoman, and a wider European history of the Age of Revolution concludes the article.

The Ottoman Empire in Europe

In terms of population, economic vitality, and imperial prestige, the Balkans constituted the most important part of the Ottoman domains, giving a European aspect to an empire commonly imagined as "Asiatic."[4] Yet the Balkan provinces had a social order and a political system that set them apart from the rest of Europe. The most important difference lay in the adherence to Islam on

[4] In the mid-nineteenth century, half of the Ottoman population still lived in Europe. Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1923* (Cambridge, 2005), 112.

the part of the Balkans' rulers and a large minority of its population, which in theory placed Ottoman Europe and all the avowedly Christian countries of the continent in mutually hostile camps.[5] Although much peaceful interaction showed that theory was often honored in the breach, hostility rooted in religious difference lurked, ready for arousal. This variable interconfessional relationship in continental affairs also existed in the Ottoman domestic arena: the norm was that non-Muslims who paid a head tax were fully protected by law and lived peaceably alongside Muslims, but local Muslim-Christian hostility could flare under disturbed conditions.

Both poles of this peaceful but tense domestic relationship were encapsulated in one frequently recurring phrase, *din ü devlet* (the religion and the dynasty [or state]), which summed up the pillars of "public life" and societal order for all subjects of the sultan. Followers of each faith defined "the religion" differently, promoting tensions when concerns for the well-being of any religious community gained abnormal importance, as happened during Ottoman wars against Christian foes. Their views of the dynasty showed a greater sense of common ground. For non-Muslims the sultan was the ultimate guarantor of protection under both sharia (legal interpretation according to Islamic precepts) and *kanun* (law accumulated from tradition and sultanic decrees).[6] For Muslims, the sultan was also the guarantor of legal order and, moreover, had authority as the champion of Islam. For sultans this tight linkage of the dynasty with justice and specifically with Islam brought practical as well as spiritual benefits, because it was as commanders of the Muslim faithful that they laid claim to practically all land in the empire, on the grounds that almost all provinces were legally classed as domains taken from infidel rulers by conquest.

Again in theory, such a sweeping claim to absolute possession, unchallenged by a hereditary landed aristocracy, supported the common European identification of the sultanate with "oriental despotism." Certainly the broad rights won by conquest and the absence of an entrenched aristocracy freed the sultans of encumbrance by customary privileges acknowledged by European monarchs who gained lands by means such as marriage: whereas the Habsburg monarch was king (of Bohemia) in Prague, king (of Hungary) in Buda, duke (of Brabant) in Brussels, and required to work through local estates-general in all three, the Ottoman ruler was sultan in Istanbul, Sofia, and

[5] Early Ottoman census figures from the 1830s are not very reliable, but it seems that roughly 40 percent of the European provinces' population was Muslim.

[6] For seventeenth- and eighteenth-century examples of Christian views, see Johann Strauss, "Ottoman Rule Experienced and Remembered: Remarks on Some Local Greek Chronicles of the Tourkokratia," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden, 2002), 200–202, 211.

Damascus and faced no local mediating institutions in any of them.[7] The imperial regime was patrimonial, in that the sultan exercised his authority through administrators and soldiers who were literally or figuratively his slaves, whom he had the right to punish as he saw fit for malfeasance committed in his service. In practice the sultan faced significant restrictions on his "despotic" power, in part from a daunting array of customs and precedents that had developed since the establishment of imperial rule and, more importantly, from the need as champion of the faith to obey God-given law. After the mid-seventeenth century, moreover, most sultans withdrew sufficiently from active management of administration to make it impossible for them to dominate completely even the sphere of imperial politics. The empire thus might seem eminently suited to absolutism, be it enlightened or benighted, but as most sultans realized, significant obstacles would confront any systematic effort to rule despotically—as events of the early nineteenth century would show.[8]

This political regime, and the multiconfessional society living under it, showed great stability until the late eighteenth century, when the empire stumbled into disastrous conflicts that practically bankrupted it and indeed threatened its continued existence. In 1768 Istanbul declared war over Russian military activity along the Ottoman Polish frontier, for which the Ottoman regime was even less prepared than the Russians—a war aptly described as "conflict between the one-armed and the blind."[9] It exacted tremendous costs in lives, money, and materiel. The incompetence of imperial commanders and the decrepitude into which the empire's once-vaunted military supply system had been allowed to slide undoubtedly contributed not only to the thorough Ottoman defeat but also to the war's staggering death toll, estimated at 500,000 on both sides combined.[10] Istanbul inadvertently fostered additional turmoil in the provinces by supporting the authority of local notables and officials capable of supplying the army's critical needs, regardless of the means they used to raise resources. The imperial regime neither recouped its strength nor reestablished firm control in the provinces before rashly declaring war again in 1787, pitting it against both Russia and the Habsburg Empire, and again Istanbul had to accept defeat by 1791–92. This pattern of disorganiza-

[7] There were exceptions to the pattern, notably in the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, where the native aristocracy survived and the Ottoman-appointed governors were always Christians. The empire also recognized in practice the influence of Muslim notable families in some mountainous or desert regions.

[8] See, for example, Haim Gerber, "The Public Sphere and Civil Society in the Ottoman Empire," in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel Eisenstadt, and Nehemiah Levtzion (Albany, NY, 2002), 78–80.

[9] Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (Chicago, 1972), 108.

[10] Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow, 2007), 142–60.

tion then continued until 1839. Of all the foreign wars the Ottoman Empire fought in this period (1768–74, 1787–92, 1798–1801, 1806–12, 1821–23, 1828–29), only two did not end in decisive and costly defeat—one due largely to the efforts of allied British and Russian forces (1798–1801, a conflict over France's occupation of Egypt) and the other because the opponent, Iran, was as disorganized as the Ottomans (1821–23). Military effectiveness reached its nadir, however, in Istanbul's inability to defeat one of its own provincial governors, the rebellious Mehmed (Muhammad) Ali Pasha of Egypt, who seized Syria and part of Anatolia in 1832 and held them until 1840.

To remedy the evident military weakness, Sultan Selim III adopted in 1792 a state-strengthening program based upon creation of a new military corps, the New Order (*Nizam-i Cedid*), which was modeled explicitly upon Christian European examples in drill, weapons, and even clothing. As sensible as such military modernization might seem, Selim and his advisors did not gauge accurately the elements most needing reform and the likely ramifications of their plans. Following immediately after the tremendous pain inflicted by disastrous wars, the New Order aroused strong opposition, especially in the Balkans. The domestic unrest and the lingering effects of foreign wars affected imperial politics, as Selim himself was deposed and subsequently murdered by his successor, Mustafa IV (1807–8). They also created turmoil in provincial society, which prompted the outbreaks of the uprisings studied here.[11]

Opening the unrest was the revolt that erupted along the Danube beginning in 1792, which spread to affect much of the rest of the Balkans as well. This unrest is rarely recognized as a revolt, making it the most difficult of the uprisings to decipher. It had numerous centers, but three came to symbolize the troubles: Vidin (northwestern Bulgaria), whose governor, Pasvanoğlu Osman Pasha, defied Istanbul's authority; Belgrade, where janissaries (members of the Ottoman standing army) terrorized the local population; and the highlands of Bulgaria and Macedonia, which became the domains of "mountain bandit" gangs. Osman Pasha had Christian as well as Muslim supporters and some Christians apparently joined the mountain bandits, but the Christians of Belgrade province became the main opponents of the janissaries there. The focus of dissatisfaction among rebels and their sympathizers was the New Order introduced by Sultan Selim III. The unrest subsided by 1806–7, when

[11] On Christian revolts, see Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1983), 1:193–229. On Muslim revolts, see Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York, 1996), 120–21; Frederick Anscombe, "Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform," *Past and Present* 208 (2010): 159–89; Tolga Esmer, "A Culture of Rebellion: Networks of Violence and Competing Discourses of Justice in the Ottoman Empire, 1790–1808" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2009), 336–46.

Selim dissolved the New Order, war with Russia erupted again, Osman Pasha died, and the Belgrade janissaries had been dispersed.

By that time, the Christians of Belgrade province had launched the second uprising. Early in 1804 they rose against the turbulent janissaries of Belgrade, who had ignored both law and sultanic directives in despoiling and abusing the Christian population, culminating in a massacre of local leaders. The Christians had already organized a militia for self-protection, making the massacre a trigger for the uprising. At first the Christians under Karadjordje Petrović cooperated with troops sent by Istanbul to disperse the janissaries, but, after those oppressors had been expelled, the sultan's troops tried to disarm the local militia and the Christians fought back. Despite initial successes, their resistance eventually broke, Karadjordje fled to Habsburg territory, and negotiations led to a full Ottoman return to Belgrade in 1813. This return only brought new frictions and reprisals against Christians, and rebellion soon revived under another leader, Miloš Obrenović. With the support of Russian pressure on the Ottomans, the Serbs enjoyed a wide degree of autonomy after 1815, which was confirmed and expanded in the peace treaty concluding the next Russo-Ottoman war in 1829.

That war resulted from another Christian uprising, the Greek revolt in the Morea that erupted in April 1821. The rebels quickly swept most of the Morea of Muslims, massacring most notoriously those resident or taking refuge in the town of Tripolitsa; Ottoman troops also engaged in mass slaughter, including notably much of the Christian population of the island of Chios. The rebellion settled into a stalemate until forces sent from Egypt by Mehmed Ali Pasha executed a systematic reconquest for the sultan, but this was halted in 1827 by the destruction of the Egyptian fleet at Navarino by an Anglo-Russian-French flotilla dispatched to impose a truce. This led to another Ottoman declaration of war on Russia in 1828, another defeat, and, in 1829, the Peace of Adrianople (Edirne), which confirmed autonomy for Serbia and independence for Greece.

Soon after concluding peace with Russia, the Ottoman Empire experienced revolts by Muslims in Bosnia, Albania, Macedonia, and Bulgaria. In Bosnia, Muslims had been restive at least since the abolition of the janissary corps in 1826, and after 1829 they raised an army to reject this and other reforms instituted by Mahmud II. Although successful against Istanbul's forces, they disbanded upon the promise that their demands would be met. Mahmud's commander in the Balkans then gathered sufficient reinforcements to invade Bosnia and quell the revolt. Bosnia and other regions nevertheless remained tense and rebellion-prone throughout the decade.

Historians of the Balkans have consistently treated the Christian uprisings as revolutionary ethnic national liberation movements, adding after 1945 significant emphasis upon peasant and bourgeois class interests as triggers for

revolt. Most simply ignore the Muslim movements on the assumption that Muslims have no real roots in the Balkans and, as a group labeled "Turks" in parlance common across Christian Europe, must have been loyal to the Ottoman Empire ("Turkey") and thus uninterested in national liberation. This historiographic tradition reached its most enduring form under the influence of the Cold War regimes of Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Yugoslavia that set guidelines adding Marxist-materialist emphases to extant nationalist models of historical interpretation. Under the geopolitical conditions of the time, historians based in, or studying, Greece and Turkey did not show much greater interest in reconsidering the history of a region riven by the Iron Curtain.[12] For various reasons, including preoccupation with Yugoslavia's disintegration, historians have left the nationalist-materialist paradigm relatively undisturbed since the end of the Cold War. Variations in approach can be seen in some narrower studies, but rethinking parts of the paradigm in specific cases has yet to disturb the overall stasis in treatment of the peninsula as a whole.[13]

As a group, Ottomanists have established a historiographic tradition regarding the European provinces that is as settled in routine as that of the Balkanists, particularly in addressing the empire's non-Muslim subjects. The Ottoman state was Islamic, Turkey's population is overwhelmingly Muslim,

[12] Leften Stavrianos was perhaps most responsible for entrenching the paradigm in English-language historiography. In his monumental history of the peninsula (*The Balkans since 1453* [Hinsdale, IL, 1958, and New York, 2000]), he stressed the two assumptions underpinning the paradigm: that the (Orthodox Christian) nations reawoke from the long hibernation of the dark centuries of Turkish occupation, and that the trigger for reawakening was the essentially materialistic oppression of the feudal Turkish class (see also his "Antecedents to the Balkan Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of Modern History* 29 [1957]: 335–48). Synthesizing histories published subsequently almost invariably have hewn to his line of analysis. Even Michael Palairet's *The Balkan Economies, c. 1800–1914: Evolution without Development* (Cambridge, 1997), one of the few major reinterpretations of the nineteenth-century Balkans, relies upon nationalist-materialist historiography in treating the early decades. Mark Mazower's *The Balkans: A Short History* (London, 2000) is an exception to the static paradigm.

[13] Nationalism-materialism describes a dominant trend rather than uniformity of scholarly views, and as the parameters of study narrow, the sophistication of interpretation often increases. Within the Balkans, Greek scholarship has shown the greatest variation in interpretation of the "revolutionary" period, especially since Dionyssios Skiotis placed the roots of the Greek revolt in their Ottoman context in "The Lion and the Phoenix: Ali Pasha and the Greek Revolution" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1971). See, for example, Paschalis Kitromilides, "'Imagined Communities' and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans," in Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-Eastern Europe* (Aldershot, 1994); John Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause: Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece 1821–1912* (Oxford, 1987); and various chapters in Antonis Anastasopoulos and Elias Kolovos, eds., *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760–1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation* (Rethymno, 2007).

and most historians interested in either entity have treated non-Muslims as awkward elements that never truly fit their Ottoman milieu—much as Balkan historiography usually ignores Muslims except as alien agents of oppression. In works that note non-Muslim affairs, therefore, the standard narrative simply incorporates the paradigm of Balkan historiography before proceeding to explain the challenges that nationalism and the non-Muslim bourgeoisie posed to Ottoman rule. Ottomanists, moreover, have generally failed to fill the gaps left by Balkanists' unwillingness to study Muslim populations such as the Albanians and Bosnians; insofar as Ottomanists note the unrest among Balkan Muslims seen in the 1792–1839 period, they tend to treat it as opposition to Ottoman modernizers' enlightened reform efforts launched in the materialist interest of safeguarding ill-gotten riches. Balkan and Ottoman historiographies thus do not test, but rather feed off, each other.[14]

Revolt along the Danube

Neither Balkanists nor Ottomanists recognize that much of the widespread unrest erupting in the 1790s represented an understandable rejection of genuinely controversial policies adopted in Istanbul. Almost all surviving information about the Balkan turmoil of 1792–1806 was collected by hostile authorities, both Ottoman and foreign, and they generally described the provincial "lawless" elements as bandits, traitors, and instigators of chaos. While there certainly was banditry in this period, it is nevertheless difficult to dismiss Pasvanoğlu Osman Pasha, the Belgrade janissaries, and the "mountain

[14] For a recent example of unquestioning acceptance of the nationalism-materialism of Balkan historiography, see Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, 2008), 277–89. For relatively rare acknowledgments of the existence of Muslim unrest in the period, see the following works by Virginia Aksan: "Military Reform and Its Limits in a Shrinking Ottoman World, 1800–1840," in *The Early Modern Ottomans: Remapping the Empire*, ed. Virginia Aksan and Daniel Goffman (Cambridge, 2007), 129–30; "Ottoman Military Recruitment Strategies in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775–1925*, ed. Erik Zürcher (London, 1999), 32–33; and "The Ottoman Military and State Transformation in a Globalizing World," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27 (2007): 259–72; see also M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ, 2008), 61. Aksan sees unrest as resistance to conscription, and Hanioğlu stresses provincial notables' desire for autonomy. As in Balkan historiography, there have been signs of change seen in more narrowly focused studies. See, for example, Hakan Erdem, "'Perfidious Albanians' and 'Zealous Governors': Ottomans, Albanians, and Turks in the Greek War of Independence," in Anastasopoulos and Kolovos, *Ottoman Rule*, 213–40; Esmer, "Culture of Rebellion"; Christine Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Practicing Ottoman Governance in the Age of Revolutions* (Berkeley, 2011).

bandits" as simply opportunistic brigands. All had distinctly military characters, including the mountain bandits who included in their ranks numerous discharged provincial militiamen. This military identification suggests a link between the unrest and Selim III's experiment in military reform, the New Order. Imperial authorities cannot be accused of misunderstanding the necessity of military improvement, but they failed to prioritize needs correctly or to foresee the likely results of the measures adopted.[15] The dissonance between Istanbul's analysis of military weaknesses and the population's perceptions of regime policies thus may explain the lack of recognition accorded to the unrest as incipient revolt.

In seeking to strengthen the state's military power, Selim's regime conformed to the pattern seen throughout Europe, but Istanbul's mental and physical distance from the Christian powers that had the lead in military modernization meant that the Ottoman effort dwelt too much on copying obvious but relatively superficial innovations rather than addressing basic weaknesses in the military and imperial administration.[16] This reflected one of the main sources of reform: observation of enemy formations on the battlefield and of drill routines performed by captured Christian European soldiers. One aspect of reform, the intensification of long-established attempts to improve artillery, certainly addressed a key need, but most of the elements resulting from observation—alterations in regimental order, drill, and appearance—were more effect than cause of Europe's military revolution. Ottoman military problems that were less easily observable than poor artillery and weak rank-and-file discipline but that were critical to Christian armies' superiority—officer training, battlefield command, staff-work, and even supply systems—changed little. Not having resolved any of those problems, the New Order army was all too similar to the old military.[17] An equally critical shortcoming in the New Order was the lack of attention to finding sustainable funding for reform. Selim's ministers simply applied more pressure to traditional sources of revenue: forcible allocation of debt, imposition of new taxes, fiscal trickery, and confiscation of imperial officials' property. The treasury raised "loans" by issuing "IOUs" rather than wages to many of those on the

[15] Fatih Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında bir Osmanlı Kâtibi Ebubekir Râtib Efendi (1750–1799)* (Istanbul, 2010), studies the author of one of the many memoranda on reform commissioned by Selim. Ebubekir Râtib had served as a diplomat in Vienna. His memorandum on Habsburg practices covered useful topics from military personnel and organization to means of stimulating economic growth, but the direction of Selim's New Order program seems to have been tied more closely to battlefield observation.

[16] For useful studies of how contemporary Christian countries addressed the military modernization challenge, see Christopher Storrs, ed., *The Fiscal-Military State in Eighteenth-Century Europe: Essays in Honour of P. G. M. Dickson* (Farnham, UK, 2009).

[17] See, for example, Esmer, "Culture of Rebellion," 275, 277.

central state payroll, including notably most of those already engaged in military affairs. New excise taxes on marketable commodities raised cash, as did property seized from dead or disgraced officials, and debasement of coinage made the money collected go further. The most critical inefficiency in revenue-raising, tax farming, underwent at best modest adjustment, and the regime made no effort to undertake proper budgeting based upon adequate control of either income or expenditure—indeed, even the periodic rough statements of overall income and expenditure that had previously been made ceased in the reigns of Selim III and Mahmud II.[18] "Financial reform" consisted of establishing a parallel treasury into which a growing proportion of tax-farm income was paid and which was to fund exclusively the New Order.[19]

Significant parts of the Ottoman population deemed the New Order and its funding measures illegitimate or unjust, particularly in the Balkans, which were still traumatized by the experiences and losses of very recent wars. Military veterans took up arms against Istanbul's innovations, but these "instigators of chaos" had supporters throughout the population. This opposition was not simply the self-interest of janissaries wishing to preserve their pay and privileges, or of provincial notables worried about losing tax farms and illegally seized land to the reinvigorated military's new treasury. Deep antagonism toward the New Order affected some provincial leaders such as Pasvanoğlu Osman Pasha, but since Selim ordered that only tax farms and other revenues whose assignations had lapsed should be transferred to the New Order treasury, there was no direct threat of dispossession faced by such notables. Such an interpretation also does not explain why figures such as Osman Pasha were so popular with much of the Balkan population, especially but not exclusively the Muslims: it was the urban tradesmen and the poor who were most directly threatened by the financial burdens of Selim's modernization plan. Already heavily taxed and reeling from the costly disruptions caused by campaigns launched from, and frequently fought in, the Balkan provinces, the guild-based economy struggled under the further weight of the new excise duties on commodities. The rural and urban poor also suffered from the great boost to inflation triggered by Istanbul's repeated debasement of the currency in this era. The guilds and the nonmilitary poor therefore

[18] K. Kıvanç Karaman and Şevket Pamuk, "Ottoman State Finances in European Perspective, 1500–1914," *Journal of Economic History* 70 (2010): 593–629, 621. The new treasury did issue summaries of income and outgoings, but these did not encompass all state revenue and expenditure. Yavuz Cezar, *Osmanlı Maliyesinde Bunalım ve Değişim Dönemi* (Istanbul, 1986), 159–61.

[19] For standard views of the New Order, see Stanford Shaw, "The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-i Cedid of Sultan Selim III," *Journal of Modern History* 37 (1965): 291–306, and Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, chaps. 5–6.

tended to sympathize with those who stood up against the reforms, and in some cases to join the retinues of those taking up arms.

Making the transition from craftwork to bearing arms was particularly easy in this period, because the nominally clear division between the military and civilian populations had blurred by the eighteenth century. Both the janissaries and the increasingly important militia hired in the provinces for the campaign season were among those seriously affected in several ways by the New Order measures. They tended to come from impoverished backgrounds, and as soldiers their lot hardly improved, since Istanbul did not have the money to pay its troops promptly or adequately. Failure to pay wages exacerbated the problem of discipline in the ranks, especially among the provincial seasonal militia, and it was such men who, when discharged from service without receiving their pay, formed much of the mountain bandit movement.[20] The news that the New Order project involved taxing the poor to equip and pay a new military corps properly, which the state had failed to do for the now-discharged militia who had fought in the war, must have been infuriating. It is no surprise, therefore, that at least some "mountain bandits" targeted particularly the property of the central government, including storehouses, arsenals, and lands devoted to supplying the new army, as well as the property of officials serving it in the provinces.[21] Similar outrage must have affected the janissary "professional" soldiers. Pay was pitifully low and habitually in arrears, and daily bread rations practically nonexistent. For the janissary outside Istanbul who was fortunate enough to receive his pay in 1800, his daily wage in this age of inflation barely covered the cost of a cup of coffee; by 1807, his *annual* salary equaled approximately £4–5s sterling.[22] Janissary pay had become so inadequate over the course of the eighteenth century that the rank-and-file of the notional standing army had to find other means of survival, leading to a commingling of the Muslim military with the urban craft and trade guilds—the bodies now threatened by the New Order.[23]

Military reform also stirred controversy on religious grounds. Given Istanbul's inability to field adequately paid and supplied armies, it had relied upon soldiers' zeal to fight for Islam and the dynastic commander of the faithful.

[20] Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmperatorluğunda Dağlı İsyanları* (Ankara, 1983); Frederick Anscombe, "Albanians and 'Mountain Bandits,'" in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750–1830*, ed. Frederick Anscombe (Princeton, NJ, 2006), 87–113.

[21] Esmer, "Culture of Rebellion," 95, 284.

[22] Deena Sadat, "Ayan and Ağa: the Transformation of the Bektashi Corps in the 18th Century," *Muslim World* 63 (1973): 206–19, 212; Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 267.

[23] For examples of janissaries melding into the civilian economy, see Charles Wilkins, *Forging Urban Solidarities: Ottoman Aleppo 1640–1700* (Leiden 2010), and Amnon Cohen, "The Army in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century—Sources of Its Weakness and Strength," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 34 (1971): 36–55.

The New Order army, with its adoption of explicitly Christian European models, presented the question "why did we fight?" The fact that mimicry of Christian Europe extended even to soldiers' clothing provoked perhaps the strongest reaction. At a time when Sultan Selim issued strict sumptuary decrees mandating that religious and social distinctions among civilians be maintained visibly through dress, the injunction to adopt Christian uniforms incensed soldiers who had fought for religion and dynasty.[24] Janissaries and militia, drawn heavily from the Balkan population of Muslims, had fought and died by the thousands in two unpopular wars rashly declared by the empire's commanders, and they had done so without receiving regular pay or supplies.[25] With the second war lost but only comparatively modest further concessions to the Habsburgs and Russians accepted in the Treaties of Sistova (1791) and Jassy (1792), Selim appeared to be using the peace to further his enemies' interests by hollowing out the motivation that had kept armies in the field: the willingness to fight for the faith. The New Order's supporters failed to address such complaints adequately.[26] Widespread bitterness and unease explain the popular support for the man who stood up for "old" values, Pasvanoğlu Osman Pasha of Vidin.

Osman was one of the few provincial notables to oppose openly the New Order. By origin he was a janissary, as his father had been. He was also a devout Muslim, and owing to that as well as his sympathies with the plight of the janissaries he refused to levy any noncanonic taxes in his province, especially the excise duties needed to fund the New Order. He drew strong sympathy from much of the Muslim population of the Balkans, and the relative stability provided by his strong grip on Vidin and northwestern Bulgaria made him surprisingly popular among the Christian peasantry under his authority as well.[27] Osman became a serious threat to the Ottoman order not because of his innate power, which was distinctly provincial rather than imperial in magnitude, but because of the widespread feeling that the state was

[24] On Selim's sumptuary laws, see Donald Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720–1829," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29 (1997): 403–25, 410–12.

[25] The war of 1787–92 was particularly unwelcome: the prospect of hostilities had triggered unprecedented protests in the form of anonymous placards or posters placed on public buildings and mosques in Istanbul. Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300–1923* (London, 2005), 382–83.

[26] For an example of pro-reform propaganda, supposedly written by an aged military veteran but actually the work of Selim's court historian, see Virginia Aksan, "Ottoman Political Writing, 1768–1808," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 25 (1993): 53–69, 61–62. On the tract's true author and his attitudes, see Philliou, *Biography of an Empire*, 206 n. 47, and Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 181–83.

[27] On Osman Pasha's ideological and practical appeal, see Sadat, "Ayan and Ağa," and Rossitsa Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin: Between Old and New," in Anscombe, *Ottoman Balkans*, 125–32.

failing to fulfill its responsibilities in the face of an existential threat from Christian Europe. Indicative of his sense of representing the true path of Islam against the wrongful innovations of Selim's ministers was his reaction to the outbreak of the Ottoman-Russian war of 1806–12. Osman apparently was insulted by not being given command of the Danube front against the Russians, which makes no sense given his long record of conflict with Istanbul other than as a sign of what he thought was his proper due as the defender of true Islamic-Ottoman values.[28]

That Osman retained control of Vidin until his death from natural causes in 1807, despite suffering several military reverses over the years, gave proof of Istanbul's lack of power or will to crush a provincial rebel. Desperation following from Istanbul's continuing inability to restore order was to spur the Christian uprising in Belgrade province, where Osman supported the janissaries in their reign of terror against those seen as clients of the New Order: officers loyal to Selim and local Christians. While unrest among Christians and Muslims at the turn of the century thus showed significant differences, two characteristics stand out that link them and that would also characterize subsequent movements in the "age of revolution": both the Muslims sympathetic to Osman Pasha and the Serbs in 1804 were not rising according to a clearly articulated plan, let alone a "modern ideology," but were up in arms against current conditions, and their resort to violence resulted from anger and despair over Istanbul's failure to do what they perceived to be right. Istanbul could no longer ensure security and justice.

Serbia

Frustration over Istanbul's inability to protect the principle of justice and a desire to prompt the imperial government to correct the problem were the most visible factors in the armed movement of Christians in Belgrade province in 1804; similar unrest could be seen elsewhere, however, as in Wallachia in 1821. In Belgrade, Karadjordje Petrović led a militia formed to defend much of the population against the depredations of soldiers and officeholders no longer responsive to the imperial regime in Istanbul. They took up arms not against the sultan's authority but as self-preservation until such authority could be assuredly restored. In order to understand the uprising, facets of the history and role of the province bear explanation.

Belgrade's importance as a military strongpoint shaped the Serbian revolt of 1804. The city was the most important military post on the Ottoman-Habsburg frontier from 1699 to 1804, and as a result the history of Belgrade and its surrounding province in this period was particularly turbulent. The city

[28] Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu," 123.

became the focus of campaigns between Ottomans and Habsburgs on numerous occasions and changed hands between the two foes in 1688, 1689, 1718, 1739, 1790, and 1791. In these and other campaigns, the rest of the province was ravaged by advancing and retreating armies. The province became relatively underpopulated, and the people remaining there became perforce highly mobile; settled agriculture held a lessening attraction for the majority Christian rural population, who turned increasingly to trade in livestock, especially swine. Whenever armies entered the province on campaign, many of its residents fled—Muslims further into Ottoman territory, Orthodox Christians increasingly toward Habsburg lands. Upon each peace, Istanbul gave guarantees, including amnesties and tax exemptions, to entice the Christians to return home and revive the province's economic and social structure. There also was a pattern of Muslim troops returning to defend the frontier and being unwilling to honor those guarantees.[29] Their militant attitude, seen among janissaries in Vidin in the eighteenth century as well, derived from the belief that the border should be under Muslim control and devoted to serving the Muslim duty to protect the abode of Islam.[30]

This wartime sequence occurred again in 1787–91, but the weakness of the center and the turmoil wracking the Balkans in the aftermath of this conflict meant that Istanbul could not reassert lasting control over the old garrison returning to Belgrade. Janissaries, so recently engaged in bitter jihad against the Habsburgs, felt strong anger and contempt for returning Christians, some of whom they had fought as rebels in the war. Among these Christians was Karadjordje Petrović, who had volunteered in the Habsburg military during the war. That the main economic pursuit of many returnees, including Karadjordje, was the raising and selling of pigs must have deepened janissary hostility. To forestall reprisals against such Christians, Istanbul barred the return of many soldiers and confiscated their property, charging them (falsely) with having delivered Belgrade into Habsburg hands during the war. Such aspersions only intensified the bitterness over Istanbul's perceived betrayal of those who had fought for faith and dynasty without adequate support from the sultan's regime. Returning troops thus paid no heed to orders from the center, or to local Muslims who tried to adhere to Istanbul's rules. They intensified their persecution of the population, taking lands and property that they felt were theirs by right, and they killed any who stood in their way. Unable to control much of the Balkans directly in this period, Istanbul directed troops from Bosnia to disperse the troublesome troops, but the janissary threat

[29] For examples from the late seventeenth century, see Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi, Istanbul, Mühimme Defter (MD) 110, page 484/order 2181, September 1698, and MD 111, 33/95, June 1699.

[30] On Vidin, see Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoğlu," 119–20.

survived because of the support of Pasvanoğlu Osman, whose Vidin was the next important frontier fortress to the east.

For centuries the ultimate guarantors of the Christians' life, liberty, and property, the Ottoman central authorities recognized the enormity of the security threat posed by the janissaries: it was the Ottoman commander of Belgrade who, overwhelmed by the task of controlling the marauders, ordered that Christians take up arms to form an anti-janissary militia. Apprised of this, and perhaps in response to the Christians having sent a delegation to Istanbul to petition the imperial authorities for aid and protection, the janissaries killed a number of the Christians' local leading figures. This prompted the open mustering of the militia by the remaining notables, and Karadjordje soon established a leading position among them. The Christian militia cooperated with Bosnian Muslim Ottoman troops through months of campaigning against the rebellious janissaries.

That Christians had arms for self-defense, and could even under certain circumstances be encouraged by the state to have them, had repeated precedents in Ottoman history, but for high officers to urge Christian subjects to organize militarily was an obvious sign of desperation, signaling their recognition that the Islamic state did not have the resources needed to uphold justice in a vital province. Many Muslim officeholders and military men were clearly discomfited by the open arming of Christians. Such disquiet reached as high as Selim III, who planned to have some Serbian militia leaders punished as soon as the janissaries were expelled in order to set an example lest Christians assume that they could continue to bear arms against Muslims. Belgrade's Christians also recognized the weakness of the empire's central authorities, and inevitably they wished precisely what Istanbul feared, that they not dissolve their militia once the janissary threat diminished. Experience had taught the province's Christians that they could have no reason to expect the setback dealt to the janissaries in 1804 to be other than temporary; the janissaries had survived every other measure taken since 1791. With the threat to life and liberty merely in abeyance, the Christians needed proof of lasting improvement: they were unwilling to take on faith Istanbul's proclamation that they would henceforth see justice restored. With that evidence still lacking, and perhaps aware that they themselves faced some threat of punishment, they resisted the premature attempt by the sultan's military to disarm them, thus setting the 1804 movement for self-defense and restoration of the sultan's authority in a new direction.

Yet throughout the first three years of the armed struggle (1804–7), the Serbs neither asserted a wish for independence nor halted petitioning, and negotiating with, the sultan and his ministers. Many indeed had remained loyal during the 1787–91 war rather than joining the Habsburgs. The enemies against whom the Serbs consistently declared they were fighting were the

Muslims who rebelled against the sultan's authority. Despite unnerving incidents such as the summary execution of Christian notables at a peace parley in 1805, a successful conclusion to negotiations was prevented for several years only by the Christians' understandable demand that another power (the Habsburg Empire or Russia) act as guarantor for Istanbul's promise of restored justice. The Ottoman center equally understandably could not accept this. The two sides finally agreed provisionally in late 1806 to a new regime for the province, in which local leaders and imperial representatives would share equally the administrative and military duties, but this arrangement collapsed after Russia, once again at war with the Ottoman Empire, offered the Serbs subsidies to join in campaigning against Istanbul, turning their uprising into a struggle for independence.[31]

By placing the 1804 revolt in its historical, Ottoman context, its nature becomes clear: it was a defensive movement staged by Christians against extremely threatening forces unleashed by the breakdown of Istanbul's moral authority over the Muslim provincial order and the imperial center's inability to restore permanently its control. It was in an important sense a loyalist uprising, but its effect upon the sultanate to which rebels appealed for protection was not what they had desired. Mahmud II, who ascended the throne after Selim's death in 1808, came to question the reliability of both Muslim and Christian populations, and he introduced a ruthlessness toward his subjects that Selim had not consistently demonstrated. He also may have had a particular distaste for the Balkans.[32] As the sultanate shifted from being the weakened defender of justice to the absolutist propagator of oppression, unrest in the provinces intensified.

Greece

In essence, the Greek revolt expressed the same lack of hope seen in Belgrade that Istanbul could provide the basic elements of law and order, but in this case the hopelessness was exacerbated by the perception that Ottoman re-

[31] The details of the Serbian Christian movement are taken from Roger Viers Paxton, "Nationalism and Revolution: A Re-Examination of the Origins of the First Serbian Insurrection 1804–1807," *East European Quarterly* 6 (1972): 337–62; Robert Zens, "Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791–1807," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (2002): 89–104; Hanioğlu, *Late Ottoman Empire*, 52–53; Mehmet Börekci, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sırp Meselesi* (Istanbul, 2001); Mustafa Nuri Pasha, *Netayic ül-Vukuat*, vols. 3–4, ed. Neşet Çağatay (Ankara, 1992), 244.

[32] It is striking that in negotiations leading to the Treaties of Bucharest (1812) and Adrianople (1829), for example, Mahmud accepted loss of land and rights in the Balkans much more readily than in the Caucasus, despite the latter region's remoteness from the capital and the most valuable parts of the empire.

formers' state strengthening was only making the problem worse. With the growing conviction that the regime did not intend to revive the tools of justice that made possible any social stability, the state's political legitimacy crumbled. Unlike the armed movement in Belgrade, therefore, the Greek revolt almost immediately escalated to a movement to throw off Ottoman rule, an escalation driven by the exceptional brutality on both sides that quickly came to characterize the uprising. It began with the Christian slaughter of Muslims and Jews in the Morea and continued with Muslim reciprocation against Orthodox Christians elsewhere. Reconciliation after such brutal beginnings became a practical impossibility.

Two areas of today's Greece drove the uprising of 1821, the Morea and southern Epirus, and both had been affected directly by the Balkan-wide breakdown of order after 1768. Unlike Belgrade, neither had served recently as a major arena of interstate warfare; also unlike Belgrade, however, Epirus and the Morea witnessed the imperial regime's attempts at self-strengthening reform. They found the experience unnerving. Serbian Christians took up arms in aid of the restoration of sultanic justice, but the Christians of Greece revolted in apprehension that Ottoman reform meant only continuation, if not intensification, of oppression.

Selim III's deposition and death in 1807–8 convinced Sultan Mahmud II that Selim had fallen not because of the substance of his state-strengthening reforms but because he had not been sufficiently ruthless. For Mahmud, reform meant first that all officials, civil and military, had to be tested for loyalty, and power and control over resources had to be delegated only to those judged trustworthy. Those deemed politically unreliable (and, given the extent of unrest in the 1792–1808 period, they were many) lost position and property and could suffer internal exile or summary execution. In the most noted such reprisal, the entire janissary corps was abolished with much bloodshed in 1826. The identities of those running the system changed but, like Selim, Mahmud never addressed adequately problems within the system itself. In essence, the New Order returned, but now with an overriding emphasis upon perceived loyalty to the sultan.[33] Tax farming continued, as did inadequate training of civil and military personnel—and, given the premium upon loyalty, the importance of personal connections to winning appointment to positions of responsibility.

Epirus experienced the full effect of this personality-centered approach to state strengthening because it was dominated by one of the best-known

[33] In conversation with the British ambassador, one senior official in Istanbul condemned Mahmud as wholly ignorant of what was needed to administer state affairs. "To flatter his pride and his vanity was to assure oneself of his approbation." Quoted in Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse, NY, 2000), 111.

provincial leaders, Ali Pasha of Ioannina. Ali, the exotic strongman who caught the fancy of European literati from Byron to Balzac, governed (either directly or through his sons) southern Albania and much of mainland Greece for several decades in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Foreigners tended to idealize him as the "Muslim Bonaparte," a charismatic modernizer favorably inclined toward Europe, but in fact he remained a loyal servant of the sultan. His power, however, prompted Mahmud's ministers to start to remove governorships from Ali's family after the conclusion of the 1806–12 war with Russia, and this pressure culminated in the dispatch of an army to seize Ioannina and Ali himself in 1820. Ali offered little resistance until Istanbul's forces reached Ioannina, but then the Ottoman army could not capture the citadel by any means other than laying siege to it for more than a year.[34] The Ottoman army, commanded by officers from Mahmud's palace, showed all of the weaknesses in command, training, and discipline that had plagued the empire's international campaigns. While waiting for Ali to surrender, the army stripped much of southern Albania and northwestern Greece bare. The population of the region grew very restive under the burden of the ill-managed occupation, and people in neighboring provinces watched the ignominious turmoil with mounting alarm. The reassertion of Istanbul's authority had become a frightening prospect.

Ali finally surrendered in 1822 after his "last gamble," the Greek revolt, failed—at least from his perspective.[35] He had encouraged some of the many Christian notables upon whom he had relied to maintain security in his provinces to organize rebellion, which Ali hoped would cause Istanbul to reconsider its determination to replace the man who had kept the peace in Greece for decades. These former local security chiefs formed much of the important Christian military leadership of the Greek revolt. There would have been no revolt in the Morea without the events in Epirus.[36] Had Ali's ploy worked by winning him a reprieve in order to restore order for the sultan, he would have tried to crush the revolt with his usual zeal, but his death removed

[34] On Ali's service to the empire and subsequent fall, see Frederick Anscombe, "Continuities in Ottoman Centre-Periphery Relations, 1787–1915," in *The Frontiers of the Ottoman World*, ed. Andrew Peacock (Oxford, 2009), 236–45.

[35] Dennis Skiotis, "The Greek Revolution: Ali Pasha's Last Gamble," in *Hellenism and the First Greek War of Liberation (1821–1830): Continuity and Change*, ed. Nikoforos Diamandouros, John Anton, John Petropoulos, and Peter Topping (Thessaloniki, 1976), 97–109. Skiotis's work on Ali Pasha's Epirus drew on Greek and Ottoman sources and remains unsurpassed for critical insight into the roots of the Greek revolt.

[36] Dennis Skiotis, "Mountain Warriors and the Greek Revolution," in *War, Technology and Society in the Middle East*, ed. V. J. Parry and M. E. Yapp (London, 1975), 309, 316.

the Ottoman Empire's most effective asset in assuring a modicum of order.[37] Ali certainly primed the explosion of revolt by encouraging Christians to act on their disquiet, helping to convince nervous notables that they could regain a measure of control over their lives if they acted with vigor, but in doing so he merely sought to gain an advantage from the frustration, anger, and fear felt by so many on the Greek mainland.

That the revolt started in the Morea was hardly coincidence, because it had long experience of misfortune under Istanbul's authority as well. All of mainland Greece suffered severely from the lawlessness seen in much of the Balkans from the late eighteenth century, which Istanbul had proven incapable of controlling, but the Morea seemed to be targeted more lastingly and severely than other areas. During the 1768–74 Ottoman-Russian war, the Russian regime tried to raise rebellions among Ottoman Orthodox Christians to little effect, succeeding even modestly in just two places: Montenegro and the Morea. Both territories had rugged terrain, easier access from the sea than from land, and histories of unstable Ottoman control (the Morea had passed to Venice in 1699 before being regained in 1718). Their populations also had internal fractures and divisions to match the ruggedness of the terrain. Crucial to the Morean revolt in 1770 was the advent of a Russian naval flotilla, which circumnavigated Europe from the Baltic to the eastern Mediterranean and Aegean. This flotilla was far superior to the Ottoman navy in those waters and indeed was to destroy the Ottoman fleet anchored at Çeşme (western Anatolia) later in the year. Russia's presence in force, coupled with the promise of military aid from the fleet, prompted an uprising led by notable "bandit" (klepht) families of the most rugged quarter of the peninsula, Mani; even in the midst of a disastrous war, however, provincial Albanian militiamen were able to crush it quickly. For decades after 1770, Muslim Albanian bands returned to the peninsula to raid and pillage, and some to settle, prompting many Christians to emigrate to Aegean islands and Anatolia or to form resistance bands in the hills. None of Istanbul's repeated strictures against Albanians setting foot on the peninsula stemmed the turmoil.[38]

It was only in the early nineteenth century that security had improved, as Ali Pasha and his sons extended their authority over much of the mainland and kept close control over communications routes. The established Christian

[37] Anscombe, "Ottoman Centre-Periphery Relations," 242–43.

[38] Anscombe, "'Mountain Bandits,'" 92; Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul, Esad Efendi 2419/2, dated to 1779. A good view of the chaos and of the ineptitude of Istanbul's appointees in Greece in this period is in Dennis Skiotis, "From Bandit to Pasha: First Steps in the Rise to Power of Ali of Tepelen, 1750–1784," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 219–44, 231–38. The best insight into turbulence affecting society in the Morea is John Alexander, *Brigandage and Public Order in the Morea, 1685–1806* (Athens, 1985).

notables of Morea, in conjunction with Ottoman forces, also carried out a campaign in 1806 to crush Christian bandit gangs who had fostered instability ever since inaugurating the 1770 revolt.[39] Ali never exercised a light touch in ruling Greece and southern Albania, but he offered stability, predictability, and a well-deserved reputation as a strongman able to preserve social order. This stability had begun to crumble as Sultan Mahmud's regime started to take provincial governorships from Ali's family after 1812, and the decision to destroy Ali threatened to upset the region completely and return all territories to their earlier precariousness. In northern Greece the rapacity of the undisciplined troops sent to capture Ali confirmed the return of chaos and random brutality, as did the resumption of old patterns of careless administration in districts once under Ali's control following the displacement of his network of local notables by appointees from Istanbul. The personal hostility toward Ali also reinforced the sultan's growing reputation for harsh action against anyone whom he deemed unreliable. In the Morea, the seat of rebellion in 1821, no part of Christian society could view regional events with indifference; the established notables who had benefited from Ali's authority faced the possibility of being treated as he had been, and the klephtic leaders not only shared that apprehension but also had their own set of grievances against imperial authority from 1770 and the decades since.

Tensions among Moreote Christians thus grew with the prospect of the full return of unpredictable governance by absentee Istanbul appointees. As Istanbul's drive against Ali Pasha gathered momentum, the governorship of the Morea passed into the portfolio of appointments held by one of Sultan Mahmud's trusted servants, Hurşid Pasha, commander of the campaign to capture Ali. Hurşid had been governor of Belgrade when Ottoman rule returned there in 1813 and had not stopped Muslim retaliation against Christian former rebels.[40] A rumor that the Ottomans intended to imprison or execute leading Christians in Hurşid's new province precipitated the uncoordinated outbreak of revolt.[41] The rumor was credible—the calculated campaign of executions against Greeks, including the Orthodox Patriarch, that was launched in Istanbul upon news of revolts in the Danubian principalities and in the Morea confirmed the regime's willingness to kill political undesirables.[42] The local Ottoman authorities nevertheless were surprised by the

[39] Alexander, *Brigandage and Public Order*, 89–101.

[40] André Gerolymatos, *The Balkan Wars: Conquest, Revolution and Retribution from the Ottoman Era to the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (New York, 2002), 155.

[41] Skiotis, "Mountain Warriors," 327.

[42] On this campaign, see Philliou, *Biography of Empire*, 67–74. Just before the uprising in the Morea, there were revolts in the Danubian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, the former having much in common with the Serbian movement of 1804 and the latter being an armed incursion by Greek nationalists from Russia.

opening shots fired, and their lack of response encouraged a full-scale attack upon Muslims and Jews. By the time the imperial regime directed its full attention to quelling the revolt, the rural areas of the Morea had been swept of non-Christians, and the fighting, or more accurately the massacring, had already given the struggle such a brutal character on both sides that autonomy or independence were the only viable options for the Christians. Neither option was acceptable to the Ottoman regime. It was again war with Russia that forced Ottoman acquiescence to Greek independence.

Greece's secession from the empire did not mark the end of unrest prompted by popular distress over imperial heavy-handedness. The trauma of the Greek revolt soon overshadowed in Christians' minds the anger and anxiety caused by the Ottoman campaign against Ali in Epirus, but Muslims in the Balkans became very aware that the Epirus episode formed but a link in a chain of repressive measures launched from Istanbul—measures that had also included the abolition of the janissary corps. Just as Christians had taken up arms to defend themselves against oppression, so in the 1830s Muslims fought in what they came to see as a desperate struggle for survival. This conflict resulted from their perception that Istanbul intended to destroy Muslim society in the Balkans. The repercussions of the struggle spread through the empire and brought the Ottoman sultanate to the brink of collapse.

Bosnia

Like the Christians of Belgrade who formed self-defense militias, Balkan Muslims did not seek secession from the Ottoman Empire, but in important respects they resembled the Greek rebels because they rejected the actions, and ultimately the authority, of those implementing the sultan's policies in the European provinces. In the eruption of violence in Bosnia, Albania, and other areas there was also an element of ruthlessness, at least on the part of Mahmud's representatives, that was reminiscent more of the Greek revolt than of the Balkan resistance to Selim III's New Order. These factors made the threat posed by Muslim Balkan unrest critically important to the survival of the imperial dynasty: rebels could not be "exiled" by granting independence but must be somehow mollified if the Islamic empire wanted its population to fight in its defense. Yet Mahmud II's preferred method for addressing the revolts was to crush them, trusting that obedience could be compelled should provincial militia from centers of Muslim rebellion ever be needed. For manning his modernized army, however, he relied upon conscription of Turkish peasants, who were regarded as relatively obedient. Conscripted for a minimum of twelve years, subjected to harsh discipline, and led by an unreformed officer corps, Mahmud's army was to prove no better than the New Order in reversing the empire's decline. As a result, only active military

support from the empire's most dangerous foe, Russia, preserved Mahmud's reign in 1833, and at his death in 1839 he faced the imminent threat of deposition at the hands of his Muslim subjects.[43]

Balkan Muslim rebels' concerns become clear from their Ottoman context and, as in the cases of Belgrade and the Morea, the history and role of rebellious regions provide relevant details. In the case of Bosnia, one of the epicenters of revolt, its historic role was that of a vital element of the Ottoman military—indeed, the northwestern redoubt of the European bulwark. Given its vulnerable frontier position, Bosnia's military resources were assigned primarily to defending the province rather than being deployed empire-wide. The Christians of neighboring Belgrade province had experienced turmoil during and after Habsburg invasions, and Bosnia's population had fared at least as badly, not only suffering the devastation of invasion but also taking the lead in fighting the enemy. Bosnians shouldered the load of defending themselves against endemic raiding from Dalmatia (which had been under the rule of Venice until 1798, then France, and after 1813 in Habsburg hands) as well as from Montenegro and the Habsburg Croatian-Slavonian military frontier. Yet while these defense burdens increased, the Bosnian militia and janissaries faced growing impediments to handling them created by policy changes originating in Istanbul. In the running conflict along the Dalmatian border, Istanbul worked to restrain Bosnian forces out of concern for French protests. The imperial government also failed to support adequately Bosnian efforts against the rebels of Belgrade province after 1804, and Bosnians were left to defend themselves unaided in ongoing border clashes with the Serbs after 1815, when Istanbul acceded to Russia's demand that it cease military operations against Belgrade's Christians. Istanbul's appointed governor of Bosnia, moreover, interfered in disputes between notables, not in the interest of seeing a just resolution of problems but in the hope of manipulating rivalries to weaken local leaders. Interference in military financing certainly also angered many in Bosnia. From the middle of the eighteenth century, changing imperial practices of tax farming began to alienate established funding sources from the Bosnian military, causing problems for defense of the frontier province's security. Any lands or other revenue sources that came under the local commanders became the most reliable sources of support for their continuing military duties in the period of Istanbul's failure of coherent administration.[44]

[43] On the threat to the throne posed by Muslims' reluctance to fight for Mahmud, and Mahmud's reliance on the Russians, see Anscombe, "Islam and the Age of Ottoman Reform."

[44] Michael Hickok, *Ottoman Military Administration in Eighteenth-Century Bosnia* (Leiden, 1997), 98–112, 152–75; Ahmet Eren, *Mahmud II Zamanında Bosna-Hersek* (Istanbul, 1965), 48–56.

Such a proclivity for interference seemingly designed to hamper self-defense in a vulnerable province prepared the ground for Bosnia's reaction to Mahmud II's abolition of the janissary corps in 1826. The Bosnians simply refused to accept the change until a tough new governor arrived supported by a large force. The change itself had been announced in a highly insulting manner, moreover, by identifying the janissaries as little more than thieving crypto-Christians in league with the Russians; such aspersions were particularly hard to accept in Bosnia, whose defenders had earned a better reputation in fighting the Habsburgs than any Ottoman force facing Russia.[45] As with the opposition to Selim III's New Order, dismissal of the Bosnian reaction as motivated by fear for pay and privileges underestimates the challenge perceived in the province. Bosnians felt threatened at a much more fundamental level: the attack on the janissaries was taken as a clear sign that Istanbul intended to break Muslim society, stripping it of its rights, possessions, and even its ability to defend itself. To replace the janissaries, Mahmud reintroduced the New Order army, which was to be developed in Istanbul; for the foreseeable future, this project would make no contribution to the defense of an isolated province whose extant forces had been suddenly dissolved. Bosnian fears that the death of the janissaries meant their own demise were serious. Sultan Mahmud complained that Bosnians had great difficulty distinguishing between being a Muslim and being a janissary—an ominous complaint, because in the aftermath of the janissary corps's dissolution the failure to answer correctly the insulting question of "are you a Janissary or Muslim?" brought execution—but he seems not to have understood why.[46] Given the endemic security concerns and the highly military nature of the Ottoman system in Bosnia, the leap from the attack on the janissaries to one on wider Muslim society was all too credible.

Istanbul's methods of reconciling Bosnia's Muslims to the new imperial order only deepened the impression that it no longer felt an interest in their well-being. The governor who broke the Bosnian rejection of the janissaries' dissolution in 1827 executed a number of recalcitrants after his arrival in Sarajevo and demanded that notables of the region compile lists of all who played a role in resisting abolition of the corps—lists entitled "kill," "exile," and "punish/fine." On the basis of such denunciations, incomplete though they were, more than one hundred people were executed without trial. Hüseyn, commander of Gradačac (a stronghold in northeastern Bosnia), leader of the most significant Bosnian revolt a few years later, had been accepting of the

[45] The text of the decree sent to Bosnia is in *Maglajski Sidžili 1816–1840*, ed. Dušanka Bojanić-Lukač and Tatjana Katić (Sarajevo, 2005), 534.

[46] Eren, *Mahmud II*, 76–77, 85; Aksan, "Ottoman Military Recruitment Strategies," 33. Eren's book is particularly valuable because it reflects clearly its Ottoman documentary sources, excerpts from which are incorporated into its text.

governor and the new military order until this point, but he was among those notables who refused to draw up the lists on grounds that they would be arbitrary and unjust, since the unrest had had widespread support.[47]

Like many other Bosnian Muslims, however, Hüseyn's full transition to rebellion occurred only after Istanbul concluded in 1829 the Peace of Adrianople with Russia, according to which more Bosnian districts were to be given to the newly autonomous Serbia. Istanbul's attempts to carry out such transfers repeatedly generated opposition from Bosnia's Muslims. In the eyes of the rebels, Bosnia faced hostile Christians on multiple fronts, but Istanbul pursued policies that now actively worked to give away what Bosnians had fought to save. The demands of the rebels thus centered upon giving control over Bosnia's fate to Bosnian leaders and ending the diversion of its human and material resources to distant imperial interests. These focused demands were supported not just by the "feudal" notables but by a broad swath of the Muslim population as well.[48] Hüseyn was thus able to raise a significant army that took the offensive against Istanbul's "modernized" forces in the Balkans and defeated them in a battle in Kosovo. The Ottoman commander in the Balkans subsequently ended the rebellion by promising to meet the Bosnians' demands and persuading them to return home, giving himself the opportunity to raise an army powerful enough to invade Bosnia and disperse the rebels as they regathered.

Tensions remained high, however, and revolt recurred sporadically. In 1835, for example, the harsh methods of Istanbul's appointed governor triggered unrest that fed off suspicions rooted in the uprising seen a few years earlier. Following the recruitment of several army reserve units for local service in Bosnia, a rumor spread that imperial authorities intended to send fighting-age men to Anatolia to campaign against Mehmed Ali and then to bring in other troops to punish the remaining, now defenseless population. Two notables whom the provincial governor suspected of spreading the rumor were lured to his residence and killed. Outrage over this reprise of earlier extralegal ruthlessness reignited rebellion.[49]

Such examples of moral outrage created a close affinity with Muslim revolts seen elsewhere in various other parts of the Balkans, where Mahmud's officers carried out numerous extralegal killings, seizures of property, and seemingly gratuitous insults to the honor of Muslims who had served the state in various ways, especially in the military. Anti-regime protest drew legitimacy from principles of Islam but, at root, the grounds for revolt were the same as those seen in Christian uprisings: the growing conviction that the imperial center no longer adhered to established principles of right and

[47] Eren, *Mahmud II*, 89–90.
[48] Ibid., 102, 115, 158–60.
[49] Ibid., 154–55.

wrong—that it no longer was the abode of justice for Ottoman society. This conviction spread from the Balkans to other parts of the empire, moreover: Mehmed Ali Pasha, the governor of Egypt but a native of the Balkans, seized Syria in 1832 to protect himself from the fate meted out to notables in Ottoman Europe. Balkan Muslims, in turn, refused to fight for Mahmud against Mehmed Ali. On the basis of the strong feelings of resentment against Mahmud that built not only in the Balkans but across Ottoman Asia as well, by 1839 Mehmed Ali was poised to remove the isolated sultan from the throne.[50]

Balkan-Inspired Revolutionary Change

Before Mehmed Ali could depose Mahmud II, the sultan died, and his successor, Abdülmecid, finally acted to address the grievances that had for decades stirred turmoil in the Balkans and more recently throughout the empire. Mahmud had embodied the stereotype of the distant "oriental despot," making momentous decisions based largely upon personality and regardless of both law and tradition; his death freed the imperial regime to revise radically the debilitating administrative practices followed by Istanbul in this "reform" period. Abdülmecid issued a decree, the Hatt-i Şerif of Gülhane, which made three fundamental promises to the empire's Muslim and Christian populations—promises that shaped the Tanzimat period, the era of fundamental change in Ottoman government. The Balkan revolts from the late eighteenth century through the 1830s were indeed revolutionary in that they prompted a radical reassessment of how the Ottoman state should govern people and land; it is no coincidence that the era of revolt ended as the promises of 1839 came into effect.

That reassessment of government practice began with the startling admission with which the Gülhane decree opened: that the power and well-being of the Ottoman Empire had declined because it had failed to uphold the law.[51] The first of the three basic promises of the decree was that the sultan's government would henceforth rule only in accordance with law (the sharia and regulations consonant with Islamic legal principles), particularly in matters concerning the life, honor, and property of the sultan's subjects. Life, honor,

[50] On the threat to dethrone Mahmud, see Butrus Abu-Manneh, "Mehmed Ali Paşa and Sultan Mahmud II: The Genesis of a Conflict," *Turkish Historical Review* 1 (2010): 1–24.

[51] The Ottoman text is in Ahmed Lutfi, *Tarih-i Lutfi* (Istanbul, 1874–1910), vi, 61–64; for English translations, see J. C. Hurewitz, ed., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, 1535–1914* (Princeton, NJ, 1956), 113–16, and http://sitemaker.umich.edu/emes/sourcebook/da.data/0000000000000000000000000000000000000000000097045/FileSource/1839_gulhane.pdf.

and property could not be touched without due process of law, and no one was too lofty or too humble to be either unconstrained or unprotected by law. Such a promise of justice openly and predictably applied addressed the most significant complaint of Balkan rebels, from Belgrade's Christians defending themselves against murderous forces of anarchy to the Greeks, Bosnians, and others struggling against the brutal reassertion of Istanbul's supremacy over the provinces. As the references to sharia suggest, the decree targeted primarily the Muslims of the empire, who had grown increasingly alienated from Sultan Mahmud II's regime and failed to rally to its defense against Mehmed Ali, but Christians gained from the promise of legality as well. It is important also to recognize that, while sharia was law that applied explicitly to Muslims, it had always operated in tandem with sultanic law, which supplemented sharia where necessary, including in affairs involving non-Muslims. Contrary to most accounts of the era, the Gülhane decree made no mention of Christian-Muslim equality before the law. That had never been a demand made by Christians in revolt: upholding the extant law of sharia and *kanun* had been the key issue.[52] As the Tanzimat legal and administrative reforms took shape, law and state power did become more predictable and thus tolerable, even if not wholly trusted by all of the population. This resurrection of the force of law, and the stability in social, economic, and even political life that it promoted, helped to limit the reappearance of significant insurrectionary movements and prevent the spread of separatist nationalism to the critical mass of any province's population that would be needed to precipitate a serious liberation revolt.[53]

Gülhane's other two promises returned to the issues that had motivated the unsettling administrative practices of Selim III and Mahmud II: the strengthening of the empire's military defenses. Following the guarantee of security for every person's life, property, and honor, the decree promised reorganization of tax collection to make it predictable, orderly, and sustainable. People were henceforth to pay taxes determined by their wealth and ability to pay and were to be protected against further exactions. The decree singled out tax farming as a practice to be eradicated. The need to defend the empire's borders was cited to legitimate the levying of taxes, but the decree also declared that laws would be formulated to limit expenditures on land and sea forces. Gülhane finally committed the imperial regime to take at least an initial

[52] It is important to remember that the overtly Islamic rule of Pasvanoğlu Osman in Vidin and the tough discipline of Ali Pasha in Greece had been acceptable to Christians because of their predictability and stability.

[53] There was one significant insurrection, in Hercegovina and Bosnia in 1875, but as in the early nineteenth-century instances this was prompted by desperation: peasants whose crops had failed for successive years due to drought resisted tax demands that were impossible to satisfy.

step toward proper budgeting, which would be critical to any chance of success for meaningful military reform. The third promise of the decree was reorganization of military recruitment to make it, too, predictable, orderly, and sustainable. Conscription would be spread equitably (i.e., it would no longer weigh only on the Turkish population but would extend to formerly suspect groups such as Albanians, Bosnians, Kurds, and Arabs as well), and the length of service would be reduced from twelve to four or five years, so that inductees would no longer be subject to despair.[54]

Abdülmecid's short list of promises to his population provided the guiding principles of the most radical reform program in Ottoman history, the Tanzimat's "beneficent measures to bring order." Taxation and military service were indeed placed upon more orderly and sustainable foundations. Perhaps the most notable failure of reform was that the state did not eradicate tax farming, but it nevertheless did establish much closer control over contracted tax collectors than it had exercised previously. The most striking feature of the Tanzimat, however, was the emphasis placed upon developing the legal framework of the empire.[55] The state's care for legal development and due process accessible by all Ottoman citizens helped greatly to forestall further popular uprisings as significant as those seen in the 1792–1839 period. Both law codes and imperial self-perception indeed remained consciously Muslim rather than secular (in the sense of divorced from religion), but the program of reforms inaugurated in 1839 resolved the great domestic crisis of the state, transforming the empire's ruling institutions into recognizably "modern" form.

[54] Gülhane does not specify the groups to be subjected to "equitable" conscription, but given Mahmud's strictures against non-Turks (as well as converts to Islam) serving in his new army, this list of affected populations seems correct. From the first conscription law of 1844 until 1909, the military recruited only from the Muslim peasantry; urbanites and nomads were exempt, and one scholar notes that "the idea that non-Muslims should . . . serve seems to have been as alien as the idea of female soldiers" (Erik Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1914," *International Review of Social History* 43 [1998]: 437–49, 445). Only around the time of the Crimean War did Istanbul make a gesture toward extending military service to the non-Muslim population, but it made little effort to implement the idea. It did abolish *jizya*, or the head tax required of Christians and Jews—but promptly introduced a military exemption fee for non-Muslims set at roughly the same level as *jizya* had been.

[55] One expert on the Tanzimat places legislation at the head of his short list of major themes characterizing the period. Carter Findley, "The Tanzimat," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. 4, *Turkey in the Modern World*, ed. Reşat Kasaba (Cambridge, 2008), 16.

Implications of the Balkan Revolutionary Era

By depicting events in the Balkans in their Ottoman provincial context, this account has offered a perspective that must strike readers familiar with standard views on any of these uprisings as surprising. This revisionist perspective carries significant implications for our current picture of Balkan, Ottoman, and wider European history.

Balkan historiography in the nineteenth century needs to accelerate its rethinking of the established focus on nation and class. Debate on these revolutionary forces in the Balkan context has revolved around the question of whether they were inspired by liberal and national intellectual currents elsewhere in Europe or were autochthonous developments that showed the Balkan peoples to be as progressive as any of their contemporaries.[56] Yet none of the revolts involving Christians had nationalist inspiration, leadership, or goals. Accounts of the "Serbian" and "Greek" revolts cite as evidence of nationalist feeling the writings of the literati commonly identified as the apostles of national liberation: Dositej Obradović for the Serbs and Rhigas Velestinlis and Adamantios Koraïs for the Greeks. Obradović was born in the Habsburg Empire and spent most of his life there and in other Christian European lands, Velestinlis lived and wrote in Vienna, and Koraïs spent practically his entire adult life in Paris; there is no reasonable explanation of how any of these writers' ideas might have spread among, let alone influenced, the overwhelmingly illiterate population that took up arms. Literacy among the Christians of Belgrade province on the eve of autonomy (granted in 1829) is estimated to have been less than 0.5 percent, and of all the Serbian notables who met to discuss terms of reconciliation with the sultan in 1807, only one could read.[57] Literacy was less rare among Greeks, but in both ethnic groups it was concentrated in populations outside Ottoman territory. Of the Greek books published by subscription between 1749 and 1832, only 7 percent went to subscribers in lands that were to form part of independent Greece.[58] As in

[56] See, for example, Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, 145–46, 173–74; Ivan T. Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, 2003); Bernard Lewis, "The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey," *Journal of World History* 1 (1953): 105–25; Maria Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism," *Slavic Review* 64 (2005): 140–64.

[57] Ivo Lederer, "Nationalism and the Yugoslavs," in *Nationalism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Peter Sugar (Seattle, 1969 [repr. 1994]), 402 n. 14. A few scholars of nationalism in the Balkans admit that evidence for its existence prior to the creation of the nation-state is thin. See, for example, Carole Rogel, "The Wandering Monk and the Balkan National Awakening," in *Nationalism in a Non-National State: The Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. William Haddad and William Ochsenwald (Columbus, OH, 1977), 79.

[58] Richard Clogg, "The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire," in *Christians and*

Belgrade, those who took up arms were not intellectuals: they were illiterate peasants and their almost equally unlettered local leaders reacting to imminent existential threats. Nationalism would gain significant numbers of converts only following the establishment of post-Ottoman states.

Only one explicitly nationalist group played a recognizable role in the uprisings: the *Philike Hetairia* (the Friendly Society, whose goal was liberation of the Greeks—but whose definition of "Greek" essentially meant "Orthodox Christian"). This society, founded by three failed merchants in the Greek diaspora (in Odessa) and having a membership weighted toward the mercantile middle class, also was the only plausible example of class interest in action. Although part of the diaspora, it laid plans for national liberation uprisings, but none of its schemes raised a meaningful response in Ottoman domains. The lack of an audience for Hetairist ideology can be seen in the society's attempt in 1821 to start a revolution in Moldavia and Wallachia. The call to arms, addressed to all "Hellenes" and recalling the exploits of classical heroes, left the Orthodox population unmoved. The reaction of a military leader in the Greek revolt, upon being complimented by a touring philhellene, best expresses the presumably dominant view in the principalities as well: "What Achilles . . . are you talking about? Did his musket kill many?"[59] The most significant achievements of the band of Hetairist revolutionaries who entered Moldavia from Russia were the massacre of Muslims and Jews in towns of Moldavia and the execution of Tudor Vladimirescu, the head of a more significant armed movement in Wallachia similar to that of Belgrade's Serbs. Vladimirescu's uprising seems to have been only slightly more coherent than a jacquerie, but one of the few facts recognized in most accounts of the movement is that he corresponded repeatedly with Ottoman officials, assuring them of his loyalty to the sultan and his desire to work with them to curb the excesses of (Christian) notables who ignored the law. His correspon-

Jews in the Ottoman Empire, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York, 1982), 192.

[59] Richard Clogg, "The Greeks and Their Past," in *Historians as Nation Builders: Central and Southeastern Europe*, ed. Dennis Deletant and Harry Hanak (Basingstoke, 1988), 24. On the proclamations made in the principalities, see Hakan Erdem, "'Do Not Think of the Greeks as Agricultural Labourers': Ottoman Responses to the Greek War of Independence," in *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*, ed. Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (Abingdon, 2005), 78. An American tourist heard a vague account of Velestinlis on his way to Greece in 1806 but deemed the contemporary Greeks utterly asleep to their forebears' illustrious history. R. A. McNeal, ed., *Nicholas Biddle in Greece: The Journals and Letters of 1806* (University Park, PA, 1993), 82–83.

dence led to his torture and execution by the Hetairists, who were soon thereafter crushed by an Ottoman expedition.[60]

In the Morea the Hetairists played a minor role prior to the outbreak of the revolt, helping to organize networks of conspirators. After the revolt erupted, the flimsiness of the ideological bond between the expatriate bourgeois hellenes and the tough peasants and highlanders who staged the uprising is indicated by their tendency to fight among themselves whenever Ottoman pressure relented. These struggles culminated in 1831 with the shooting of the would-be president of the new Republic of Greece, Ioannis Kapodistrias, an expatriate formerly in the Russian diplomatic service who had spent the years of the revolt in Geneva. Kapodistrias's assassination by a member of a notable family of the Morea that had been heavily involved in fighting against the Ottoman order led to a neutral compromise, the importation of a German prince to establish a monarchy. The uprising was a grassroots movement spearheaded by local leaders of the mainly Christian population, not a movement under a centralized "national" leadership, and middle-class Hetairist nationalism struggled to appropriate it even after independence had been won.[61]

Ottoman historical accounts also need to reconsider the problems of the empire's last century of existence. The empire's non-Muslims merit more careful consideration as integral elements of the Ottoman milieu, rather than being portrayed subtly or overtly as the empire's saboteurs, a fifth column irreconcilable to an Ottoman future.[62] Much effort in recent decades has gone into overturning the once-dominant "decline thesis," which portrayed the empire as decaying inexorably since the death of Sultan Süleyman I "the Magnificent" (r. 1520–66); this revisionist trend was overdue, but Ottomanists should not overlook the evident problems that crippled the empire in the early nineteenth century. While it is easy to blame the European powers that made war on the Ottomans for the extended crisis in which the empire found itself from 1792 to 1839, it is important to recognize that domestic discontents

[60] See, for example, E. D. Tappe, "The 1821 Revolution in the Rumanian Principalities," in *The Struggle for Greek Independence*, ed. Richard Clogg (Hamden, CT, 1973), 135–49; Stavrianos, *Balkans since 1453*, 345–46; Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 1:208–13; Georges Castellan, *Histoire des Balkans (XIVe–Xxe siècle)* (Paris, 1991), 280–83. For an earlier example of a Wallachian local notable who rose up in support of the sultan, see Virginia Aksan, "Whose Territory and Whose Peasants? Ottoman Boundaries on the Danube in the 1760s," in Anscombe, *Ottoman Balkans*, 76–77.

[61] Panagiotis Stathis, "From Klephts and Armatoloi to Revolutionaries," in Anastasopoulos and Kolovos, *Ottoman Rule*, 177–78.

[62] Examples of such reconsideration include Philliou, *Biography of Empire*, and Ayşe Ozil, "The Structure of Community: Orthodox Christians of the Ottoman Empire in Northwestern Asia Minor, c. 1860–1910" (PhD thesis, University of London, 2009).

brought the sultanate to its lowest point—and that such discontents were not simply the result of Muslim conservatism, Christian nationalism, or economic self-interest. Istanbul failed to govern as it had historically, and its lack of strength, and then interest, in ensuring basic justice lost it the support of much of its population. Revolts in the empire's most important region, the European provinces, forced the imperial authorities to recast radically a crippled political system.

Realization of the importance of Ottoman governmental failings, however, should not wholly obscure Christian Europe's contributions to the empire's problems. The major challenge facing the late Ottoman Empire was not the need to conciliate hostile Christian nations yearning to be free, nor was it the Eastern question (how to prevent a great-power crisis sparked by the collapse of "the Sick Man of Europe"). It was the "Western question": how to make the empire strong enough to withstand the threat from Christian Europe.[63] The empire only lost territory to European intervention, never to domestic insurrection, and it died only in the lethal chaos of the First World War, which also killed or scarred every other combatant state in Europe.[64] The Balkan revolutionary age marked the point of the empire's greatest weakness in its struggle to find new means of meeting the European threat. The resort to arms by multiple groups in the Balkans, long misinterpreted as the result of the liberalism, nationalism, and class interest often highlighted in accounts of Europe's "age of revolution," played a crucial part in creating the lasting image of the empire as the Sick Man of Europe. Once established, this image endured despite the pace of change inaugurated by the Tanzimat program.

Our depiction of Europe in the nineteenth century needs to recognize more clearly this political dynamism in Ottoman lands and to reflect the more nuanced assessment of the continent's southeast that has been presented here. Seen to be in, but not really of, Europe, the Balkans should not be dismissed as the home of political sclerosis, prickly nationalism, and class-ridden backwardness. It was not Ruritania.[65] In regard to all three conceptions, the story of the Balkans presented in this article suggests that this part of Europe followed its own path of development, oriented fundamentally toward Istanbul rather than toward other parts of the continent, but that ultimately the divide between this path and those followed elsewhere was less stark than is

[63] This point is made strongly in Nazan Çiçek, *The Young Ottomans: Turkish Critics of the Eastern Question in the Late Nineteenth Century* (London, 2010).

[64] For further discussion of the weakness of domestic agitation in the empire, see Frederick Anscombe, "On the Road Back from Berlin," in *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 and the Treaty of Berlin*, ed. M. Hakan Yavuz and Peter Sluglett (Salt Lake City, UT, 2011), 550–55.

[65] It was this pattern of condescension and dismissal that Maria Todorova targeted in *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford, 1997), the most noted book on southeastern Europe to appear in the last two decades.

often imagined. They progressed at least in parallel, if not toward convergence. The absence of nationalism in the Balkans is one sign of possible convergence, because recent studies of both post-Napoleonic western Europe and of Habsburg lands, the region long thought to have been just as dominated by separatist nationalism as the Ottoman Balkans, have seriously weakened old notions of the strength of nationalism unleashed by the French Revolution.[66] Ottoman Europe is the most significant surviving reservoir of examples—notably the Serbian and Greek nations depicted in Balkan historiography—to be cited in works of "primordialist" studies in nationalism that stress the ancient lineage of national identities.[67] Texts examining class-based revolutionary forces, of which Eric Hobsbawm's *Bandits* is perhaps the most renowned example, also draw upon tales of Balkan peasant resistance traditions that supposedly culminated in liberation struggles such as the Serbian revolt.[68] The account presented here should undermine Balkan examples cited as the evidence of nationalism or of class movements that now appears lacking elsewhere on the continent.

It is in the development of state power and the nature of state-society relations, however, that possible convergence with revolutionary and restoration Europe seems most intriguing. Protests over unjust rule by absolutist monarchs recurred across much of late eighteenth-century Europe, as governments everywhere on the continent came under critical pressure to strengthen their military preparedness. Louis XV (1715–74) of France attempted to adopt the role of enlightened despot, trying to impose unquestioning obedience in

[66] See, for example, Michael Broers, *Europe after Napoleon: Revolution, Reaction and Romanticism, 1814–1848* (New York, 1996), and David Laven and Lucy Riall, eds., *Napoleon's Legacy: Problems of Government in Restoration Europe* (Oxford, 2000). On Habsburg and post-Habsburg nationalism, see Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics 1848–1948* (Princeton, NJ, 2002); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, 2006); and Maria Bucur and Nancy Wingfield, eds., *Staging the Past: The Politics of Commemoration in Habsburg Central Europe, 1848 to the Present* (West Lafayette, IN, 2001).

[67] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London, 1991); Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997); and Aviel Roshwald, *The Endurance of Nationalism: Ancient Roots and Modern Dilemmas* (Cambridge, 2006). Hobsbawm, *Age of Revolution*, 146, 171–73, sees in the Greek revolt both the most successful revolutionary project of radical liberalism and the only serious middle-class nationalist movement outside the modern bourgeois world of the time.

[68] Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (London, 2000). Ottoman records belie the folkloric tradition of peasant resistance, but the myth of peasant "social banditry" as a significant force still surfaces. On Ottoman evidence, see Fikret Adanir, "Heiduckentum und Osmanische Herrschaft," *Südost-Forschungen* 41 (1982): 43–116. For the importance still given to the myth see, for example, Cathie Carmichael, *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans: Nationalism and the Destruction of Tradition* (London, 2002), chap. 3.

fiscal, administrative, and military affairs, and succeeded only in destroying his legitimacy as protector of justice; his son Louis XVI suffered for this in 1789 when state finances, impoverished by the wars of the eighteenth century, required him to convene the estates-general to authorize new taxes.[69] The Habsburg Joseph II (1780–90), eager to emulate the perceived absolutist model of Austria's rival, Prussia, also tried to impose rationalizing, state-strengthening reforms on his various lands. Joseph raised such antagonism over the quashing of traditional rights that shortly before his demise he had to rescind most of these measures to forestall full revolt in domains such as the Kingdom of Hungary. The Ottoman experience under Selim III and especially Mahmud II echoes these examples, from the military motor of reform to the reaction against despotic rule—and even to the opportune death of the polarizing ruler. As in the French and Habsburg cases, it was left to later governing authorities to rebuild Ottoman state strength by means more sustainable than royal absolutism.

Napoleonic France set the standard for much of Europe. Napoleon created a continental power out of the ruins of revolutionary France in part by building an unprecedentedly thorough bureaucracy, buttressed by a strong domestic security system. These arms of the state proved effective in controlling and, when needed, mobilizing the human and material resources of France, aided by nationalism and the ideal of the revolution (*liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*). Easing the population's acceptance of growing state power was elaboration of a unified "national" law code, which established the rules by which the state operated. Napoleon indeed viewed his civil code as his "greatest victory." The Ottoman Empire had little direct exposure to revolutionary-Napoleonic France, but Istanbul's response to the failure of its own experiment in royal absolutism bore similarities to state development in France. The most striking aspect of the Tanzimat period was the emphasis placed upon legislation to regulate the state and the citizenry, and the creation of an empire-wide court system to apply the new legal standards. The sources of new law were distinctly Ottoman, but their purpose resembled that of the Code Napoléon: legal defenses for imperial standardization and improved efficiency of state activity, and, just as important, sufficient protection for all within the country suspicious of growing state demands. This last element was particularly important, because in the empire the multiplicity of confessions and ethnicities hindered any full shift from "the religion and the dynasty (state)" to "the

[69] Julian Swann, "'Silence, Respect Obedience': Political Culture in Louis XV's France," in *Cultures of Power in Europe during the Long Eighteenth Century*, ed. Hamish Scott and Brendan Simms (Cambridge, 2007), 225–48. Swann cites (240) a *parlementaire* who protested absolutism by averring that France was not the Ottoman Empire, and his property, liberty, profession, and honor could not be subject to royal whim.

Ottoman nation" as the main principle of public life. The other striking aspect of the post-1839 empire was the growth of a modern bureaucracy, from perhaps 1–2,000 in 1800 (and not much more in 1839) to 35,000 in 1900. With this growth in the state's administrative power came the construction of a distinct domestic security system, reflecting regime awareness after the decades of revolutionary unrest that public opinion could not be ignored.[70]

In Muslim as in Christian Europe, revolt made popular participation in politics irreversible, and with this came political modernity. While politics as "public affairs" may have originated in popular protest against state oppression, its continuity was ensured by the irreversibility of growth in regime demands for money and men to serve the military. Only the efficient bureaucratic state, supported but also bound by law, could survive the escalation of domestic as well as international pressures fed by military change. Each state may have evolved from distinct roots, but, in East as in West, in modernity they converged.

[70] For a summary of the reform period, see Findley, "Tanzimat." On the organization of surveillance, see Cengiz Kırlı, "Kahvehaneler ve Hafiyeler: 19. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Osmanlı'da Sosyal Kontrolu," *Toplum ve Bilim* 83 (2000): 58–79, and "Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," in *Public Islam and the Common Good*, ed. Armando Salvatore and Dale Eickelman (Leiden, 2004), 80–89.