

The New Order and Its Enemies:  
Opposition to Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1789 – 1807

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is a study of the New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*) army and the opposition it triggered during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807). It aims to present an alternative perspective on the Ottoman military reform and its implications for the course of the imperial transformation. It hopes to contribute to the social history of Ottoman military reform through an investigation of the challenges the state faced as well as the motivations of political, military, economic, and social groups in opposing the new army.

This period represented a moment of crisis of great magnitude for the Ottoman imperial center. However, in military and financial terms, it was also a moment of reconfiguration and restructuring of Ottoman state power. Constant contestation and continuous renegotiation of state power occurred between the state elites and various societal actors. These actors did not necessarily have a fixed position on military reform. In fact, the military reform measures were part of the bargaining process and both the state elites and different political actors shifted their positions depending on the circumstances. This study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the causes of resistance by various groups such as the janissaries, local notables, and common people. It argues that their resistance shaped the possibilities of the Ottoman military reform by challenging the centralized, rationalized, disciplined, and bureaucratic new logic of the modern state.

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*To My Family*



## Introduction

This dissertation is an examination of the New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*) army and the opposition it triggered during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807). By undertaking a critical historical reevaluation, the study aims to present an alternative perspective on the Ottoman military reform and its implications for the course of the imperial transformation. It hopes to contribute to the social history of Ottoman military reform through an investigation of the challenges the state faced as well as the motivations of various socio-economic and political groups in opposing the new army.

One of the main assumptions of this project is that once we manage to consider this period free of predetermined and anachronistic explanations, we can see that the Ottoman reform efforts broadly defined could have evolved in a variety of directions. That is to say, a closer look at the New Order and the opposition to it reveals a picture far more complicated than the conventionally linear as well as binary explanations have allowed. The strongest tendency has been to frame this period within the Ottoman modernization story in such a way that the possibilities for the state elites as well as various actors such as the janissaries were very limited. The “reform or perish” paradigm told us that the Ottomans had no choice but to keep up with the “rise of the West.” It further argued that their reform efforts were doomed from the beginning as is clear in the eventual collapse of the empire.

This argument assumed that what needed to be done in terms of military reform was clear given the proven “western superiority” in the battlefield. There was in fact a series of consequential changes taking place in Western Europe in terms of military

technology, discipline, tactical organization, and regularized drill.<sup>1</sup> However, these changes resulted from the broader development toward commercialization of the war making enterprise. Strengthening of the relationship between financial profit and military adventures was the crucial characteristic that made innovations possible and sustainable in the long run. Furthermore, regular tax income allowed the disorderly bands of fighting groups to be brought under the control of the central government through predictable taxes.<sup>2</sup>

While the Ottoman center's employment of the notables in wars could be likened to private profiteering from wars in the West, the center could no longer offer lucrative war contracts in the eighteenth century in the wake of the disastrous wars against the Austrians and particularly the Russians. The state's regular income from tax collection was not sufficient to remedy the situation. In other words, the Ottoman state's financial ability to make wars profitable and desirable enterprises was compromised. Furthermore, the main challenge against the Ottomans did not come from the Western European powers but the Eastern European powers: Austria and Russia. Thus, the argument that the Ottomans failed to appreciate western superiority in the battlefield and to adopt the necessary innovations falls short of explaining the broader conditions that account for the effectiveness of military innovations.

The Western superiority in battlefield argument does not take into account what military reform meant for the Ottomans in the first place. It argues that the Ottomans were simply behind their contemporaries in the West and they failed miserably in

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<sup>1</sup> McNeill credits Maurice of Nassau, Prince of Orange with "developing modern routines of army drill." William Hardy McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since A.D. 1000* (University of Chicago Press, 1984), 126.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

implementing reforms mainly because of cultural opposition from a traditional society, which explained their eventual demise. This did not allow much room for the relevance of Ottoman conceptualization of their own problems as well as their solutions. It is crucial to appreciate how the Ottomans perceived of the threats facing them because their conception of military reform would necessarily differ depending on their threat perceptions. That is to say, if the Ottomans perceived a “rising West” that threatened their very existence, their response would be different than if they regarded their problems only in terms of military efficiency. In the absence of a clear understanding of how the Ottomans defined their problems, we cannot appreciate the nature of reform measures they implemented nor can we arrive at the reasons why there was continuous yet ever-evolving opposition from within diverse societal groups.

This was clearly a moment of crisis especially in military and financial terms but it was also a moment of reconfiguration and restructuring of the Ottoman state power. Renegotiation was happening between and among state elites as well as between the state elites and various political actors. These actors did not necessarily have a fixed position on the Ottoman’s army’s military reform. In fact, the military reform measures were part of the bargaining process and both the state elites and different political actors often shifted their positions depending on the political circumstances. It is crucial for us to have an in-depth understanding of the reasons for resistance from various groups such as the janissaries, local notables, and common people, as their resistance shaped the possibilities of the Ottoman military reform.

When the state elites set out to build a new army alongside the old one and introduced measures to reform the existing forces, they did not readily submit to a single

model imported from elsewhere. At the same time, the logic of these measures included some of the features of the rationalizing and disciplining character of the emerging modern state.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the Ottomans were re-producing hallmarks of the modern state without necessarily directly copying the West in a non-western context. For instance, when the Ottomans attempted to undertake reform measures, such as creating a dedicated budget for the new army or assigning one pay ticket per one janissary, they were in fact employing the very logic of fiscal rationalization and discipline as well as *legibility*.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the new logic of the state now sought to *monopolize* violence<sup>5</sup> in its struggle against and at the expense of the regional power brokers. The notables' resistance was thus compounded because they both sought to rebuff the center and to protect their overlapping interests with various societal groups.

The conventional view has been to argue that the Ottomans were following the West but they failed because they did not go far enough and that their conservative society did not allow them to introduce *modernity*. I would argue that the Ottomans were employing modern forms of power, which provoked resistance by the society not because of a religious conservative backlash but because the new logic of the modern forms of power violated the local and regional interests of notables, communal rights of the common people, and the sense of group solidarity of the janissaries among others. Resistance could occur in a variety of more direct ways such as open revolt and more

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<sup>3</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : the Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992).

subtle ways such as tax evasion.<sup>6</sup> The overlapping of a broad and diverse group of interests created a common front against the creeping new logic of the modern state. Contestation by these groups was neither uniform nor purely ideological. For example, there were significant regional differences among the janissaries, which make it difficult to attribute a certain attitude to all of the janissaries. Their position vis-à-vis the new army could vary depending on the local political conditions they were engaged in. This again brings us back to the importance of appreciating the magnitude of local grievances that matched up with the interests of notables and janissaries. In the face of such broad discontent, the logic of the modern state had to adjust itself to the conditions and it was redefined as a result of societal resistance.

In this dissertation, I have utilized contemporary histories, archival documents, and secondary sources. In terms of archival sources, the documents come mainly from the imperial rescripts (*hatt-ı hümayun*) collection located in the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives in Istanbul. To gain a broader regional comparative perspective, I used documents from regions as far apart as Vidin and Aleppo. Imperial rescripts are rich and diverse sources. They are mainly reports and correspondences sent by the government officials addressed to the sultan. One finds the sultan's brief remarks on the documents and they are quite telling in some instances, as they reflect urgency as well as frustration in the sultan's tone.

Officials appointed from the center often either exaggerated the threats to receive stronger support from the center. Officials also downplayed threats and risks when they tried to appear as fulfilling their tasks efficiently. I have tried to note both instances in the

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<sup>6</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

dissertation. The documents cited in the bibliography are only a fraction of what is available and they await further scholarly scrutiny to arrive at a more comprehensive perspective on this period.

Chapter 1, “Historiography on the New Order and Its Opponents,” provides a critical overview of various theoretical frameworks and historiographical traditions. In an attempt to focus on how particular intellectual, historiographical and political concerns have come to shape our understanding of the New Order, the discussion in the first chapter tries to unpack some of the deeply entrenched and long held views. The main rationale for this chapter is to complicate the story first by exposing the inadequacy of the historiographical frameworks and theories that continue to dominate our perception of the New Order.

Chapter 2, “The Meaning of the New Order,” focuses on the factors that led to the Ottoman elites’ conclusion that they needed to reform their military in the first place. How the Ottomans diagnosed the problem at hand is crucial in understanding the very solutions they sought. Whether this was simply a matter of adopting a given model, whose effectiveness and adequacy had been proven, is a central concern of this chapter. The way in which the elites conceptualized the political, military, and economic state of affairs reveals much about their reform proposals (*layihalar*), which are also discussed extensively in this chapter.

Chapter 3, “The New Order Army,” investigates the implementation of the New Order army as well as the problems it faced in the meantime. By exploring the financing mechanisms and manpower resources, this chapter scrutinizes whether the creation of the new army escaped the handicaps of the old army. It also seeks to answer what kind of

problems the new enterprise met in trying to harness financial resources and overcome recruitment challenges. This chapter addresses the issue of resistance against the establishment of the new army, a theme discussed in the last two chapters more broadly. In this chapter, only the resistance to recruitment and expansion of the new army are discussed to study the direct impact of the efforts to finance and man the new army.

Chapter 4, “Janissary Soldiers and Social Networks Resist the New Order,” discusses the ways in which the Ottoman elites attempted to integrate the janissaries into the new army through establishing order and discipline among them. Whether the central government was able to enlist the janissaries in the war effort through financial incentives is also explored. The relationship between the government’s inability to marshal large sums of money for the military and lack of janissary mobilization is also analyzed. Furthermore, the janissaries’ complex relations with the broader societal groups are outlined. This chapter helps us understand why disciplining and rationalizing the janissaries may have proven difficult.

Chapter 5, “Local Notables and the End of the New Order,” attempts to demonstrate the connection between the local notables and the eventual failure of the New Order. Local notables are discussed in regard to their politics vis-à-vis the imperial center but also in terms of their ability to shape the local and regional dynamics to their advantage. In a time of great disorder, the Balkans provides a case study of how the center’s willingness to introduce military reform played itself out. Paspanoğlu’s activities is discussed at length as his relationship to the janissaries and other local bandit groups gives us clues as to how the opposition to the new army may have transpired. This

discussion furthers our understanding of the emergence of the alliance that ended Selim III's reign in May 1807.



## Chapter 1 – Historiography on the New Order and Its Opponents

### *Conventional Wisdom*

This chapter provides a discussion of historiography on the New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*) and the opposition to it by various social, economic, and military groups. Reorganization of the existing army and establishment of new army units alongside the old ones were met with opposition from various groups for different yet often overlapping reasons. The New Order's detrimental effects triggered resistance and opposition from various social groups, who often had conflicting interests among themselves. Few studies deal with the New Order as a *social* phenomenon. Most studies focus on the military and political implications of the establishment of the New Order army during the reign of Selim III. Furthermore, the majority of historical studies on the New Order suffer from inherent deficiencies of the modernization and decline paradigms, which offer dichotomous frameworks. These theories were commonly applied to many other subjects in Ottoman historiography and revisionist Ottoman historians have been trying to grapple with their legacy. This kind of historiography's detrimental impact has been that the New Order is presented in an exclusively positive light and opposition to it from broad segments of society is often disregarded.

As will be discussed in this chapter, much of this was the result of anachronistic approaches by modern historians as well as their ideological priorities. Historians applied the parameters of the political struggles of their time to the New Order. There was an effort to trace back the roots of the ideologically tainted "modernity vs. tradition" struggle. The New Order, in that sense, represented the beginnings of a new era, where

the modern enlightened elites failed to lead the empire towards modernity because of their defeat by the conservatives in a predominantly Muslim society. The backdrop of this framework was the question of whether Islamic societies could be modern in the first place. By scrutinizing historiography as such, I aim to demonstrate that the bulk of the discussions on the New Order prevent us from capturing the complexities of the reform efforts and the broader society's response.

There is a perceptible imbalance between the amount of studies on the New Order and those on the opposition. While the specific measures implemented in the context of the New Order is studied much more in depth, albeit mostly military and political aspects of it, the opposition to the New Order is often associated with regressive forces and is often dismissed as reactionary. The New Order is hailed as a progressive attempt at reforming the empire's institutions. In contrast, the resistance to the New Order, which often came from a broad variety of societal groups, is reduced to a primitive self-interested approach of the resisting groups. While the Ottoman elites were honorable in their efforts to implement true reforms, the backward looking societal groups prevented the society from adapting to change. As we look closer, however, we see that neither picture does justice to the complexities of this period's deeper transformations in state-society relations.

Revisionist historians of our day have to rely on information and analyses provided by the early Turkish republican historians (e.g. İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı)<sup>7</sup> and

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<sup>7</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devleti Teşkilâtından: Kapukulu Ocakları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1943).

court historians (e.g. Es'ad Pasha),<sup>8</sup> neither of which groups is immune to prejudices and ideological struggles of their time. This is unavoidable to some extent, as historians in general always have to tackle these kinds of problems in historical analysis. Our purpose in this chapter is not to show whether these works are biased but rather in what ways they might have influenced and defined our understanding of the New Order and the opposition.

In evaluating the approaches of the early Turkish republican historians, the ideological interpretations seem easier to identify, as there exist many studies on the secularist and nationalist agenda of the new republican historiography. As we go further back in history, however, the Ottoman historians who supply much of the information on the New Order are concerned with ideological confirmation of their own theories as well. There exists a tendency in Ottoman historiography to treat contemporary works as more immune to ideological distortions and closer to historical reality. Not only were they closer in time to the events that took place but also they can be supported through the use of archival documents.

Revisionist historiography scrutinizes court historians just as much, if not more, both because they often reflected the government's official view and they produced overwhelmingly elitist perspectives on societal movements. Today's revisionist historians have to often search for a glimpse of an indication of social movements in such histories. Yet, on the subject of the New Order, we still need to rely on court historians and classic nationalist narratives of the early republican historians. Thus, in this chapter, a discussion of the approaches of Ottoman court historians and commentators will be provided in

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<sup>8</sup> Mehmed Es'ad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer: Yeniçeriliğin Kaldırılmasına Dair*, trans. Mehmed Arslan (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2005).

addition to those of republican and modern historians, who built and applied their theories upon the data provided by the Ottoman court historians and official documents. This discussion will shed some light on how the modern approaches inherited elitist prejudices of the Ottoman court historians in addition to their own ideological ones.

### ***Legacy of the Decline Theory***

Delving into a comprehensive discussion of the decline and modernization theories and their shortcomings would be a redundant and perhaps an impossible task for the purposes of this chapter. These theories have lost much of their relevance as analytical frameworks in the way they were prescribed in the 1950s and afterwards thanks to many revisionist historians in the post-1980s.<sup>9</sup> Yet, the legacy of the decline and modernization theories is still pertinent to the historiography on the New Order and its opponents. Many of the assumptions inherited from these theories about the nature of the measures implemented in the name of the New Order and the reasons for resistance to these measures survive. Hence, a discussion of these theories as they relate to the New Order is necessary. Only by recognizing some of these influences will we be able to situate late eighteenth and early nineteenth century changes in a framework that does justice to the time period and its own dynamics as opposed to a rigid linear progression towards an ultimately inevitable collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

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<sup>9</sup> For a broad outline of major historiographical approaches in Ottoman historiography since the 1950s, see Cem Emrence, “Three Waves of Late Ottoman Historiography,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 41, no. 2 (2007): 137–151.

The so-called decline theory can be cited as one of the most debated issues among Ottoman historians in terms of historiography.<sup>10</sup> The decline theory argues that the Ottoman state exercised a great degree of control over the lands it ruled during the heyday of the empire until around the end of the sixteenth century. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire enjoyed its ‘Golden Age’ as it reached the zenith of its power in terms of its imperial institutions, military and economic power, and large territory. The internal disturbances and chaotic situation created by the *Celali* rebellions in late sixteenth century, according to this argument, indicated that a general decline in the imperial institutions was already underway by the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Military defeats in the “post-classical” era and rise of the local notables later in the eighteenth century were some of the signs of the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

This decline would necessitate the reform efforts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Everyone did not appreciate this obvious fact though. Despite the good-willed efforts of few enlightened reformer bureaucrats and rulers (such as Selim III), the Empire was destined for its eventual collapse because the Ottoman recognition of the *superiority* of the West arrived too late.<sup>12</sup> Due to this late appreciation of Western supremacy

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<sup>10</sup> For a brief review of the literature on the “decline” and modernization theories, see Donald Quataert, “Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes Towards the Notion of ‘Decline’,” *History Compass* 1 (2003): 1–9. For a review of the decline literature of the earlier centuries, see Douglas A. Howard, “Ottoman Historiography and the Literature of ‘Decline’ of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” *Journal of Asian History* 22 (1988): 52–77.

<sup>11</sup> See also Halil İnalcık, “The Ottoman State: Economy and Society,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 11–409.

<sup>12</sup> For a classic formulation of the theory, see Bernard Lewis, “Some Reflections on the Decline of the Ottoman Empire,” *Studia Islamica* 9 (1958): 111–127.

(evidenced by the European military's success), the only remaining question for Ottomans was whether and how they could actually catch up with the West. In fact, this theory had its firm roots in the eighteenth century European intellectual tradition, which argued that the eighteenth century in the Orient represented an "era of political and societal decay and intellectual stagnation."<sup>13</sup>

The decline theory as such and its application to the Ottoman context have widely been criticized and its basic assumptions have been closely scrutinized. In terms of historiography, this was a rigidly linear perception of history that confined any Ottoman effort at modernization as an inherently futile attempt. The process of change had a single target, namely Western modernity and there was no room for hybridity or an alternative modernity. This inevitable *progress* towards Western norms and ideas was destined to triumph despite the *regressive* forces in society and any modifications along the way meant shirking the fundamental logic of change. By judging that the eventual collapse of the empire was evidence of earlier incapability to adopt and change, decline theory provided historians with a fundamentally anachronistic framework.

In addition to its anachronism, the decline theory prioritized political and military success by stripping social, economic, and cultural processes of their relevance for history. Economic, social, and cultural histories written on various regions of the Empire over the past several decades have emphasized *change* as an analytical category as opposed to *decline*.

Historians have debated some of the basic assumptions of the decline theory. In fact, the amount of revisionist discussions reached a point that Dana Sajdi now refers to

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<sup>13</sup> Jamal Malik, "Muslim Culture and Reform in 18th Century South Asia," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 13, no. 2 (2003): 229.

the existence of an “anti-declinist literature.” However, despite the rich criticisms leveled against the decline theory, it is still too early to declare the end of decline versus anti-decline debate.<sup>14</sup> As Sajdi notes, the declinist arguments are still being put forward<sup>15</sup> due in large part to the current post-9/11 political climate.<sup>16</sup> As a result, inquiring into the reasons why Islamic societies in general have failed to modernize has become quite popular.<sup>17</sup> While the Ottoman historians are in agreement to a large degree on the analytical shortcomings of the decline theory, they have yet to liberate<sup>18</sup> general histories on the Middle East from the baggage of the decline and modernization theories. Scarcity of such revisionist general histories results in repetition of the decline theory by non-Ottomanists who are interested in broader questions about imperial longevity and comparisons between early modern empires.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For an overview of the debate on the decline theory, see Dana Sajdi, “Decline, Its Discontents and Ottoman Cultural History: By Way of Introduction,” in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 1–40. See also Virginia H. Aksan, “Theoretical Ottomans,” *History and Theory* 47, no. February 2008 (2008): 109–122.

<sup>15</sup> Sajdi singles out Bernard Lewis as one scholar still insisting on the decline theory. Sajdi, “Decline, Its Discontents,” 26.

<sup>16</sup> There is resurgence in the “Islamophobic” literature especially in the U.S. and Europe. In an attempt to explain what they see as the conflict between Islam and the West, many writers (often in organized and concerted efforts) are resurrecting and promoting views that place Islam and the West in diametrically opposed positions. Surely, these positions are not equal to one another, as the West represents the more progressive and advanced civilization against the regressive Islamic cultures. Hence, it becomes legitimate to ask questions about the reasons for the backwardness and decline of Muslim societies in history.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Sajdi, “Decline, Its Discontents,” 38.

<sup>19</sup> For an example of this approach, see Manfred Pittioni, “The Economic Decline of the Ottoman Empire,” in *The Decline of Empires*, ed. Emil Brix, Klaus Koch, and Elisabeth

Ottoman historians have yet to produce narratives that provide a substitute for the decline theory. This has an important role in the continued utilization of the decline theory by non-Ottomanists. However, discussions of the decline theory do not take place solely because scholars are unaware of the accomplishments in the field of Ottoman history in terms of producing a discourse of change and transformation instead of decline. The decline theory has relevance conceptually, especially for scholars interested in exposition of the reasons for the disintegration of imperial structures. Since disintegration did actually take place, what were the causes of it? There seems to be a tension between trying to provide causes for the end of empires in a comparative perspective<sup>20</sup> and avoiding linear explanations culminating in the collapse of the empire and emergence of the modern Turkish republic,<sup>21</sup> especially because the latter perception would ignore growth in certain areas such as trade, manufacturing, and the strength of the local powerbrokers.

We cannot deny the fact that the Ottoman Empire as a political entity has disintegrated.<sup>22</sup> Yet, we also need to avoid some of the earlier scholarly perceptions such as to attribute cultural causes for the demise of the empire, to read Ottoman history only

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Vyslonzil (Wien, München: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik; Oldenbourg Verlag, 2001), 21–44.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Tilly, “How Empires End,” in *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires*, ed. Karen Barkey and M. Von Hagen (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997).

<sup>21</sup> Kemal Karpat, “The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 3 (1972): 243–281.

<sup>22</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “The Question of Ottoman Decline,” *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4, no. 1 (1998): 30–75.



through the eyes of the disgruntled critiques within the Ottoman elite,<sup>23</sup> and to privilege the Ottoman center's concerns and ideology by ignoring the vitality of the periphery as well as the non-elite groups. Hence, it may be premature to claim that the decline theory has lost all its relevance as a result of the proliferation of social and cultural histories produced during the last couple of decades largely because the field has a long way to go in producing general Ottoman histories free of declinist frameworks.

Social and cultural histories have shown the depth and richness of the institutions in transformation. They have shown that the apparent decline in the military and political realm did not necessarily translate into decline in other areas. What remains to be accomplished is to present a balanced picture of the Empire's declining political power while simultaneously showing how various institutions (such as a modern bureaucracy) may have thrived. Furthermore, it will have to be demonstrated that the triumph of these new institutions was not necessarily at the expense of the center.

It is not an easy task to reassert the decline theory without fundamental conceptual modifications that take into account the institutional and social transformations of the later centuries. Such a balancing act, namely explaining the imperial disintegration without ignoring the internal dynamics, flexibility, change, and growth seems imperative. This endeavor is especially crucial if we are to answer the question of how the Ottoman imperial structures did not survive at the end, despite their efforts to remain flexible and adaptable.<sup>24</sup> Rethinking how decline and growth happened

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<sup>23</sup> Bernard Lewis, "Ottoman Observers of Ottoman Decline," *Islamic Studies* 1 (1962): 71–87.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Barkey, "A Perspective on Ottoman Decline," in *Hegemonic Decline: Present and Past*, vol. XXVI-b, Political Economy of the World-System Annuals (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), 135–151.

in parallel may prove to be a more fruitful endeavor.<sup>25</sup> As Jane Hathaway points out, the majority of modern studies on the eighteenth century posited the eighteenth century as a “period when decline finally caught up with the empire ... decentralization finally won out over sporadic attempts at recentralization.”<sup>26</sup>

Historiography on the New Order also suffers from this idea of an inevitable decline and portrays the New Order as an effort that was *too little, too late* on the part of the Ottoman elite to *catch up*. Framing the decline in terms of military and political power along with increased centralization and fiscal rationalization (not necessarily positive developments for all segments of the society), for instance, could prevent us from presenting a distorted vision and overemphasizing the decline in all imperial institutions. The creation of the New Order army can be construed within the process of “adjustment of Ottoman methods of rule and the balance of power within the empire to changing circumstances”<sup>27</sup> instead of the imperial decline perspective, which hyper focuses on the center’s receding power.

The crucial mistake we need to avoid, however, is to take growth in one area (for instance, Janissaries’ increasing power in politics) and treat it as corruption or some sort of aberration, which was the view of various segments within the elites of the Ottoman government. The New Order historiography is full of narratives that depict the non-elite groups’ involvement in politics as an anomaly. This was precisely the viewpoint of the Ottoman court historians who wrote that the ideal order was being upset by the

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<sup>25</sup> Kafadar, “Question of Ottoman Decline,” 71.

<sup>26</sup> Jane Hathaway, “Rewriting Eighteenth-Century Ottoman History,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 19, no. 1 (2004): 46.

<sup>27</sup> Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: MJF Books, 1991), 250.

emergence of non-elite groups, such as the Janissaries, the *esnaf*, or even the notables. Later historians took this perception at face value without considering the idea that “elites and non-elites can be seen to participate in a cultural continuum.”<sup>28</sup>

The non-elite groups, especially within the context of the New Order narratives, were predominantly presented as troublemakers causing the decline of the state. This perception helped modern republican historians in constructing a narrative that presented these groups as regressive forces resisting the necessary changes and refusing to adapt to the needs of the time. There was, of course, a nuance involved in moving from the narrative of the “troublemakers” to that of the “regressive forces.” This shift in discourse was closely related to the secularist language and radical reform agenda of the early republican historiography.

The Ottoman court historians and the early republican historians agreed on the concept of decline, but their narratives differed in that the former focused on the upsetting of the Ottoman ideal order while the latter proposed a so-called historic struggle between progressive and regressive/conservative forces. For the Ottoman historians, societal groups were causing trouble and preventing the empire from returning to its supposed imperial glory back in the sixteenth century. For the early republican historians, there was no emphasis on past glory but instead on the present glorious revolutionary agenda of the new Turkish republic. They were much more focused on showing that what they considered to be the regressive forces of their own time were remnants of the troublemakers of the past, who had ostensibly inherited the task of hindering Turkey’s march towards modernity.

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<sup>28</sup> Hathaway, “Rewriting Eighteenth-Century Ottoman History,” 47.

### *A Military Society?*

One of the influences of the decline theory has to do with assumptions about the *military nature* and strength of the Ottoman state in its earliest stages and during its *Golden Age*. The relatively rapid expansion of the Ottoman state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was puzzling to historians.<sup>29</sup> How was it that the Ottomans were able to bring under their rule such varied territories in such a short time and sustain their rule for such a long time?<sup>30</sup> Among many answers given to this question, military discipline epitomized in a devoted military corps, symbolized by the Janissaries, scored highly.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the Ottomans owed their greatness to the janissaries.<sup>32</sup> Yet, since the Empire was no longer expanding territorially after the sixteenth century, it was concluded that the military capabilities of the Ottoman state must have been declining. Military losses experienced during the eighteenth century were deemed evidence of this decline long in the making. It was argued that because the Ottoman Empire owed its strength to its military nature, weakening of this essential feature would lead the Empire to its ultimate failure.

The idea that this was a society with clearly compartmentalized social classes attributes successes and failures to this essentially militaristic feature of the Ottoman

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<sup>29</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the historiography on the foundation of the Ottoman state, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Kafadar shows the degree to which modern nationalist concerns of the twentieth century historians have shaped the perception of the foundation of the Ottoman state.

<sup>30</sup> Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age, 1300-1600* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1973), 5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>32</sup> Arthur L. Horniker, "The Corps of the Janizaries," *Military Affairs*, 1944, 203.

society. Just as the Golden Age was due to the military strength of the Janissaries, it was only logical that decline of the Empire was also because of the military weakness of the army, i.e. the Janissaries. The portrayal of the Ottoman government as a two tier system (secular and religious powers working side by side in incredible harmony thanks to their clearly defined roles) where the Janissaries displayed an unprecedented level of selflessness, discipline, and commitment to the sultan himself contributed to a perception of the Janissaries as almost supra-human soldiers comparable to the guardians of Plato's Republic.<sup>33</sup>

This representation was not seriously challenged nor was it the subject of a critical scholarly debate.<sup>34</sup> Yet, it pervaded much of the idealized view of the janissaries in the classical age among modern historians.<sup>35</sup> Just as Plato had argued that the intermingling of the different classes in the Republic would lead to inferior forms of government,<sup>36</sup> the most fundamental institution in the Ottoman society would deteriorate in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries because of the janissaries' involvement in the economic and social spheres. The janissaries' relations with societal groups were thus seen as clear

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<sup>33</sup> Albert Howe Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent* (New York: AMS Press, Reprint of the 1913 ed. published by Harvard University Press, 1978).

<sup>34</sup> Norman Itzkowitz, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Realities," *Studia Islamica* 16 (1962): 73–94.

<sup>35</sup> William Hardy McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires, 1450-1800* (Washington, DC: American Historical Association, 1989), 34–36.

<sup>36</sup> Plato, *Republic*, trans. C. D. C. Reeve and G. M. A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 1992).

signs of deviation from the ideal order where the ruler and the ruled were strictly separate.<sup>37</sup>

The notion that the Ottoman state was actually able to maintain such a strict separation between the military classes (*askeri*) and the commoners (*reaya*)<sup>38</sup> during its heyday and that any movement between these two classes would be a violation of the ideal order is highly questionable to say the least. This perception fits well with Orientalist preconceptions about the nature of Islamic societies,<sup>39</sup> a discussion that cannot be dealt with extensively here. For our purposes, it should suffice to recall Roger Owen's critique of Gibb and Bowen's understanding of Ottoman society as an *Islamic* society that was divided between the rulers and the ruled.<sup>40</sup>

However, this does not mean that the idea of a strict separation between the ruling elite and society was a mere creation of the Orientalist historians. The viewpoint of the Ottoman court historians, who often shared the state-centered view of the Ottoman elite,

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<sup>37</sup> H. A. R. Gibb and Harold Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West: A Study of the Impact of Western Civilization on Moslem Culture in the Near East* (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1950).

<sup>38</sup> For a critique of the idea of a rigid "division between the ruler and the ruled," see Roger Owen, "The Middle East in the Eighteenth Century: An 'Islamic' Society in Decline? A Critique of Gibb and Bowen's *Islamic Society and the West*," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Societies)* 3, no. 2 (1976): 110–117. See also T. Asad and R. Owen, "The Critique of Orientalism: A Reply to Professor Dodd," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Societies)* 7, no. 1 (1980): 33–38.

<sup>39</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

<sup>40</sup> Owen asserts that such a conception was the product of the scholarship of the inter-war period when Gibb and Bowen prepared their work under the commissioning of Arnold Toynbee. Owen, "'Islamic' Society," 110–112. For a brief discussion of historiography on eighteenth century, see Karl K. Barbir, "The Changing Face of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century: Past and Future Scholarship," *Oriente Moderno* 1, no. XVIII (LXXIX) (1999): 253–267. See also Albert Hourani, "How Should We Write the History of the Middle East?," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 23, no. 2 (1991): 125–136.

has contributed immensely to this perception. Adoption of their narratives by later historians has often resulted in negligence of social groups including craftsmen, peasants, and women.<sup>41</sup> Even some of the earlier critics of the classic state-centered understanding of the Ottoman state-society dynamics were not immune from reproducing the supposedly rigid separation, as they interpreted the empire as essentially a feudal state. The military class with the exclusive right to bear arms was pitted against the producing class of peasants and farmers within a Marxist framework.<sup>42</sup> The idea of a strict separation between the military and non-military groups was thus maintained and even reproduced by historians.

The Ottoman ruling elite perceived the relations between the military and non-military groups in society as an anomaly contributing to the failures of the Ottoman state. The ideal order (if it ever existed) could only be maintained through a clear stratification of society. The Ottoman court historians' elitist and often self-serving rhetoric reflected their positions as Ottoman officials, who "subscribed to the Ibn Khaldunian notion that the ruler and his entourage should not engage in commerce or similar money-making

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<sup>41</sup> Adanır and Faroqhi calls for a "critical contextualization of the relevant authors" and their "major claims," which is sorely missing in the republican modernist historians' accounts who were more preoccupied with the ideological concerns of their time rather than a rigorous critique of the Ottoman court's chroniclers. Fikret Adanır and Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 6–7.

<sup>42</sup> John Haldon, "The Ottoman State and the Question of State Autonomy: Comparative Perspectives," in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, ed. Halil Berktaş and Suraiya Faroqhi (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 18–108.

activities.”<sup>43</sup> Blaming the janissaries and their relations with the society at large for the military failures of the Ottoman state fits well this ideological outlook.

Especially in a time period such as the late eighteenth century when imposition of new regulations and discipline needed to be justified, the idea of an ideal past epoch when there existed a clear stratification of society was used as a trope in the writings of Ottoman court historians. They spoke of a golden age when the military and non-military classes in the Ottoman society had supposedly remained within their own classes and avoided intermingling with each other. However, as we know well, the Ottoman elites themselves did not abide by this rule. For instance, they had no qualms about arming the Ottoman subjects, hence violating the alleged military versus non-military distinction, in the name of “protecting the common people from their *oppressors* (the *Celalis*)” in the 1590s.<sup>44</sup> This concept of justice, namely protecting the subjects from oppressors,<sup>45</sup> was employed even if it meant going against the ideal stratification of society. Political expediency required that the state use such an ideology to respond to the realities on the ground. In a similar vein, the eighteenth century court historians’ complaints about

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<sup>43</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, “Guildsmen Complain to the Sultan: Artisans’ Disputes and the Ottoman Administration in the 18th Century,” in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), 177.

<sup>44</sup> Boğaç A. Ergene, “On Ottoman Justice: Interpretations in Conflict (1600-1800),” *Islamic Law and Society* 8, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 82.

<sup>45</sup> Halil Berktaş argues that “justice” as an ideology was a universally utilized tool to maintain an “average rate of exploitation” of the peasant economy. See Halil Berktaş, “Three Empires and the Societies They Governed: Iran, India and the Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of Peasant Studies* 18, no. 3–4 (1991): 252.



mingling of the military and non-military classes as a cause of decline derive from their current political agendas rather than the realities of the Ottoman history.<sup>46</sup>

Among the historians who have questioned the existence of military and non-military separation, Cemal Kafadar has disputed the idea that the janissaries were ever in such an ideal state disconnected from society at large. He has shown that the alleged demarcating lines between the subjects (*reaya*) and the military (*askeri*) classes were far from rigid and the engagement of the military classes in the economic sphere need not be interpreted as a sign of corruption and decline of the Ottoman military institutions.<sup>47</sup> Even the sultan himself would occasionally violate this alleged rule that the state be separate from society.<sup>48</sup> Mingling of soldiers with local people of Istanbul as well as other provinces, especially during long periods of peace, was not a novel phenomenon peculiar to the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>46</sup> Hakan Erdem, “The Wise Old Man, Propagandist and Ideologist: Koca Sekbanbasi [sic] on the Janissaries, 1807,” *Individual, Ideologies and Society: Tracing the Mosaic of Mediterranean History* (2000): 153–177. It has recently been discovered that the treatise known as “Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi” actually belonged to the court historian Ahmed Vasıf Efendi. Kemal Beydilli, “Sekbanbaşı Risalesinin Müellifi Hakkında,” *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* 12 (2005): 221–224. See also Virginia H. Aksan, *The Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow, England: Longman/Pearson, 2007), 182 and Aksan’s footnote # 2.

<sup>47</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “On the Purity and Corruption of the Janissaries,” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* XV, no. 1991 (1991): 273–279. See also Cemal Kafadar, “Janissaries and Other Riffraff of Ottoman İstanbul: Rebels Without a Cause?,” in *Identity and Identity Formation in the Ottoman World: A Volume of Essays in Honor of Norman Itzkowitz* (Madison, Wisconsin: The Center for Turkish Studies at the University of Wisconsin & The University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 113–134.

<sup>48</sup> “For Muslim *reaya*, it was possible to be enrolled in the military by a special decree of the sultan if, as volunteers on the frontiers, they accomplished some outstanding act of courage. Nonetheless, the general principle was adhered to that each individual should remain in his own status group so that equilibrium in the state and society could be maintained.” İnalçık, “Economy and Society,” 17.

From a military history standpoint, janissaries' relations with the society at large raise some valid questions about their *efficiency* as a military corps. Historians find it difficult to avoid the janissary corps' presentation as a corrupt and decaying institution that once was free of corrupting influences of non-military activities.<sup>49</sup> After all, was it not this highly disciplined corps during the height of the Empire that secured victories for the state? The reason for the military losses must have had something to do with the Janissaries who no longer functioned as they used to. However, this cannot be identified as *the* cause of military failures, which resulted from a complex set of political, military, economic, and social reasons. For instance, Robert Zens charges "inefficiency and corruption that plagued the janissary corps" concluding from Virginia Aksan's reference to Baron de Tot's claim that only 10% of the 400.000 registered janissaries could be considered soldiers in wartime.<sup>50</sup>

It is true that the janissaries' extremely low participation in the war effort pose serious questions about military efficiency of the janissary corps. However, was the low participation of the janissaries in the military enterprise due to their inefficiency and corruption only? Deeper causes of this phenomenon have yet to be explained and they are related to broader socio-economic conditions in the late eighteenth century. The inefficiency and corruption was, at the same time, an effect of the Ottoman government's inability to conduct warfare as an attractive enterprise both socially and economically for the individual soldiers.

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<sup>49</sup> Kafadar, "On the Purity," 274.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Zens, "The Ayanlık and Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa of Vidin in the Age of Ottoman Social Change, 1791-1815" (PhD, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004), 262.

The corruption charge assumes an earlier ideal situation from which deviation occurred. It prevents us from understanding the larger janissary *phenomenon* with its economic and social implications for the Ottoman society as a whole because of the focus on the military efficiency of the janissaries. It also lacks a comparative perspective on the pre-modern armies that shared similar problems with regard to organizational capabilities, efficiency, and corruption. The Russian army, for instance, which the Ottomans found it difficult to deal with throughout the eighteenth century, suffered from corruption in their supply system, to cite only one problem area.<sup>51</sup> It is clear that we also need a comparative perspective in evaluating the nature of corruption and inefficiency in the eighteenth century to be able to identify the distinct qualities of the Ottoman army that may have pushed Ottoman elites toward reform of the janissaries.

Decline theory has provided historians with an account of the New Order that suffers from analytical problems such as anachronism, elitism, and reductionism among others. It has argued for the inevitability of decline, rigid social stratification between military and non-military groups, and janissaries as the responsible party for the ultimate collapse of the Ottoman Empire. It has failed to enrich our understanding of the New Order as one of the instances where the Ottoman society interacted and tried to engage with “modernity” as they experienced it in an attempt to produce their *authentic* version. Dismissing this experience with the narrow perspectives offered by the decline theory hampers a fuller understanding of the New Order and its opponents and ultimately fails to

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<sup>51</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “The One-Eyed Fighting the Blind: Mobilization, Supply, and Command in the Russo-Turkish War of 1768-1774,” *International History Review* 15, no. 2 (1993): 224.

account for the processes of change, adaptation, mutual recognition, and negotiation between the supporters and opponents of the New Order effort.

### ***Modernization Paradigm***

The decline paradigm often goes hand in hand with the so-called modernization paradigm. The modernization paradigm picks up where the decline paradigm leaves off. Since the military and political power of the empire had declined, now it was only natural that the Ottomans try to adopt and imitate the ways of the Western powers owing to their technological, economic, and military superiority. Before the implementation of the Western techniques of statecraft, there needed to be recognition on the part of the Ottomans that they were in fact behind their western counterparts. After all, “even if the industrial states of Europe were willing to share their military technology, the Muslim dynastic states could not have mastered the new skills without simultaneously changing their societies and their economies.”<sup>52</sup> The realization of Western superiority, however, did not come about for a long time and that it was only after the French Revolution that the Ottomans saw no choice but to imitate the West.<sup>53</sup> By then, salvaging the deteriorated state of affairs and turning the imperial decline around had become extremely difficult, if not impossible. Nevertheless, the impact of the West was an inherently progressive force

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<sup>52</sup> J. C. Hurewitz, “The Beginnings of Military Modernization in the Middle East: A Comparative Analysis,” *The Middle East Journal* (1968): 157.

<sup>53</sup> Aksan, “One-Eyed Fighting,” 224.

that helped the empire alter its archaic structures to evolve toward a modern nation state eventually.<sup>54</sup>

There were a few brave souls and western educated reformers to undertake this task of enlightened westernization and modernization of the imperial institutions. Highly privileging the Enlightenment ideals and the ideological impact of the French Revolution in modern times, historians presented Selim III and Mahmud II as the enlightened despots<sup>55</sup> trying to adhere to those ideals by instituting modern institutions. The enlightened bureaucrats these sultans' reforms created were considered beacons of change. However, the traditional Muslim society stood in the way of these good-willed sultans and enlightened bureaucrats by resisting their progressive reforms and delaying the necessary modernization of the imperial institutions.<sup>56</sup>

The so-called reform era (eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) would prove to be a long period of struggle between the reform-minded ruling elite and the traditional forces of society, i.e. the janissaries, the ulema etc. ultimately leading to emergence of secularism in an essentially Islamic society.<sup>57</sup> As Niyazi Berkes argued, “the impoverished social classes and estates were in common opposition to reform, irrespective of their original differences and antipathies, in order to maintain their parasitical status. Their primary opponents were the men who stood for reform, above all

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<sup>54</sup> Roderic H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990).

<sup>55</sup> Kemal Beydilli, “III. Selim: Aydınlanmış Hükümdar,” in *Nizam-ı Kadim'den Nizam-ı Cedid'e III. Selim Ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 27–57.

<sup>56</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>57</sup> Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964).

the rulers and secular minded statesmen who aimed at creating an effective, scientifically trained officer corps.”<sup>58</sup> Through casting the struggle as one between the reformists and conservatives and by reducing the opposition to reform to a single group seeking to retain their “parasitical” status, historians made an argument that projected the ideologically charged debates on secularism and capability of Islamic societies to modernize onto the historiography on the New Order. Furthermore, in discussions of modern Turkish history, the period under discussion here has often been treated as a prelude to Ottoman westernization and modernization in a teleological fashion.<sup>59</sup>

Intellectuals of the eighteenth century who were greatly concerned with the European advances were often presented as the harbingers of secularism in the preordained story of Turkish modernization. More careful consideration of such Ottoman intellectuals, such as İbrahim Müteferrika, has revealed that they were in fact in awe of the order and discipline of the European armies and virtually obsessed with the idea of *order*. Müteferrika, for instance, proposed that Ottomans reorganize their military on the model of the Europeans and Russians under Peter the Great while asserting Muslim superiority.<sup>60</sup> The presentation of Ottoman elite intellectuals as early enlightened secularists who were rebuffed by their conservative religious countrymen curtails the complex dynamics at work in the reform efforts of the eighteenth century and inhibits our ability to develop an alternative framework.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>59</sup> Sina Akşin, *Turkey from Empire to Revolutionary Republic: The Emergence of the Turkish Nation from 1789 to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

<sup>60</sup> Vefa Erginbaş, “Forerunner of the Ottoman Enlightenment: İbrahim Müteferrika and His Intellectual Landscape,” *Graduate School of Arts and Social Sciences*, 2005.

One of the arguments of modernization theory contributing to the perception of the New Order has to do with the nature of the Ottomans' relationship with the West. The Ottoman society's belonging to the Islamic world meant that it was supposed to be demarcated from the Western world and would not be influenced by it until it was confronted with the challenge of the West.<sup>61</sup> The problem with this approach, besides its Eurocentric bias, is that it assumes that the West influenced the Ottoman political, economic, social, and intellectual currents in a unidirectional manner;<sup>62</sup> suggesting, "change in the Ottoman Empire came from without, namely, from the West." According to this framework, Ottomans were simply *imitators* who "could not even appreciate their own backwardness."<sup>63</sup>

This perspective privileges political changes by ignoring mutual social and cultural exchanges as well as the Ottoman influence on the West. For instance, new studies show that Ottoman military music exerted strong influence on European court festivals.<sup>64</sup> The Ottoman military's influence on the European militaries remains an under researched area of study, inhibiting our ability to analyze mutual exchanges. As early as the sixteenth century, the Ottoman merchants were vehicles of similar economic and cultural exchanges with the West through their engagement in domestic and international

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<sup>61</sup> Owen, "'Islamic' Society," 112.

<sup>62</sup> Shirine Hamadeh, "Ottoman Expressions of Early Modernity and the 'Inevitable' Question of Westernization," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 63, no. 1 (March 1, 2004): 34.

<sup>63</sup> Donald Quataert, "Labor History and the Ottoman Empire, C. 1700-1922," *International Labor and Working-Class History* no. 60 (October 1, 2001): 96.

<sup>64</sup> Edmund A. Bowles, "The Impact of Turkish Military Bands on European Court Festivals in the 17th and 18th Centuries," *Early Music* 34, no. 4 (2006): 533–579.

trade.<sup>65</sup> Even at its inception, as Kafadar demonstrates, the Ottoman state emerged out of a deeply hybrid society with both Muslims and Christians as its foundational elements. The relationship between the early Ottomans and the Christians living in western Anatolia went beyond simple interaction between two distinct societies.<sup>66</sup> As the Ottoman state transformed into an empire, this multicultural and multiethnic character became even stronger and more structural. Arguing that this empire was essentially an Islamic empire, and therefore, isolated from the Christian West is to do injustice to history to say the least.

The Ottomans were neither hesitant nor incapable of adopting foreign technologies and to import foreign expertise whenever necessary in earlier centuries,<sup>67</sup> as well as in the late eighteenth century. As William McNeill writes, the “sultan hired Christians from Transylvania to build and operate the cannon he needed to overcome the famous and formidable defenses of Constantinople attests to the superiority that European metalworkers and gunsmiths had achieved, as well as his eagerness to acquire what he recognized as a clearly superior weapon.”<sup>68</sup> Neither did the Ottomans have a serious resistance to Western influence in cultural terms as is exemplified by the architectural influences throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the Ottomans’

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*.

<sup>67</sup> Rhoads Murphey, “The Ottoman Attitude Towards the Adoption of Western Technology: The Role of the Efrenci Technicians in Civil and Military Applications,” in *Contributions a l’Histoire Economique Et Sociale de l’Empire Ottoman*, ed. P. Dumont and J.P. Bacque-Grammont (Louvain: Editions Peeters, 1983), 287–298.

<sup>68</sup> McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires, 1450-1800*, 6.

<sup>69</sup> Ali Uzay Peker, “Western Influences on the Ottoman Empire and Occidentalism in the Architecture of Istanbul,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 26, no. 3 (2002): 139–163.



making good use of foreign technologies were not limited to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when they may have felt powerful enough not to be threatened by such imports. In Aksan's words, "the imperial bureaucracy both recognized the necessity of importing, or manufacturing, what they saw merely as weapons, while remaining wedded to the cultural system of which they were the principal beneficiaries."<sup>70</sup>

The idea that the Ottomans imported superior technologies once they recognized the superior Western ideas and technologies has been criticized for missing the interaction inherent in any such occurrence of technology transfer between cultures as well as the dialectical nature of the conversation.<sup>71</sup> Even in the time of Selim III, when one might expect a haphazard import of technology because of political instability and social unrest, the Ottomans imported weapons and expertise from multiple sources (French, Russian, Austrian, Spanish, and British) and only those that had "proven their worth on the battlefield."<sup>72</sup> Ottomans were close observers of developments in the West, including the historic transformations taking place such as the French Revolution,<sup>73</sup> even Selim III himself corresponded with Louis XVI prior to assuming the throne.<sup>74</sup> It is difficult to determine to what extent the Ottomans fully grasped the pace of the

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<sup>70</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, "Breaking the Spell of the Baron de Tott: Reframing the Question of Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1760-1830," *International History Review* 24, no. 2 (2002): 258.

<sup>71</sup> Borrowing from Arnold Pacey, Aksan argues for an exchange rather than a one-way import of ideas and technologies. See *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 268.

<sup>73</sup> Fatih Yeşil, "Looking at the French Revolution Through Ottoman Eyes: Ebubekir Ratib Efendi's Observations," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 70, no. 2 (January 1, 2007): 283–304.

<sup>74</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Selim III'ün Veliiaht İken Fransa Kralı Lui XVI İle Muhabereleleri," *Belleten II* (1938).

technological developments in the West but it is safe to argue that the Ottomans were neither simple importers of nor resisters against foreign ideas and technology.<sup>75</sup> On the contrary, they were selective in adopting what would work best for their needs at the time. Whether this was sufficient is another debate but it is difficult to argue that the Ottomans had a cultural disposition to oppose foreign ideas or reform.

Ottoman resistance to the innovation argument is often based on eyewitness accounts of Ottoman military practice by Western travelers, diplomats, and military advisors. Such observers came not only with their preconceived notions about how the Eastern societies are supposed to operate but also with their conviction that the West was inherently superior to the East.<sup>76</sup> Even those who observed the Ottoman army on the battlefield made such overly simplistic generalizations that one needs to be very cautious in using them at face value.<sup>77</sup> Their formulations such as despotism as an explanatory framework of the *oriental* governments such as the Ottoman Empire represented discourses that belonged to the European context where the thinkers argued against their own kings in favor of concepts such as the rule of law, good government etc. It was established among eighteenth century European thinkers, based on their extremely

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<sup>75</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, *An Ottoman Statesman in War and Peace : Ahmed Resmi Efendi, 1700-1783* (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1995).

<sup>76</sup> Joan-Pau Rubiés, “Oriental Despotism and European Orientalism: Botero to Montesquieu,” *Journal of Early Modern History: Contacts, Comparisons, Contrasts* 9, no. 1–2 (2005): 109–180.

<sup>77</sup> Langeron wrote, “A Turkish general never knows the number of men which he has under arms.” George F. Jewsbury, “Chaos and Corruption: The Comte de Langeron’s Critique of the 1787-1792 Russo-Turkish War,” *Studies in History and Politics* iii (1984 1983): 81.

skewed knowledge about the Ottoman governing practices, that the Ottoman government rule was inherently despotic.<sup>78</sup>

Traditional historiography has often taken these accounts at face value and adopted their approach to explain why the military reform had been unsuccessful. One of the most famous accounts of this kind belonged to Baron de Tott. Such accounts were, in Virginia Aksan's words, "imbued with their own progressive, superior view of the world, were neither able to recognize that Ottoman resistance to social and cultural change might have had causes other than religious fanaticism."<sup>79</sup> Surely, this was not uncommon and the *strange* reports from strange lands were filling the imagination of the European reading public over the course of the eighteenth century. Especially in the second half of the nineteenth century, European officials increasingly circumscribed the main characteristics of reform through a modernization discourse expressed within the framework of a religious clash between Islam and "European Christian rationality."<sup>80</sup>

Simplistic dichotomies were not necessarily subjected to scholarly criticisms of our day and they were often part of the political debates within Europe such as the nature of despotism<sup>81</sup> rather than carefully researched accounts of non-Western realities. These

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<sup>78</sup> Aslı Çırakman, "From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 33 (2001): 49–68. For an earlier example of Ottoman despotism argument from the seventeenth century, see Linda T. Darling, "Ottoman Politics Through British Eyes: Paul Rycaut's 'The Present State of the Ottoman Empire'," *Journal of World History* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 1994): 71–97.

<sup>79</sup> Aksan, "Baron de Tott," 257.

<sup>80</sup> Ussama Samir Makdisi, *The Culture of Sectarianism : Community, History, and Violence in Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Lebanon* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>81</sup> Thomas Kaiser, "The Evil Empire? The Debate on Turkish Despotism in Eighteenth-Century French Political Culture," *Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (2000): 6–34.

works could become standard readings about other cultures. Tott's writings conveyed a standard story about Ottoman military modernization. Tott's memoirs' popularity at the time was "attributable as much to the entertaining stories as to the information about the Ottomans it supplies."<sup>82</sup> The problem for later historiography was, however, that they took the writings of Tott at face value, inherited assumptions about the nature of the Ottoman culture, and built their historiographical theories based on such tainted reporting.

Advocates of modernization theory often took the European travelers' accounts as evidence for two separate closed worlds, the West and the East. Although sharing many prejudices and preconceived notions about the Orient, these travel accounts were not necessarily monolithic in their conception of the Orient.<sup>83</sup> Nonetheless, the modernization discourse was intent on showing that the trajectory of the early modern history led to the modern state, the best example of which was in Europe. It was argued that only a small portion of the Ottoman bureaucratic elite, who had previously been closed to the developments in the West, started only in the eighteenth century to realize Western superiority.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Aksan, "Baron de Tott," 261.

<sup>83</sup> Rhoads Murphey, "Bigots or Informed Observers? A Periodization of Pre-Colonial English and European Writing on the Middle East," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110 (1990): 291–303.

<sup>84</sup> Stanford J. Shaw, *Between Old and New: The Ottoman Empire Under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 5–8. See also Shaw's earlier works with essentially the same approach about the lack of Ottoman awareness of the developments in the West, Stanford J. Shaw, "The Origins of Ottoman Military Reform: The Nizam-ı Cedid Army of Sultan Selim III," *Journal of Modern History* 37, no. 3 (1965): 291–306.; Stanford J. Shaw, "The Nizam-ı Cedid Army Under Sultan Selim III, 1789-1807," *Oriens* 18 (66 1965): 168–184.

The enlightened sultan, Selim III, was viewed as the first courageous sultan to attempt to reform the society along western lines, although he “lacked the necessary ruthlessness and cunning”<sup>85</sup> in implementing the necessary radical reforms against the likes of the janissaries. As Avigdor Levy put it, the “reforms failed essentially for lack of a determined and stable leadership that could sustain them in the face of strong popular opposition.”<sup>86</sup> He was a “man lacking in determination and foresight.”<sup>87</sup> Selim III’s so-called “limited concept of reform”<sup>88</sup> met stiff resistance from a conservative society, which was not ready to emulate and benefit from Western progress. According to this framework, the fundamental flaw in Selim III’s reform measures was that he did not go far enough and he was too conservative in his approach<sup>89</sup> bowing to internal pressures. The tenacity of reactionary forces was contrasted with the courage of the reforming sultan and the elite.<sup>90</sup> Such scholarship privileges any contact with the West during this time period as a progressive step in the right direction and treats any opposition to new measures as a reactionary and conservative force. A small-enlightened elite had started to realize the trajectory of history but it was again “too little, too late.”

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<sup>85</sup> Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris, 1994), 24.

<sup>86</sup> Avigdor Levy, “Military Reform and the Problem of Centralization in the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, no. 3 (1982): 234.

<sup>87</sup> Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, 72.

<sup>88</sup> Shaw, *Old and New*, 71. For a more recent but similar view of Selim III as a “well-meaning but irresolute sultan,” see Bruce McGowan, “The Age of the Ayans, 1699-1812,” in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 658.

<sup>89</sup> Beydilli, “Aydınlanmış Hükümdar,” 28.

<sup>90</sup> Carl Max Kortepeter, “Did the Turks Attain Enlightenment Through Defeat in Warfare?,” *Balkan Studies* 40, no. 1 (1999): 129–171.

The modernization paradigm posits that there is only one type of truly *authentic* modernity, i.e. the Western version. The rest of the world, by definition, is not capable of reaching the level of modernity the West has built in isolation. Proponents of this paradigm considered the “non-Western world as taking a historical course different from Europe’s, one in which no significant change took place until the ‘impact of the West’.”<sup>91</sup> If non-Westerners attempted to imitate the West, it remained as a limited (and ultimately a futile) attempt by the elites, as they were not as radical as they needed to be to push through the necessary revolutionary reforms in the face of their conservative societies.

There was no room in this paradigm for hybridity or an alternative modernity, as non-Westerners did not go through the necessary stages of progression leading up to the emergence of modern states, rendering them simple followers of the West. Others have convincingly disputed the validity of Western uniqueness in this manner and suggested that the “transition from medieval segmentary states to stable empires, from localized to globalizing economies, and from inward-looking to expansionist policies took place in the Middle East at the same time as in Europe”<sup>92</sup> in the sixteenth century. If the Ottomans went through similar processes as the Europeans in terms of state development in early modern times, the argument that the Ottomans did not realize the West’s supposed superiority until they were finally awoken to this reality in late eighteenth century becomes difficult to justify.

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<sup>91</sup> Linda T. Darling, “Political Change and Political Discourse in the Early Modern Mediterranean World,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 38, no. 4 (April 1, 2008): 505.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 530.

### *Early Republican Histories*

Arguably, the strongest proponents of modernization theory were the early Turkish nationalist historians because of the outlook of the newly created secular republic in the 1920s. The Turkish nationalist historiography projected its anxiety over secular versus religious dichotomy unto Ottoman history.<sup>93</sup> Turkish nationalist scholars rejected the Ottoman past for its corruption and degeneration<sup>94</sup> because of the impact of religion.<sup>95</sup> The main concern for the historiography of the 1930s was to explain the fatal decline<sup>96</sup> of the Ottoman Empire, which, according to them, resulted from the religiously minded conservatism of the *ulema* and bureaucrats of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. What they claimed as their progressive predecessors in the Ottoman past were the reformers who tried to adopt the Western institutions in an effort to save the empire. Even then, what they applauded was not the effort to save the empire, which we knew was futile, but the elite's recognition that they were behind the West and they needed to radically reform just as the nascent Turkish republic was in the process of doing. The alleged historical struggle between the reformists and conservatives<sup>97</sup> as well as the need

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<sup>93</sup> Büşra Ersanlı, "The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era: A Theory of Fatal Decline," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>97</sup> The ideologically useful "reformer vs. reactionary" framework was employed by the nationalist historiography in interpreting the "first regicide" against Osman II in the seventeenth century, an era not associated with the modern reform period in the Ottoman history. See

for adoption of Western institutions were used as the ultimate explanatory models reflecting the concerns of the western-aspiring modern Turkish nation-state.

In this context, everything *modern* was identified with the notion of an advanced and progressive West. This did not start with the new republic's nation-state project. Republican historians inherited the legacy of the late nineteenth century Ottoman Orientalism, which "implicitly and explicitly acknowledged the West to be the home of progress and the East, writ large, to be a *present* theater of backwardness."<sup>98</sup> The discourse of westernization among Turkish intellectuals has been an ongoing political and historical obsession<sup>99</sup> perhaps understandably given the context of a need to build a new nation and the legacy of more-than-a-century-long effort to confront the West in political, military, economic, and cultural terms.

Under the influence of French sociologists such as Durkheim and Comte in particular,<sup>100</sup> the late Ottoman and early republican intellectuals (sociologists, historians, politicians such as Namık Kemal, Ziya Gökalp, Ahmed Refik, İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, Enver Ziya Karal) employed a discourse of modernization with varying degrees of emphasis on westernization. As they felt *different* from Westerners, they sought non-Western models of modernization especially in the wake of Japan's 1905 triumph over

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<sup>98</sup> Ussama Makdisi, "Ottoman Orientalism," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 1, 2002): 768–769.

<sup>99</sup> Rhoads Murphy, "Westernisation in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: How Far, How Fast," *Byzantine & Modern Greek Studies* 23 (1999): 119.

<sup>100</sup> Niyazi Berkes, "Sociology in Turkey," *The American Journal of Sociology* 42, no. 2 (1936): 238–246.



Russia.<sup>101</sup> These historians may have settled for the Islamic and near Ottoman example of Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt in their search for a non-Western model for development.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, they considered the West as the ultimate defining model of modernization and nation-state even as they looked to the East for a model.<sup>103</sup> Traumatized not only by the impending disintegration of the empire but also specifically the loss of the Balkans in the eve of the First World War<sup>104</sup> and in search of a new history for the new nation, they discussed what the appropriate place of Ottoman history with reference to the new republic should have been.<sup>105</sup>

A recent study by Can Erimtan demonstrated skillfully how one such historian Ahmed Refik redefined and reconstructed the so-called Tulip Era (1712 – 1730) as, in Refik’s own words, a “brilliant age of awakening, the first stage of serious dissemination of European civilization in the East.”<sup>106</sup> Refik used the very term *new order* in discussing

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<sup>101</sup> Christoph K. Neumann, “Bad Times and Better Self: Definitions of Identity and Strategies for Development in Late Ottoman Historiography (1850-1900),” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 72.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>103</sup> Renee Worringer, “‘Sick Man of Europe’ or ‘Japan of the Near East’: Constructing Ottoman Modernity in the Hamidian and Young Turk Eras,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 207–230.

<sup>104</sup> Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris; Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>106</sup> Can Erimtan, *Ottomans Looking West?: The Origins of the Tulip Age and Its Development in Modern Turkey* (London & New York: Tauris Academic Studies: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 23. See also M. Pavlović, “Interpretation and Usage of History: The Age of Tulips as a Paradigm of Archetypal in the Past,” *Spomenica Istorijskog Arhiva Srem* no. 9 (2010): 224–241.

the intentions of Damad İbrahim Pasha during the Tulip Era<sup>107</sup> so as to argue that the Western-influenced efforts to reform the society had already started at the beginning of the eighteenth century only to be continued in Selim III's time. Yet again, this short-lived progressive epoch would be disrupted by a coalition of the janissaries and the *ulema*,<sup>108</sup> which represented the usual reactionary forces opposing “innovations imported from the West.”<sup>109</sup> Tulip Era was considered not only the beginning of Westernization<sup>110</sup> but also the end of the Ottoman classical age according to this framework.<sup>111</sup> Reconsideration of the so-called Tulip Era and the political, economic, and social dynamics of the rebellion that ended it would arrive much later.<sup>112</sup> Historians of this era portrayed the *usual*

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<sup>107</sup> Erimtan, *Ottomans Looking West?*, 31.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>110</sup> Robert W. Olson, “The Patrona Halil Rebellion and Ottoman-Persian Wars and Eighteenth Century Ottoman Historiography,” *Turkic Culture: Continuity and Change* (1987): 75–82.

<sup>111</sup> For a discussion on the basic myths about the Tulip Era, Selim Karahasanoğlu, *Politics and Governance in the Ottoman Empire : the Rebellion of 1730 : an Account of the Revolution That Took Place in Constantinople in the Year 1143 of the Hegira* (Cambridge: Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 2009); Selim Karahasanoğlu, “A Tulip Age Legend Consumer Behavior and Material Culture in the Ottoman Empire (1718-1730)” (PhD, Binghamton University, 2009); Selim Karahasanoğlu, “Osmanlı Tarih yazımında ‘Lale Devri’: Eleştirel Bir Değerlendirme,” *Tarih Ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* no. 7 (2008): 129–144. See also D. Cantemir, “The Sources of Ahmed Refik’s Lale Devri and the Paradigm of the ‘Tulip Age’: A Teleological Agenda,” *Essays in Honour of Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu: a Collection of Articles. Societies, Cultures, Sciences* 1 (2006): 259.

<sup>112</sup> Robert W. Olson, “The Esnaf and the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730: A Realignment in Ottoman Politics?,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 17, no. 3 (1974): 329–344; Robert W. Olson, “Jews, Janissaries, Esnaf and the Revolt of 1740 in Istanbul: Social Upheaval and Political Realignment in the Ottoman Empire,” *Journal of the Economic & Social History of the Orient* 20, no. 2 (1977): 185–207. See also Donald Quataert, “Janissaries, Artisans and the Question of Ottoman Decline, 1730-1826,” in

*suspects* (a coalition of like-minded conservative forces such as the janissaries, ulema and the riff raff of Istanbul) as responsible for putting an end to a progressive attempt at modernization and westernization. Historiography on the New Order era shares a similar fate as that of the Tulip Era because of this ideologically motivated anachronism of the early Republican historiography.

The dilemma for the intellectuals during this transitional period (early Republican era) was to explain the current political weakness of the Ottoman polity and justify the need to modernize moving forward without necessarily abandoning the Turkish culture (especially in the case of Ziya Gökalp).<sup>113</sup> The resulting formulation epitomized in Kemalist historiography included aspects of both the decline and modernization discourses. The decline of the Ottoman Empire would justify the need for modernization along western lines. In this context, the New Order would appear to be a failed attempt at modernization. This required radical measures to be undertaken, a task the Republican intellectuals set for themselves. Thus, in line with this ideological reshaping of history, Turkish nationalist historiography defined and situated the New Order within a traditionalist versus progressive framework.

Another framework the Republican historians relied on was the opposition between the central and peripheral forces with sympathies placed with the central government. The reason for that was the Republican historians were instrumental in

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*Workers, Peasants, and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730-1914* (Beylerbeyi, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 1993).

<sup>113</sup> Mehmet Kireççi argues that Ziya Gökalp was one example of the “self-Orientalizing” intellectuals who utilized decline discourse to deal with their perceived superiority of the West. See Mehmet Akif Kirecci, “Decline Discourse and Self-Orientalization in the Writings of al-Tahtawi, Taha Husayn, and Ziya Gökalp: A Comparative Study of Modernization in Egypt and Turkey” (PhD, University of Pennsylvania, 2007).

constructing the new nation state's centralizing discourse. They blamed the Ottoman decline on the weakness of central authority. This approach reflects their desire to justify the nascent nation state's highly centralized authority and the late eighteenth century phenomenon of diffused structures of power was not regarded as a positive development for the empire. On the contrary, this was the very reason the state had disintegrated at the end. The history of the New Order taught the Republican historians the value of being as radical as possible in the new nation's reform agenda and avoid at all costs decentralized sources of power.

### ***Ottoman Court Historians***

Having demonstrated some of the main assumptions and the preconceived notions of the modern or republican historians, one might be inclined to think that we can avoid these assumptions if we abandon these modern histories in favor of contemporary sources or archival documents. However, the earliest archival sources and accounts on the New Order pose historiographical and textual problems for the historian of our day. In the name of "approaching the Ottoman Empire on its own terms," historians have often fallen into the trap of viewing "all phenomena through the eyes of the central bureaucracy and gave an exaggerated picture of the state's power and actual control."<sup>114</sup> The often criticized Ottoman historians' obsession with the archival materials, or *document-fetishism* in Berktaý's wording,<sup>115</sup> has had its impact on the New Order historiography as

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<sup>114</sup> Halil Berktaý, "The Search for the Peasant in Western and Turkish History/historiography," in *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History* (London: Frank Cass, 1992), 153.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

well, as the complaints of the Ottoman reformist elites about the opponents of the New Order were taken at face value. The perspective of the imperial center with regard to military reform dominated the debates, resulting in the rendition of opponents of the New Order as a nuisance rather than a social reality.

Historians interested in inter-textuality and discourse analysis<sup>116</sup> have argued that any text is to be treated in relation to other texts and discourses. Yet, some historians have taken this to the point that all texts are mere constructions (which they are) that have no relation to reality (which they do). That is to say, the fact that any text, hence any historical narrative, is to be understood as an inter-textual construction does not mean that it has no relation to reality.<sup>117</sup> The historian's job seems to be critically engaging with the text by identifying and situating the text in relation to reality as much as we are able to understand that reality.

Historiography on the New Order is not a mere construction of modern historians reflecting the concerns of their time. The official historians of the Ottoman state provided modern historians with plenty of ammunition about the need for reform and corruption of the janissaries as well as the broken ideal order of the golden age. Critical reading and deconstruction of the narratives of the court historians have been accomplished by a handful of historians especially for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, University of Texas Press Slavic Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004).

<sup>117</sup> Erimtan, *Ottomans Looking West?*, 175.

<sup>118</sup> Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Ali (1541-1600)* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Contemporary sources on the New Order and especially on the 1807 rebellion that brought an end to the New Order project<sup>119</sup> are much more diverse in their presentation of the political polarizations and struggles of their time. They often differ on their perceptions of the New Order measures and the janissaries, providing us with a more complex picture. This demonstrates the hazards of reducing the New Order and its opponents to a struggle between two ideological camps, i.e. the reformers and the conservatives. As a result of the eventual abolition of the janissary corps in 1826, however, historiography has favored the view that the janissaries constituted the main problem at the time whereas contemporary sources often blamed different individuals and trends (such as the New Order elite's personal enrichment through the new taxes and their corruption). Some of these sources expressed views that identified the Janissaries and their elite affiliates as the main source of the problem while others found the New Order elites responsible. Later historians favored the former view.<sup>120</sup>

Much of the republican and modern historiography overlooked these nuances and overwhelmingly interpreted Selim III's reign through the *Tanzimat* elites' lenses. For the late eighteenth century, the *Tanzimat* intellectual and historian<sup>121</sup> Ahmed Cevdet Pasha's

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<sup>119</sup> These sources include Ubeydullah Kuşmani and Ebubekir Efendi's *Fezleke-i Kuşmani*, Kethüda Said Efendi's *Tarih-i Vaka-yı Selim-i Salis* and *Neticetü'l Vekayi*, Cabi Ömer Efendi's *Cabi Tarihi*, Ahmed Asım's *Tarih-i Asım*, Tüfengçibaşı Arif Efendi's *Vaka-yı Selimiyye*, an anonymous author's *Yayla İmamı Risalesi*, Georg Oğulukyan's *Ruzname*, Mustafa Necib Efendi's *Sultan Selim-i Salis Asrı Vekayi*, and Şanizade's *Tarih-i Şanizade*. For a detailed description of these contemporary sources as well as their specific views on the 1807 rebellion, see Aysel Yıldız, "Vaka-yı Selimiyye or the Selimiyye Incident: A Study of the May 1807 Rebellion" (Unpublished Dissertation, Sabancı University, 2008), 10–60.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>121</sup> Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy: History and Historiography at Play*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

canonical 12 volumes, *Tarih-i Cevdet*<sup>122</sup> continues to shape our understanding of the New Order despite the fact that a critical assessment of this narrative exposing its Tanzimat-minded reform agenda has already been written.<sup>123</sup> Carefully crafted as a virtual commentary on the *Tanzimat* reforms through the use of history, this work has been the main source for New Order although Cevdet Pasha himself was not a contemporary.

As a scholar and statesman involved in the conception and implementation of the *Tanzimat* reforms, Cevdet Pasha was commissioned to write his history,<sup>124</sup> which covers the period from 1774 to 1826.<sup>125</sup> Even the choice of these dates as the beginning and end of his history reflects the reading of history by the bureaucrats of the *Tanzimat* period. The catastrophic defeat at the hands of the Russians and the pursuant embarrassing Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 would serve as the beginning of his narrative to be concluded with the destruction of the Janissary Corps by Mahmud II as the end of an era.

What we need to pay attention is how the account of Cevdet Pasha, as a reform-minded historian, might have been crafted as he clearly saw himself in direct conversation with those dates. Cevdet Pasha's interpretation of the destruction of the janissary corps as the beginning of a new era of *Tanzimat* reforms<sup>126</sup> reflects the consciousness on the part of the *Tanzimat* intellectuals that the reforms they aspired to

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<sup>122</sup> Richard L. Chambers, "The Education of a Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Alim, Ahmed Cevdet Pasa," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 4 (1973): 440–464.

<sup>123</sup> Ahmet Cevdet Paşa, *Tarih-i Cevdet* (Istanbul: Sabah, 1972).

<sup>124</sup> Christoph K. Neumann, *Araç Tarih Amaç Tanzimat: Tarih-i Cevdet'in Siyasi Anlamı*, trans. Meltem Arun (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999).

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>126</sup> Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Tarihçi Cevdet Paşa," in *Ahmed Cevdet Paşa Semineri: 27-28 Mayıs 1985: Bildiriler* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1986), 107–114.

implement could not be possible if the janissaries were around. As such, their very position in history as reformers and their reformist aspirations were indebted to the absence of the janissaries, or so they perceived.

Cevdet Pasha's main concern in his *Tarih* seems to be to explain the reasons for the collapse (*çöküş*) of various Ottoman institutions, specifically the military and the Muslim religious education (*ilmiye*), as well as the need for reform in these areas.<sup>127</sup> Cevdet Pasha presents Selim III as a precursor to post-Tanzimat reformers and whose dethronement would legitimize the violent end of the janissaries.<sup>128</sup> His narrative is crafted in a somewhat manipulative way that eliminates the potentially pro-janissary statements or comments in the contemporary sources he uses in writing his history.<sup>129</sup> The commonly used portrait of Selim III as a well intentioned but somewhat naïve sultan, who had been ill advised, is also a construction of Cevdet Pasha.<sup>130</sup> What needed to be done, according to him, was to act decisively, which Selim III could not do because of his lack of resolve.<sup>131</sup> Such a description serves the idea that the reformers are more enlightened and progressive but their opponents were ignorant and bigoted. More

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<sup>127</sup> Neumann, *Amaç Tarih*, 53.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 109. For a popular depiction of Selim III as a well-meaning sultan surrounded by reformers who looked down upon common people and alienated them and one who was opposed by a reactionary *ulema* and corrupt janissaries, see İsmail Orman, *Devletlî Eşkiyalar: Osmanlı Tarihinden Zorba Portreleri* (Üsküdar, İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları, 2005).

<sup>131</sup> Neumann, *Amaç Tarih*, 112. Given the state of the affairs in Selim III's time, it is important to recognize the magnitude of the challenges Selim III had to face. Yet, we still need to remember that Selim III did not hesitate, whenever he could, to take violent measures to counter the opposition to *Nizam-ı Cedid* by the local notables and the Janissaries.



importantly, the implication is that the Tanzimat reforms needed to be resolute in the face of opposition and avoid the mistakes of Selim III while following the successful example of Mahmud II.

Cevdet Pasha's narrow focus on the janissaries as the enemies of the New Order efforts draws attention away from the broad societal support for the opposition. This allows him to construct a narrative that pits reformers against reactionaries. In Cevdet Pasha's account, the janissaries are accused of lack of discipline and order, harassing the population, and disobeying the sultan,<sup>132</sup> which later became the standard accusations against the janissaries. Some of the Republican era historians set out to document the instances of janissary disobedience and corruption, taking Cevdet Pasha's framework without questioning its Tanzimat era prejudices and priorities.<sup>133</sup>

Historians enumerated instances of janissary participation in economic activity, failure to respond to government's call to arms, and occasions of harassment of the local population among other acts of corruption.<sup>134</sup> In fact, the "unintended union of the military with the populace," as McGowan puts it, was a "political problem with a long past,"<sup>135</sup> which was not unique to the Ottomans of the late eighteenth century but to pre-modern imperial statecraft. In the absence of professional standing armies at the absolute disposal of central modern states, military men's relationship to the rest of the society

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>133</sup> Yücel Özkaya, *18. Yüzyıl'da Osmanlı Toplumunu* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008).

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 33–43.

<sup>135</sup> McGowan, "Age of Ayans," 640.

was much more complex than an anomaly (the janissary involvement in economic affairs) as the late eighteenth century Ottoman elites illustrate.

In this *ahistorical* history writing, janissaries were represented as a source of trouble rather than a social reality as part of the Ottoman social fabric. There remains little room to explain how janissary rebellions could have been possible without any societal support. In fact, Cevdet Pasha acknowledges that popular opinion has to be on the side of the rebels for a rebellion to succeed,<sup>136</sup> however, he sees reaction from the society in a negative light. What mattered to the historians such as Cevdet Pasha more than anything else was the establishment and maintenance of *order*. He would consider any reaction to order a regressive act.

Cevdet Pasha argued for the legitimacy of the state's power over the *messy* multiplicity of society in the context of Tanzimat era's emerging state versus society dichotomy. He utilized the framework that a ruler's main duty was to protect his subjects, which required him to be a strong ruler. In his view, "only a strong ruler can be a good ruler, because only he is able to protect the weak."<sup>137</sup> A ruler, he suggested, "should take any step, which will serve to better secure the control of the state over society."<sup>138</sup> His perspective on state-society relations privileged the state's absolute power and rendered the janissaries and their societal ties as harmful to the wellbeing of the state as a whole.

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<sup>136</sup> Neumann, *Amaç Tarih*, 117–118.

<sup>137</sup> Neumann, "Bad Times," 76–77.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

One of the major sources on the New Order belongs to Ahmed Vasıf Efendi. In addition to *Mehasinü'l Asar*,<sup>139</sup> written in a traditional court historian style,<sup>140</sup> Vasıf Efendi authored a treatise in which he used a pseudonym, *Koca Sekbanbaşı*, disguising himself out of fear of reaction from the janissaries. The treatise, until recently known as *Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi*,<sup>141</sup> was written in defense of the New Order. In this treatise, Vasıf Efendi equates his time period with that of Suleiman the Magnificent and argues that both epochs experienced similar problems when new laws and institutions were introduced and implemented.

The historian claims that the *rabble*<sup>142</sup> of this kind (i.e. the janissaries) had disliked and resisted the new laws (*kanun-ı cedid*) in Suleiman's time just like the janissaries of his day. Vasıf Efendi continued the sixteenth century Ottoman elites' tradition of contrasting the ancient tradition (*kanun-ı kadim*) with what they saw as the needs of their time in an attempt to legitimize the reform efforts with a historical

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<sup>139</sup> Ahmed Vasıf Efendi, *Mehasinü'l-Asar Ve Hakaikü'l-Ahbar*, ed. Mücteba İlgürel (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994).

<sup>140</sup> Neumann, *Amaç Tarih*, 201.

<sup>141</sup> Ahmed Vasıf Efendi, *Mehasinü'l Asar*. An English translation of the treatise can be found in Beydilli, "Sekbanbaşı Risalesi." For the simplified Turkish rendition, see William Wilkinson, *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia: Including Various Political Observations Relating to Them* (London: Longman, 1820), Appendix 5.

<sup>142</sup> Such derogatory language was commonly applied to various groups including the janissaries earlier in the seventeenth century especially when the elites wanted to describe rebellions as disorder and social opposition as deviation from accepted norms. Marinos Sariyannis, "Mob, 'Scamps' and Rebels in Seventeenth-Century Istanbul: Some Remarks on Ottoman Social Vocabulary," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1 (2005): 1–15.

example.<sup>143</sup> According to Vasıf Efendi, Suleiman the Magnificent had used violence against opponents, which they had deserved, and made an example out of them by hanging their ears and tongues for the public to view. The same necessary punishments, according to Vasıf Efendi, are not exacted in his day because of what he calls the *leniency* of his time. All these people, who had been created just so that the “world may not remain empty,” these “company of hogs, corrupt and degraded” ones “assemble in taverns, coffee-houses, and brothels” and express their ignorant opinions.<sup>144</sup>

Vasıf Efendi’s hostile and derogatory language towards common people discussing politics and minding state’s business in public places is striking. He goes further by saying that these people were “outwardly Muslims” but had no idea about “cleaning after themselves when they go to bathroom,” implying they lacked the fundamentals of cleanliness and religious purity. In an attempt to belittle the opposition, Vasıf Efendi provides us with clues as to their social and economic profile when he says that they were actually a bunch of boatmen, fishermen, porters, coffeehouse keepers, and similar persons. He asserts that although these people should be punished and even “killed for opening their mouth” about state affairs, ignorance and inattention of the times (as opposed to the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent) prevent it from happening.<sup>145</sup>

Vasıf Efendi’s claim that Suleiman the Magnificent had established the janissary

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<sup>143</sup> Mehmet Öz, “Kanun-ı Kadim: Osmanlı Gelenekçi Söyleminin Dayanağı Mı, Islahat Girişimlerinin Meşrulaştırma Aracı Mı?,” in *Nizam-ı Kadim’den Nizam-ı Cedit’e III. Selim Ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 59–77.

<sup>144</sup> Koca Sekbanbaşı, *Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi: Hulasat-ül Kelam Fi Redd-il Avam*, trans. Abdullah Uçman (İstanbul: Tercüman Gazetesi, 1970).

<sup>145</sup> Wilkinson, *Wallachia and Moldavia*, 220–221.

Corps and given it to the care of Hadji Bektash,<sup>146</sup> which is historically inaccurate, is used as a rhetorical tool to identify the opponents of the New Order as the opponents of the very establishment of the janissary corps. He conveniently forgets that the inception of the janissary corps as the “first standing army in Europe”<sup>147</sup> happened in the 1360s.<sup>148</sup> By drawing a similarity between dissenters in his time and those of the golden age, Vasıf Efendi aims to accomplish two things: 1- he can argue that he is the real voice of the janissaries unlike these ignorant opponents of the New Order, 2- he can delegitimize the opposition by laying a claim to real representation of the ideal order. In fact, the literary works of the period under discussion employed similar techniques, by naturalizing “policies at the time widely perceived to threaten traditional prerogatives in the political sphere, making the new seem approved by convention of centuries old practice.”<sup>149</sup>

Another important contemporary source on the period under discussion here belongs to Cabi Ömer Efendi,<sup>150</sup> a preacher of Ayasofya (Hagia Sofia) Mosque in Istanbul.<sup>151</sup> Cabi does not seem particularly hostile towards the janissaries throughout his narrative. His descriptive style makes his account appear more neutral and he even relates some of the janissary arguments. Yet, Cabi dismisses the janissaries’ side of the story by

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 240–242.

<sup>147</sup> İnalçık, *The Classical Age*, 11.

<sup>148</sup> Rhoads Murphey, “Yeniçeri,” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Online Edition*, 2007, <http://www.encyislam.brill.nl.arugula>.

<sup>149</sup> Victoria Rowe Holbrook, “The Intellectual and the State: Poetry in Istanbul in the 1790s,” *Oriente Moderno* 1, no. XVIII (LXXIX) (1999): 243.

<sup>150</sup> Ömer Efendi Cabi, *Cabi Tarihi: Tarih-i Sultan Selim-i Salis Ve Mahmud-i Sani: Tahlil Ve Tenkidli Metin*, ed. Mehmet Ali Beyhan (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003).

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., XVII.

calling them mere “pretexts.” He reveals his distaste for the janissaries by speaking about their unruliness (*serkeşlik*).<sup>152</sup> Cabi Efendi does not appear to be ideologically motivated particularly against the janissaries and provides a lot of useful information on social and cultural history. His account is not as embellished and ideologically constructed as the aforementioned court historians and it provides historians with many anecdotes with glimpses into the usual villains’ side of the story. Nevertheless, Cabi clearly shares in the milieu of Istanbul elites who saw the janissaries as disorderly and called for a new order in the face of political activism and opposition led by the janissaries.

As should be clear by now, the court historians described the New Order and its opponents through the prism of the political debates and struggles of their own times. In the case of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, his Tanzimat reformist agenda was deeply influential in how he situated himself in relation to New Order reformers and the opposition. Vasif Efendi entertained a clear distaste for the dissenters and tried to claim real ownership of those truly committed to the janissary corps while making hugely anachronistic statements about how the janissaries were in the time of Suleiman the Magnificent. Cabi Ömer, for his part, was quite neutral in his description but could not avoid revealing his elitist view of the janissaries. Accounts of the key Ottoman historians that the later historians have relied on to construct the history of the New Order and its opposition pose unique challenges for revisionist historians.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 118.

### *Modern Historiography*

As has been argued above, the historiography on the New Order and its opponents has been shaped by the decline and modernization theories as well as the Ottoman court historian's elitist and state-centered accounts of the historical events. In the past several decades, however, there have been a number of social and cultural histories that have abandoned these conventional assumptions about Ottoman history. Yet, *Nizam-ı Cedid* still retains its perception as a comprehensive reform program and its dissenters as reactionary forces. This is because a thorough examination of the general histories as well as contemporary sources for this era is yet to be accomplished. As a result, historians incorporate the prejudices of these works in their own work.

For instance, one historian ends up repeating some of the common accusations found in the works of the Ottoman court historians about the janissaries.<sup>153</sup> Two reasons are apparent for this reproduction of the typical conventional arguments about janissary corruption. One is that the historian is not critical enough of the very sources he is using in his narrative.<sup>154</sup> The second is that most of the secondary literature is also based on the narratives of the court historians, who often wrote for propaganda of imperial policies for readers among the Ottoman elite as well as for the general public.<sup>155</sup> The historian acknowledges that the janissary power may have functioned as a check on the power of

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<sup>153</sup> Ali Çaksu, "Janissary Coffee Houses in Late Eighteenth-Century Istanbul," in *Ottoman Tulips, Ottoman Coffee: Leisure and Lifestyle in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dana Sajdi (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 117–132.

<sup>154</sup> Es'ad Efendi, *Üss-i Zafer*. This source is a clear justification effort in favor of the elimination of the Janissary Corps in 1826, the event famously known as the Auspicious Event (*Vaka-i Hayriye*). It needs to be used carefully especially when speaking about the crimes the Janissaries allegedly committed.

<sup>155</sup> Neumann, "Bad Times," 64.

the Ottoman state in favor of the common people in Istanbul,<sup>156</sup> a point originally made by Cemal Kafadar.<sup>157</sup> Yet, Çaksu repeats the theme of janissary oppression over the common people of Istanbul, a theme developed and embellished by the Ottoman elite historians, especially in the aftermath of the destruction of the janissaries.<sup>158</sup>

Historians, who suggest a different approach to the janissaries in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, remain exceptions. Christine Philliou suggests a comparison of the janissary networks with the *Phanariot* networks. Such networks were the “means” for groups like the *Phanariots*, janissaries, and *ulema* to gain a share for themselves in Ottoman governance.<sup>159</sup> Instead of seeing these networks as detrimental to the imperial governance, she suggests that uncoupling the “demise of *Phanariots* from the Balkan national narrative and that of janissaries from the talk of imperial modernization” could provide us with a comparative perspective on imperial institutions rather than placing them within broader trajectories that ultimately lead to an inevitable end in both cases. Modern histories discuss the *Phanariot* network within the context of the emergence of the Greek nation. Similarly, the story of the janissary networks gets lost in the teleological story of imperial modernization.<sup>160</sup> These networks were not simply

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<sup>156</sup> Çaksu, “Janissary Coffee Houses,” 120.

<sup>157</sup> Cemal Kafadar, “Yeniçeri-Esnaf Relations: Solidarity and Conflict” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1981).

<sup>158</sup> Ataullah Mehmet Şanizade, *Tarih-i Şanizade* (Istanbul: Ceride-i Havadis Matbaası, 1290).

<sup>159</sup> Christine M. Philliou, “Worlds, Old and New: Phanariot Networks and the Remaking of Ottoman Governance in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century” (PhD, Princeton University, 2004).

<sup>160</sup> Christine M. Philliou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).



the objects of or obstacles before the processes such as modernization or nationalism but active participants of imperial transformation.

Historians have started to entertain the idea, albeit only recently, that the janissaries could not have been the sole reason for the demise of the empire; and that broader political, social, and economic reasons would have to be accounted for.<sup>161</sup> Some recent studies have suggested that the historiography needs to break away from the Enlightenment's decline-reform-revolt-abolition linear framework in discussing the janissary-reform dynamics as well as the broader changes in the state organization in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>162</sup> Such perspectives applied to the period under discussion here are still in their beginnings and we have yet to come up with an alternative interpretation of the redefinition and reorganization of the state free of the *old versus new* or *reform versus reaction* dichotomies. Even fewer are comparative studies that consider the dynamic interplay between Ottoman efforts to adapt, change, and modernize and the opposition these reform measures created; ones that can place this vigorous change in a difficult imperial moment within the broader context of evolution of state-society relations in Europe and elsewhere.

One of the most distinct characteristics of the modern state is that it tries to govern instead of simply ruling.<sup>163</sup> The early modern Ottomans during Selim III's era were transitioning to this new logic but this change was incomplete, as is evidenced by

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<sup>161</sup> Ahmet Elibol, "Yeniçeriler Ve İktidar Bağlamında Osmanlı Sisteminin Dönüşümü," *Akademik Bakış* 3, no. 5 (K 2009): 21–40.

<sup>162</sup> Fatih Yeşil, "Nizam-ı Cedid'den Yeniçeriliğin Kaldırılışına Osmanlı Kara Ordusunda Değişim, 1793-1826" (PhD, Hacettepe University, 2009).

<sup>163</sup> Ariel Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 20.

the way the foundation and operation of the New Army was handled. Lack of a dedicated budget, ad hoc recruitment practices, and inability to *discipline* the soldiers demonstrate that the adoption of certain aspects of the modern state's disciplinary rationale<sup>164</sup> did not yield a full-fledged transformation into a centralized modern state.

Differences in the New Order army's varying degrees of capabilities between the center and the periphery emanate from the "complex division of organizational and administrative labor."<sup>165</sup> Salzmann discusses this division of labor to argue that the shift of power from the center to the peripheries did not necessarily mean loss of imperial power. According to Salzmann, there is no reason to assume that there was a direct correlation between this shift and the so-called decline of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>166</sup> However, in the case of building a fully professional army dedicated to war making and at the disposal of the center, division of labor between the center and the periphery resulted in the inefficiency of the military reform because the periphery did not necessarily embrace the new project. The very reason why a new army was to be erected was because the center wanted to rid itself of what it considered the inefficiencies of the old army. However, the new army was not necessarily free of the handicaps of the old army. This partly emanated from the transitional nature and hybrid logic of the period in that the center could not afford to give up the old army immediately. Thus, division of labor between the center and the periphery may have been possible in other areas but not

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<sup>164</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish : the Birth of the Prison*.

<sup>165</sup> Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State*, 20.

<sup>166</sup> Abdul-Karim Rafeq, "Changes in the Relationship Between the Ottoman Central Administration and the Syrian Provinces from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Roger Owen and Thomas Naff (London, Amsterdam: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 53–73.

in terms of achieving military effectiveness because the center's approach to military reform directly contravened the interests of the periphery.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has attempted to unpack a variety of theories and historical traditions that have shaped our understanding of the New Order and the opposition to it. Decline paradigm and modernization theories weigh heavily on debates regarding the Ottoman reform efforts. They provide us with dichotomies such as reformist elites versus reactionary forces (i.e. janissaries, *ulema*), reductionist approaches such as inevitable decline, or anachronistic frameworks such as secularist elites versus narrow-minded and religious conservatives. Ottoman historiography in general has made great strides in overcoming and going beyond many of these rather problematic explanatory frameworks but the studies dealing with the New Order remain largely replete with them.

The problem may not necessarily lend itself to a solution if we ignore the modern historiographical traditions and focus instead on contemporary sources. As this chapter has shown, contemporary sources have their political agendas and they have been interpreted under the influence of the political debates of the Tanzimat and Republican eras. For example, many historians simply go back to Ahmet Cevdet Pasha to read the New Order but he was heavily invested in a struggle as part of the newly emerging bureaucratic elite of the Tanzimat era to bring about reforms. For him, elimination of the janissaries could only be considered a step in the right direction, as it foretold the Tanzimat reforms. For historians like Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, contemporary accounts that were for the New Order and against the opposition were of higher value, as they fit the

frameworks the Pasha had in mind.

Imposition of later theories anachronistically, historical bias, and political colorings of contemporary sources may all be considered challenges *typical* of any historical inquiry and the New Order historiography was no exception. This chapter has pointed out simply that we need to be particularly mindful of these handicaps if we were to develop a serious debate about the beginnings of Ottoman state transformation in late eighteenth century. If we can avoid these theoretical deficiencies, we may be able to have a more robust debate on what military reform may have implied for the society as a whole.

## Chapter 2 – The Meaning of the New Order

### *Why Reform the Military?*

This chapter aims to analyze the Ottoman center's conception and rationale for the establishment of the New Order army as well as the logistical and financial difficulties that triggered a rethinking of the military posture of the state during Selim III's reign. Discussing the reasons why the military effectiveness of the Ottomans had diminished by the late eighteenth century is a trying task and the debate over the military and socio-economic reasons for it has been ongoing among Ottoman historians. My aim in this chapter, however, is only to point out the factors that shaped the rationale behind the idea of the reorganization and discipline of the Ottoman army in late eighteenth century rather than trying to discuss the causes of the Ottoman military failures in a comprehensive manner. This rationale gave way to the measures of the New Order as a remedy for the fiscal and military difficulties of the Ottoman government. Analyzing the conditions, which shaped the way the Ottoman elite perceived reform in this period, is crucial in helping us understand the reasons why and how implementation of reform may have triggered opposition from various military and societal groups.

An analysis of the Ottoman elite's intentions, rationale, and strategies in implementing the new measures allows us to understand the Ottoman elite's attitude towards societal groups affected by the so-called "reforms." This analysis should provide us with important clues as to the motivations for resistance against and negotiation with the establishment of the New Order army. This does not mean that understanding resistance is possible only through understanding the Ottoman elite's actions but rather that the rationale of the resistance can be understood better if we explain what "reform"

really meant at this time period. This is important especially for understanding the New Order's social and economic impact, which provoked reaction from the society at large.

The following questions will be explored in this chapter: what were the reasons that pushed the state to undertake first a reorganization of the existing military and then the foundation of a new army? Was the Ottomans' capacity to reform their military inhibited by their opposition to innovation? What kind of problems did the Ottoman ruling elite identify as the problems facing the state? How did they think they could remedy the dismal state of affairs? What specific measures did the Ottoman advisors recommend in the name of the New Order and how were they justified?

The New Order (*Nizam-ı Cedid*) army was created in 1793, as a new army with its dedicated revenue source (*İrad-ı Cedid*), during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807). The context within which the New Order was instituted has been called “the greatest moment of crisis the empire had yet faced.”<sup>167</sup> Much of the eighteenth century, in fact, was a “period of recovery, stability, and economic expansion”<sup>168</sup> after the fiscal and military difficulties and internal conflicts in the seventeenth century. Late eighteenth century, in contrast, witnessed unprecedented fiscal and military problems combined with immense pressure on the central government created by external wars as well as internal disturbances.

The Ottoman government was unable to resist the military advances of the Habsburgs and the Russians in the Balkans, especially in the second half of the eighteenth century. The Ottoman central government's ability to mobilize resources for

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<sup>167</sup> Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 181.

<sup>168</sup> Sevket Pamuk, “Institutional Change and the Longevity of the Ottoman Empire, 1500-1800,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 35, no. 2 (2004): 226–227.

the war effort in general had diminished by the late eighteenth century. This was made clear to the Ottomans by the military defeats they suffered at the hands of the Austrian and Russian armies in the wars of 1768-74 and 1787-92. Modern historiography provides us with a variety of explanations as to the causes of the Ottoman military ineffectiveness in the eighteenth century ranging from the so-called European military revolution<sup>169</sup> to the general decline of the Ottoman Empire.

The material and psychological consequences of these wars were monumental for the Ottomans. The treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 stipulated that the Crimea and the northern coasts of the Black Sea would be independent of the Ottoman Empire. Article VII opened the door for Russia to claim the “right to make representations at the Porte on behalf of the Orthodox Christian subjects of the sultan.”<sup>170</sup> Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in 1783 led the Ottomans to declare war on Russia in 1787. When Selim III ascended to throne in 1789, the most pressing issue was the Russian military threat in the Balkans. Continuing the war against Russia with the hopes of retrieving the Crimea proved unsuccessful and the loss of the Crimea was definitive by 1790.<sup>171</sup> This was the latest chapter of the Ottoman military and political retreat in the face of the Russian threat. The loss of a predominantly Muslim province to Russia seems to have had a chilling effect on the Ottomans.

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<sup>169</sup> For an overview of the military revolution debates, see Clifford J Rogers, *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995).

<sup>170</sup> Fikret Adanır, “Turkey’s Entry into the Concert of Europe,” *European Review* 13, no. 3 (2005): 401.

<sup>171</sup> An overview of these wars and political history is provided in Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 160–170.

At the domestic level, the phenomenon of banditry throughout the Balkans during Selim III's reign was connected at various levels to the military failures suffered at the hands of the Russians. Domestic political implications of external military defeats should not be underestimated. For example, Suraiya Faroqhi draws attention to the "delegitimizing effect" of the Russo-Ottoman war of 1768-1774.<sup>172</sup> As the Ottoman troops withdrew from the Balkan frontiers, "irregular troops, no longer needed to harass the opponent, usually cut loose and terrorized the local population instead."<sup>173</sup> This not only led to de-legitimization of the Ottoman rule but also local populations' allegiances became more fluid. Furthermore, in the absence of a strong financial commitment by the Ottoman center to shape their behavior, bandits wreaked havoc in the countryside.

The central government could not prevent local notables from increasing their regional influence through employing such irregulars. Small and large bands of former soldiers – at times under the patronage of local notables – created a banditry phenomenon, which complicated the capital's efforts to control the countryside. Diffusion of power away from the center toward the provinces was not unique to the Ottomans; it was a contemporary reality in Europe as well. The wars and the revolutions of the eighteenth century generated "immense opportunities for contraband and speculative profiteering," which often benefited intermediaries such as local notables, tax farmers, merchants, and money lenders (and their affiliates such as bandits and irregulars

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<sup>172</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 115.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*



in the countryside) more than the central government itself.<sup>174</sup> The imperial center sought to reassert its control through a variety of strategies that often implied centralization, re-appropriation of resources, fiscal discipline, and military reform.

### ***Financial Crisis***

The Ottoman central state was scrambling to exert control over not only the provinces and the periphery but also the forces stationed at the center because of the financial woes of the state. While historians hailed the newly established army as part of a broad reform program, we need to keep in mind that the new army was created in one of the most financially difficult periods over the course of the eighteenth century.

It has been argued that the New Order reforms were initiated by the state voluntarily instead of reforms stemming from financial difficulties.<sup>175</sup> However, the fiscal crisis at the end of the eighteenth century was paramount and the initiative to draw up a new army alongside the old one needs to be considered within the context of deep financial crises. While the Ottoman center's assessment was that it needed a more disciplined army to be able to fight the external powers, the financial crises informed how they viewed this endeavor.

The state lacked the funds to finance a brand new army at the level that could make a difference in reversing the tide against the Russians and Habsburgs in battlefield.

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<sup>174</sup> Reşat Kasaba, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Economy: The Nineteenth Century* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988).

<sup>175</sup> Cezar, Yavuz. "From Financial Crisis to the Structural Change: The Case of the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century." *Oriente Moderno* 1, no. XVIII (LXXIX) (1999): 49–54.

Thus, much of the financing relied on rationalization of financial practices and redirection of existing revenue. Financial rationalization went hand in hand with implementation of discipline within the military corps. In the earlier centuries, the state commanded much stronger resources and directed more revenue to the military when compared to the late eighteenth century. As such, it will be crucial to discuss the fiscal situation the empire found itself in at the end of the eighteenth century.

Part of the reason why the state did not enjoy the cash to finance wars at this time seems to have derived from structural reasons and new external economic dynamics throughout the eighteenth century. According to Mehmet Genç, three pillars of the Ottoman economic logic were provisionism, fiscalism, and traditionalism in the eighteenth century.<sup>176</sup> The Ottoman state, he argues, was concerned with maintaining a balance in the domestic market in terms of supply and demand as well as state expenditures and prices of goods.<sup>177</sup> This framework explains why the Ottomans may have chosen to stay away from adopting a “competitive” logic in managing the imperial economy. Others fault the Ottoman government’s customs policies, which favored imports while discouraging exports, resulting in a consistent trade imbalance with the exception of the capital, Istanbul.<sup>178</sup> This policy is considered a clear symptom of the Ottomans’ failure to appreciate the “emergent world trade system” in the eighteenth

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<sup>176</sup> Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Devlet Ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2000).

<sup>177</sup> Mehmet Genç, “Ottoman Industry in the Eighteenth Century: General Framework, Characteristics, and Main Trends,” in *Manufacturing in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, 1500-1950*, ed. Donald Quataert (Albany, 1994), 59–86.

<sup>178</sup> Daniel Panzac, “International and Domestic Maritime Trade in the Ottoman Empire During the 18th Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 24, no. 2 (1992): 192–193.

century.<sup>179</sup> While the Ottomans adapted themselves to “unexpected rises in prices of import items and sharp decreases in the quantity of goods imported from the West” through maintaining a balance of supply and demand, they were unable to avoid ending up “dependent on foreign goods”<sup>180</sup> as a result of pressures of financial crises, wars and internal disorder. Lack of competitiveness in economy, financial crisis, and internal political problems prevented the imperial center from relying on a strong economic base to sponsor an advanced army capable of overcoming internal and external security problems in a short amount of time.

The structural weaknesses of the Ottoman economy and increasing dependency on the West may be blamed for lack of strong financing of the wars. At the same time, military defeats at the hands of the Russians and Habsburgs contributed to this vicious circle. Ariel Salzman argues that the fiscal crises caused by military commitments of the Ottoman state over the course of the eighteenth century constituted the “first blow to the old regime.”<sup>181</sup> The fundamental challenge for the Ottoman polity did not derive from a breakdown of a certain political or ideological relationship between the sovereign and the subject populations but rather from the insurmountable fiscal crises encountered by the state. Neither the defeats nor the inherent weaknesses in the economy could be posited as the sole reasons for the financial crises. In any case, the state’s ability to finance wars was severely restricted and the same was true for drawing up a new army altogether.

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<sup>179</sup> A. Mesud Küçükkalay and Numan Elibol, “Ottoman Imports in the Eighteenth Century: Smyrna (1771-72),” *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 5 (2006): 723.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 731.

<sup>181</sup> Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State*, 23.

The state elites' recommendations focused on financial discipline as a remedy to lack of resources. It was no coincidence that fiscal discipline and financial rationalization (though not necessarily pronounced as such) were concepts included in the New Order debates among the ruling elite. The establishment of a new revenue source (*İrad-ı Cedit*) was part of an effort to finance the new army, which was meant to put an end to the military defeats suffered by the Ottoman army. This revenue relied on exploitation and redirection of existing sources of revenue while introducing a level of fiscal discipline and financial rationalization as it was supposed to be used solely for the New Order army.

### ***Recruitment Problems prior to the New Order Army***

One of the biggest problems for the Ottomans prior to the establishment of a new army was mustering and financing enough manpower for the military campaigns. Many archival sources document enormous financial and logistical problems the military was faced with in trying to keep up with the Russian armies. Prior to the establishment of the New Order army, a variety of resources were relied upon to recruit soldiers for the campaigns: the cavalrymen (*sipahi*), men supplied by local notables, the Janissaries, and other irregulars.<sup>182</sup> These sources, however, proved insufficient when confronted with the immense manpower of the Russian armies, which relied on forced conscription.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, "Feeding the Ottoman Troops on the Danube, 1768-1774," *War and Society* 13, no. 1 (1995): 2.

<sup>183</sup> Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 145–146.

In the absence of a strictly professional modern standing army in the late eighteenth century,<sup>184</sup> the Ottomans relied on a flexible but not-so-efficient method of recruitment whereby a relatively small central army would be supported and enlarged by a combination of imperial soldiers stationed in various regions, local irregulars (*levend*), and manpower provided by the various local notables. Relying on the “commanders and suppliers of militias drawn from the countryside power brokers” in the late eighteenth century meant that the tax farmers and tax collectors came to play a critical role in the Ottoman campaigns’ success.<sup>185</sup> In addition, the Ottomans practiced ad hoc conscription from among the Muslim peasants during the war of 1768-1774.<sup>186</sup> Mobilization of a “largely untutored and undisciplined force” not only ensured defeat but also resulted in widespread desertion and banditry.<sup>187</sup> This eclectic method could have worked if the state could make it financially and psychologically attractive for soldiers and local notables to go to war.

In the winter of 1790, the janissaries being assembled in the capital to be deployed to Bosnia were given ten piasters each as campaign stipend (*ulufe*). The official remarked, “because most of the janissary soldiers are meager and lonesome, but it is a requirement of their obedience that they would serve with their bodily strength in the

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<sup>184</sup> This is ironic in the way that the Ottomans were the first ones in Eurasia to have a standing army when they created the Janissary Corps in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. See İnalcık, *The Classical Age*.

<sup>185</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “Manning a Black Sea Garrison in the 18th Century: Ochakov and Concepts of Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Context,” in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002), 68.

<sup>186</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “Ottoman Military Recruitment Strategies in the Late Eighteenth Century,” in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1999), 21–39.

<sup>187</sup> Aksan, “Black Sea Garrison,” 70.

campaign.”<sup>188</sup> Sekbanbaşı Agha’s description of the janissaries in this report is clearly aimed at soliciting campaign stipends (*ulufe*) since the document includes an order to pay 10 guruş to each soldier along with the sultan’s approval. It seems that the financial award was not necessarily ensured given that Sekbanbaşı Agha had to ask for it. However, it can also be argued that the government’s failure to honor such commitments could create a less-than-enthusiastic spirit in preparing for the campaign. Especially after the disastrous defeats against the Russians, it was more difficult than ever to motivate the forces traditionally relied upon to go to war. Nor was it possible to rely on the local power brokers to put up an effective campaign as they sought to increase their regional influence instead of strengthening the reach of the imperial center.

The Ottoman government also experienced serious problems in providing grains and provisions for the war effort. Canikli Ali Pasha<sup>189</sup> outlined the inefficiency caused by the state officials’ inappropriate and often corrupt behavior.<sup>190</sup> He drew attention to the blurred line between the military officers and civilian population resulting in “disorder.”<sup>191</sup> He suggested that the local people should be compensated for the

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<sup>188</sup> “yeniçeri askeri kullarının ekserisi garib yekid olduklarından ancak kuvvet-i bedeniyyeleriyle sefer u hazırda hizmet ve sadakat ve gayret eylemeleri fariza-i zimmet-i ubudiyetleri olmağla” BOA, HAT, 10622 (13 February 1790).

<sup>189</sup> Yücel Özkaya, “Canikli Ali Pasha,” *Bellekten* 144 (1972): 483–525. See also Rıza Karagöz, *Canikli Ali Paşa* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003).

<sup>190</sup> Yücel Özkaya, “Canikli Ali Paşa’nın Risalesi ‘Tedabirü’l-Gazavat’,” *A.Ü.D.T.C.F. Tarih Araştırmaları Enstitüsü, Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 7, no. 12–13 (1973): 119–191.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 133–134.

provisions in a timely manner.<sup>192</sup> As a result of some of the tax exemptions provided for the residents of Istanbul, immigration had already become a major problem for the capital.<sup>193</sup> However, this was a problem for the rural populations as well because the state continued to make up for the lost tax revenue as a result of migration by demanding extra taxes from the rural population that decided to remain in their lands.<sup>194</sup> Overall, the war effort put extra strain on the rural populations, which inhibited the state's ability to muster human resources and provisions to wage effective wars.

The state lacked the necessary financial resources to attract power brokers and individual soldiers for the war effort. Yet, the Ottoman elite opted to create a new professional army financed by extra taxes instead of trying to increase its fiscal health of the state through non-military reforms. The Ottoman government found economic problems insurmountable and focused on quick fixes to its military in a rush to respond to external and domestic threats. This was accompanied by the broader phenomenon of moving towards professional armies at the disposal of the imperial center during this time period.

One of the major arguments for establishing a new army was inefficiency and lack of discipline of the Ottoman forces proven especially during the 1787-92 Russo-Ottoman wars. Not only did the palace cavalrymen's (*sipahi*) rebellious behavior cause trouble for the government, but also the forces brought to the front by local power

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<sup>192</sup> Songül Çolak, "Canikli Ali Paşa'nın 'Tedbir-i Nizam-ı Memleket' Adlı Risalesinde Reayanın Durumuna Dair Tespit Ve Öneriler," *Atatürk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi* 12, no. 2 (2008): 169.

<sup>193</sup> Yücel Özkaya, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda XVIII. Yüzyılda Göç Sorunu," *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 25 (1982 1981): 171–203.

<sup>194</sup> Çolak, "Canikli Ali Paşa," 171.

brokers, like those of Cabbarzade and Karaosmanoğlu, proved to be lacking the discipline needed to overcome the Russian forces.<sup>195</sup>

Unable to muster enough manpower for the reasons outlined above, the Ottoman government faulted the janissaries' failure to show up for the military campaigns as the main reason for insufficient mobilization.<sup>196</sup> During this time period, the Ottoman center relied on intermediaries to bring janissary soldiers to the war front. Since the janissaries had been scattered around the empire, bringing them to the war front fell upon the shoulders of the janissary officers (*ağa*). When the sultan asked for a certain number of soldiers, usually only a fraction of the demanded number could be mustered.<sup>197</sup> The Ottoman administration's frustration was expressed in the following manner, "so many soldiers are receiving salaries in the army and in Istanbul, where are they and who are taking these salaries?"<sup>198</sup> What was the reason for such low participation of the janissaries?

The government frequently delegated the command of janissaries in a certain locality to various governors and local officials in an effort to increase the janissaries' contribution to the war effort. Controlling (*zabt u rabt*) the janissaries was a problem and

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<sup>195</sup> Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 182–183.

<sup>196</sup> Traditional Ottoman historians who labeled them as "riff-raff" and portrayed them as responsible for the military defeats inherited the Ottoman government's negative views of the janissaries. For an example of this approach, see İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Nizam-ı Cedid Ricalinden Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa," *Bellekten* 35, no. 138 (1971): 245–246.

<sup>197</sup> For instance, when the sultan asked the janissary officer Seyyid Muhammed Agha in the district of Edremid to supply 200 janissaries, he brought a mere 40 soldiers to the front. BOA, C. AS, 9344 (5 July 1791).

<sup>198</sup> "...orduda ve Asitanede bu kadar neferat mevacib alıyorlar neferatları nerededir ve bu mevacibleri kim alıyor..." BOA, HAT, 9450 (1789/1790).



appointing non-janissary state officials was meant to alleviate the problem as they were thought to have less in common with the janissaries.<sup>199</sup> However, these measures must have contributed to the janissary corps' inefficiencies as well as the unruly behavior the Ottoman elites complained about in the first place. In one such instance, the janissaries expressed their disapproval that Poyraz Seyyid Halil Aga was appointed as a janissary officer (*zabit*) in İbrail, Hotin, and Salonika. It was reported that he could not “get along with” them. Poyraz Seyyid Halil Aga had to be taken off duty for thirty to forty days as a result. Officials recommended that a certain janissary officer, Mehmed, who had already earned the trust of the *serdars*, *ayans*, *aghas*, and *alemdars* in these localities, be appointed instead. In doing so, the officials judged, the fears of the local notables could be deflected.<sup>200</sup>

It should be noted that the janissaries continued to be part of the effective fighting forces despite the recruitment problems discussed in this chapter. In the fall of 1789, for example, a total of 2,500 janissaries from Aleppo were given to the command of the *serasker* in Egypt to fight the invading French troops. After some 150 men died in clashes in Jaffa, the janissaries reassembled in Aleppo and joined forces from Rakka and Diyarbakir to be redeployed against the French.<sup>201</sup> It is difficult to impose uniformity on the janissaries across the empire and across time; there were great differences between different regions in janissaries' response to the government's demands.

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<sup>199</sup> BOA, HAT, 7917 (6/7 June 1789).

<sup>200</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1901 (Undated).

<sup>201</sup> BOA, C. AS, 3492 (29 October 1789).

Instead of attributing inefficiencies in the janissary corps to corruption and insubordination (which was a common trope dating back to sixteenth century Ottoman historians),<sup>202</sup> we need to remember that the state often failed in its basic commitments to its soldiers. The financial difficulties the state faced directly affected the army and the soldiers, specifically the janissaries. A document from 1789 mentions that the janissaries stationed in the fortress of Bender had not received their salaries from the year 1784/1785. The total owed to these janissaries was 153,718.5 piasters. The janissaries were reported to be in Keşnu, an area eight hours away from Bender, from where they might attack Bender if the money owed them was not paid very soon. The government official writing the report expressed fear for infighting and revolt among the soldiers.<sup>203</sup>

The janissaries stationed in the fortress of Bosnia were in a similar predicament. Their salaries for the year 1774 was paid only in 1788 and the government had to sell some imperial property in the area just to pay the 289,000 piasters owed to the janissaries for their salaries, provisions, and broadcloth allowance.<sup>204</sup> The government was trying to pay them at least a year's worth of salaries so that it could ask these soldiers to defend their fortresses.

It seems that the Ottomans were trying to compensate the soldiers for their services especially when a new confrontation was to occur or when the soldiers were stationed in a strategically sensitive borderland. In a report reminding the central

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<sup>202</sup> Colin Imber, "Ibrahim Peçevi on War: a Note on the 'European Military Revolution'," in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies: State, Province, and the West*, vol. II (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 18.

<sup>203</sup> BOA, HAT, 7902 (9 September 1790).

<sup>204</sup> BOA, HAT, 11677 (1788/1789). Such delays in payments seem to be commonplace, BOA, HAT, 10411 (1788); BOA, HAT, 8668 (1789).

government of the special position of Vidin, as a large frontier area, the sultan was advised not to withhold a portion of the salaries for the janissary corps in Istanbul but to pay the janissaries in Vidin in full.<sup>205</sup> The government's inability to provide for its soldiers led the janissaries in Vardar to become indebted.<sup>206</sup> For those janissaries who were not stationed in strategic locations, not receiving their salaries for extended periods of time must have been an important factor in avoiding recruitment for the military campaigns.

The common complaint that the janissaries did not show up for duty when needed has to be reconsidered since abuse by the Ottoman officials themselves must also have contributed to the unwillingness of the janissaries to fight in wars or putting down rebellions. During the fall of 1789, the Ottoman officials decided to assemble and send five thousand janissaries to Albania, where the Ottoman control had relatively been weak because of the terrain. The cost of bringing these soldiers to Albania amounted to close to eighty thousand piasters.<sup>207</sup> The commander of the Imperial Guard in Edirne (*bostancıbaşı*) was given the responsibility to bring these soldiers to Albania. The commander was warned that he would be severely punished "if he touched even one piaster."<sup>208</sup> On the one hand, there was the urgency to send soldiers as soon as possible to control Albania. On the other hand, there was an anxiety over the possibility that the

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<sup>205</sup> BOA, HAT, 11350 (1790/1791).

<sup>206</sup> BOA, HAT, 9904 (1790).

<sup>207</sup> The requested money was some 176,5 purses (*kise*). Each purse ranged from 416 to 450 piasters (*akçe*).

<sup>208</sup> BOA, HAT, 8265 (19 September 1789).

Ottoman officials would misappropriate the funds destined for the maintenance of the soldiers.

The banditry phenomenon in the Balkans in the late 1780s inhibited the government's ability to effectively raise armies against the Russians and the Austrians. In a competition with the local notables to establish effective control over the bandits in the Balkans at this time, the central government was faced with a plethora of small and large bands of brigands whose allegiances were often rendered to the highest bidder. As the government lacked the financial resources to attract their services, the local power brokers such as Paspanoğlu were better positioned to utilize the strength of the banditry in the Balkans. Furthermore, "great pool of potential soldiers ... were tied up in *ayan* squabbles,"<sup>209</sup> which complicated the government's recruitment efforts.

In an order sent to the administrators in Hezargrad, the government asked that 1,500 soldiers be raised quickly to launch an attack on the Austrians who had captured Bucharest in June 1790. The order includes complaints about the quality of soldiers raised and incidents of desertion.<sup>210</sup> In addition to the inefficiency of the local officials and unwillingness of the soldiers, the center had its share in the recruitment problems as it often failed to provide the necessary financial resources for effective recruitment.

Requests for mobilization of soldiers in a short time had become commonplace as the center desperately sought ways to man its armies. For instance, an order sent to Trabzon requested that "some soldiers" be raised within 20 days. But the correspondence indicates that the local governor did not receive half the funds necessary to feed the

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<sup>209</sup> Frederick F. Anscombe, "Albanians and 'Mountain Bandits'," in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 97.

<sup>210</sup> BOA, C. AS, 43516 (23 June – 3 July 1790).

soldiers.<sup>211</sup> It is clear that the government's estimates of the number of soldiers and the time frame did not necessarily correspond with the reality on the ground.

Financial troubles of the state were so extreme that the increase of a disabled veteran's salary, which seems to have been an established practice, was a matter of discussion among the Ottoman officials. Upon the request of a certain Bekir, a disabled veteran swordsman and a janissary of the forty-third regiment, the grand vizier (*sadrızam*) expressed his concern that such soldiers may claim such disability assistance twice, once from the army and once directly from the sultan. Yet, the sultan decided to give the ten piasters (*akçe*) this janissary had asked for, saying that turning him down would not "suit his exalted imperial fame given that the soldier had sacrificed his arm for the sake of religion."<sup>212</sup> Financial concerns of the central state seem to have interfered with the traditionally enjoyed privileges of the soldiers in this way. A show of generosity on the part of the sultan was a psychological motivator for the soldiers. The Ottoman government failed to deliver its basic commitments and encourage the soldiers for recruitment through financial and psychological incentives.

In searching for ways to assert the center's will, the Ottoman elites deemed it necessary that the center's ability in exerting its coercive powers<sup>213</sup> be rebuilt and enhanced. From their perspective, the inefficiency of the Ottoman army was because of lack of discipline among the troops. Hence, it was only natural that a disciplined army at the disposal of the center should be organized. In this way, the center could not only

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<sup>211</sup> BOA, C. AS, 7835 (22 April 1790).

<sup>212</sup> BOA, HAT, 7981 (9 September 1790).

<sup>213</sup> Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*.

respond to external threats but also assert its power internally, especially against the local notables and local rebellions. While the government experienced serious recruitment problems as it failed to provide financial resources, the elites identified lack of discipline among soldiers as the chief reason why the military defeats had been experienced.

***Military Technology Debate: Adaptation or Resistance to Innovation?***

The Ottoman military's failures during the eighteenth century have been attributed to conditions outside their control, i.e. the new military technologies and techniques that revolutionized warfare in the West.<sup>214</sup> From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Ottomans were able to conduct warfare efficiently thanks to their ability to organize and provide for military campaigns better than their western counterparts. In 'early modern' warfare, military undertakings entailed movement of large masses of humans and material resources across long distances. In a time when land armies were the norm, the Ottomans excelled in supplying provisions for and organizing their armies, which was key in their military successes.<sup>215</sup> Neither the material resources nor politics (and even ideology) should be considered separate from one another as they both feed off each other. Technological changes should be treated in relation to financial and political realities without which specific military techniques could not prove

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<sup>214</sup> G. Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). There were limits to what these new military innovations could achieve on the battleground. For a discussion of the actual effectiveness of the "volley fire" technique, see G. Parker, "The Limits to Revolutions in Military Affairs: Maurice of Nassau, the Battle of Nieuwpoort (1600), and the Legacy," *The Journal of Military History* 71, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 331–372.

<sup>215</sup> Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500-1700* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

revolutionary. As Geoffrey Parker puts it, “even in the twentieth century, the outcome of wars has been determined less by technology than by better war plans, the achievement of purpose, greater economic strength and, above all, superior discipline.”<sup>216</sup> The ability to maintain such vast land armies and their mobility in early modern warfare owed itself to the availability of material resources as much as political tools for rendering allegiance from subjects in various regions throughout the empire.

Attributing Ottomans’ so-called *failure to adapt* to new methods and technologies to cultural reasons in the late eighteenth century is very similar to explaining their success in earlier centuries in ideological terms. Ottoman state’s successful emergence had been attributed to various reasons among which religious conquest (*ghaza*) ideology as the basis of a *warrior culture* remained at the top of the list.<sup>217</sup> Just as the earlier rise of the Ottomans was attributed to the strength of their ideology, their military failures in the eighteenth century were also attributed to the Ottoman refusal to engage with relevant technological innovations at the time due to their ideological outlook and religiosity.<sup>218</sup>

However, the very content of the *ghaza* ideology has been modified and revisited by prominent Ottoman historians who have established to a great extent how it could serve such disparate purposes as conquest, trade, or alliances with former enemies. Now, we are much more comfortable in asserting the ever changing content and fluidity of the *ghaza* ideology. Its strength for the purposes of political justification as well as military conquests has to be acknowledged. Surely, this ideology (very often as a rhetorical tool)

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<sup>216</sup> G. Parker, *The Cambridge History of Warfare* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>217</sup> For a thorough analysis of historiography on the “*ghaza* thesis,” see *Ibid.*

<sup>218</sup> Christopher Tuck, “‘All Innovation Leads to Hellfire’: Military Reform and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2008.

helped organize large numbers of people and provided legitimacy for the Ottoman expansion; yet, this was only part of the story. Political legitimacy, by itself, could not bring about success for the Ottomans.

The Ottoman military failures in the eighteenth century have also been attributed to the technological gap between the Western powers and the Ottomans. It has been argued that the Ottomans had lagged behind in military technology due to their cultural resistance to imitation of the infidels. Culturist explanations as to why the Ottomans were unable to keep up with their Western counterparts have been discredited through various studies focusing on technology exchange between the Ottomans and the Christian powers in the earlier centuries. According to Gábor Ágoston, the argument that the Ottomans were resistant to adaptation of foreign technologies due to “extreme conservatism” is a flawed one given the Ottomans’ extensive experience with firearms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>219</sup> “Ottomans not only successfully adopted and integrated gunpowder technology into their armed forces and navy, but until the seventeenth century remained a strong “gunpowder empire,” indeed stronger than their immediate neighbors, both Christian and Muslim.”<sup>220</sup>

For the late eighteenth century, Jonathan Grant’s comparison between the Ottomans and the Europeans in terms of military technology concludes that the Ottoman military capabilities (arms production, arms transfers, and technological diffusion) remained competitive throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Grant argues

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<sup>219</sup> Gábor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 56.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.



that the Ottomans maintained their “third tier” producer position in the “international production hierarchy” by continuing to “copy and reproduce” the technologies produced by the “first tier” producers.<sup>221</sup> Grant reminds us that the real competitors for the Ottomans were not the first tier producers but the third tier producers, like Russia and Venice. The Ottomans were able to adopt the military technologies produced in Western Europe until the mid-nineteenth century. Grant considers the military “reforms” (naval production increase, artillery production) during Selim III’s reign within the framework of military technology diffusion.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of testing some of his assertions (such as his claim that the Ottoman fleet became “competitive with Atlantic Europe” as a result of the naval reforms of Selim III),<sup>222</sup> Grant successfully discounts the argument that the Ottomans were unaware of the developments in the West and that they resisted those developments as a result of their conservative outlook. Yet, while the Ottoman conservatism is an outmoded and untenable argument to explain away the technological gap, it may be difficult to argue that the military reforms during Selim III’s reign made the Ottomans truly *competitive* with their counterparts as Grant argues.

The Ottomans clearly faced a significant threat from the Russians throughout the eighteenth century, which pushed them to adopt new military methods and organizational models for their army. Some scholars working on military diffusion have argued that states such as the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century that faced greater security

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<sup>221</sup> Jonathan Grant, “Rethinking the Ottoman ‘Decline’: Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries,” *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): 181–182.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

threats were more likely to adopt new technologies.<sup>223</sup> However, they have also asserted that the Ottomans resisted innovations based on the existence of a cultural orthodoxy. In contrast to Europe in the midst of Enlightenment, as the argument goes, the Ottoman elites in this century were “dismissive of outside scientific, technical, and political knowledge.”<sup>224</sup>

For the period under study here, it is very difficult to point out a certain cultural orthodoxy that may have prevented the Ottomans from suggesting reform and elimination of janissary corruption. In fact, the opposite could be argued, namely that the Ottomans sought to adopt new military techniques and methods in order to prevail over the enemy. In the summer of 1780, for instance, an envoy from India arrived in the capital and told the sultan Abdulhamid I that if they wanted to beat the Russians, they needed to “imitate the ways of the enemy.” The Indians did not know about rifles and war but the British introduced them so they had to respond with the same weapons and fighting techniques as well as “drills.” He reported that they had been able to capture some sixteen fortresses from the British. Having completed some demonstrations in Kağıthane, the envoy was told that the Ottoman soldiers do not conduct drills in peacetime.<sup>225</sup> Our source does not make it entirely clear but the Indian envoy was most likely from Mysore during the reign of Tipu Sultan. This anecdote shows that debates about adopting new technologies and techniques were taking place in the Ottoman court even before the reign of Selim III.

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<sup>223</sup> Emily O. Goldman, “Cultural Foundations of Military Diffusion,” *Review of International Studies* 32, no. 1 (January 1, 2006): 69.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>225</sup> Cabi, *Cabi Tarihi*, 4–7.

Furthermore, this debate was happening between imperial powers that experienced a similar challenge, namely turning their armies into efficient fighting forces.

The question does not appear to be whether or not new methods should be adopted to remedy the dismal military situation the Empire found itself in. The debate revolved around what the causes of the failures were and the various features of modernity such as rationalization of finances and disciplining the military corps were proposed as solutions, in a “matter-of-fact” fashion. That is to say, the Ottoman elites did not oppose rationalization and discipline out of a cultural orthodoxy; on the contrary, these were their very solutions to what they diagnosed as the consequences of janissary corruption and military inefficiency.

The argument that it was the division between the religious and the secular as representing the official orthodoxy that prevented the Ottomans from adopting a full-scale reform project in favor of a piecemeal reform remains a simplistic interpretation of Ottoman elites’ approach to reform. For instance, Emily Goldman’s sources on the Ottoman reform belong to the modernization school, as the dualistic framework she attributes to Ottoman statecraft is overly simplistic.<sup>226</sup> More importantly, it contradicts the kinds of discussions that took place among the supporters and opponents of a new army in late the eighteenth century. In fact, the perspective on military reform was not “uniquely determined by religious concerns” in the Ottoman periphery either.<sup>227</sup> The suitability of reform to cultural norms was definitely a concern and it could become a

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<sup>226</sup> Goldman, “Cultural Foundations of Military Diffusion,” 70.

<sup>227</sup> Bettina Dennerlein, “South-South Linkages and Social Change: Moroccan Perspectives on Army Reform in the Muslim Mediterranean in the Nineteenth Century,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 1 (2007): 52–61.

rallying cry for the opponents of military reforms. However, this does not justify the argument that Western induced military reform met resistance out of a given cultural orthodoxy.

According to Ágoston, it was better drill, command and control, and bureaucratic administration rather than “better guns” that may have given the Europeans the edge in military competitiveness during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>228</sup> The failure on the part of the Ottomans to adopt the “new techniques and discipline” as a result of the “military revolution” in the West<sup>229</sup> was not due to cultural reasons. Rather, it stemmed from the absence, in the Ottoman context, of political and socio-economic conditions that gave way to the rise of the logic of discipline and rationalization of warfare in western European armies, such as the Dutch and the Prussian armies. They perfected and successfully implemented this logic of discipline in their armies. Both the commercialization of warfare and competition among bands of warriors in the West had critical importance for the emergence of modern disciplined armies.<sup>230</sup>

In the eighteenth century, the main adversaries of the Ottomans were not the highly disciplined Dutch and Prussian armies but instead the Austrian and Russian armies. They were arguably more disciplined than the Ottoman army and the Russian army had the additional advantage of relying on immense sources of manpower. Even if the Ottomans were successful in adopting new military methods, technologies, and tactics, these can become effective only if other aspects of the war enterprise are effectively administered, such as manpower, financing, logistics, political legitimacy, and

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<sup>228</sup> Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 202.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power*.

even ideology. In the late eighteenth century, the Ottomans experienced significant challenges in all these areas while trying to introduce the logic of discipline in the New Order army. Broader challenges rendered immediate military success rather difficult and costly. A reductionist approach (i.e. West's advances in military technology and Ottoman resistance to change) appears untenable and insufficient in addressing the broader structural problems that had to do with the socio-economic conditions within which the Ottoman army was embedded.

The example, in the eighteenth century, of the overhaul of the gunpowder production demonstrates that the problem had to do more with the government's ability to provide financial incentives and encourage investment in new technologies than a cultural resistance to new methods. As it was diagnosed that the gunpowder production was insufficient and ineffective, the government started with doubling the price it paid for saltpeter. A thorough upgrade of the facilities, employment of engineers able to design most modern grindstone machines, and doubling the salaries of the workers led to production of higher-grade level gunpowder.<sup>231</sup>

When Selim III set out to modernize the navy, neither the importation of foreign advisors and engineers nor the employment of European techniques of shipbuilding seems to have met resistance by the military establishment on religious grounds or otherwise.<sup>232</sup> On the contrary, adoption of new knowledge and techniques depended on

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<sup>231</sup> Kemal Beydilli and İlhan Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi Ve Nizam-ı Cedid'e Dair Eseri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001), 47–48.

<sup>232</sup> Tuncay Zorlu, "III. Selim Dönemi Osmanlı Teknolojisi," in *Nizam-ı Kadim'den Nizam-ı Cedid'e III. Selim Ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (Istanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 213–251.

whether they served as remedies to the problems on the ground. In Tuncay Zorlu's words, "Particularly, in such fields as military technology, firearms, mining, cartography, compasses and clock making, the Ottomans had a tendency to adopt and apply new developments efficiently without much time lapse."<sup>233</sup> The question was not necessarily being ignorant of progress taking place in military science in the West or elsewhere but rather whether adoption of innovations was financially feasible and economically sustainable.

Observers of the foundation and the development of engineering schools find that despite the fact that the Ottomans set up military and naval engineering schools as early as 1775, these institutions could not transform into engines of rapid change in military and naval technology largely because of the lack of funding and administrative failures.<sup>234</sup> The question of adoption of innovation was much more of a question of the Ottomans' ability to provide the necessary resources for modernization of the military than a feature of cultural opposition to innovation. When the state was able to direct sufficient resources to taking advantage of the latest techniques and technologies in the military sciences, successful results could be obtained.

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<sup>233</sup> Tuncay Zorlu, *Innovation and Empire in Turkey: Sultan Selim III and the Modernisation of the Ottoman Navy* (London, New York: Tauris Academic Studies; Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 77.

<sup>234</sup> Mustafa Kaçar, "Tersane Hendesehanesi'nden Bahriye Mektebi'ne Mühendishane-i Bahri-i Hümayun," *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları* 9, no. 1–2 (2007): 73–74. See also Mustafa Kaçar, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Askeri Teknik Eğitimde Modernleşme Çalışmaları Ve Mühendishanelerin Kuruluşu (1808'e Kadar)," *Osmanlı Bilimi Araştırmaları* (1998): 68–137.

### *New Order Army as a Response to Internal Threats*

The establishment of a new and disciplined army was conceived of as a response to external threats, Austrians and Russians. Yet, this was only part of the story. While the Ottoman center was having difficulty mobilizing its resources, this was not necessarily the case for the local notables in various provinces. Notables themselves were able to muster enough manpower and resources to protect and enlarge their spheres of influence. However, this imbalance between the center and the local notables in terms of mobilization of resources did not translate into an immediate disintegration of the empire. Tendency to see the struggle between the center and the provincial notables as a zero sum game was at the heart of the decline paradigm as discussed in the first chapter. More recent scholarship, however, has shown that this center-periphery relationship was anything but unidirectional. Instead, actors on both sides were active participants in the production of power through allegiance as well as rebellion and dissent.

Diffusion of the imperial center's power to local notables in the provinces throughout the eighteenth century has been called "decentralization"<sup>235</sup> of state power and "privatization"<sup>236</sup> of economic resources. It was argued that this diffusion of power away from the center toward the provinces started much earlier and peaked in the eighteenth century but this was not necessarily a destructive or destabilizing phenomenon for the empire. Shifts in international trade in the eighteenth century, for instance, were

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<sup>235</sup> Halil İnalcık, "Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, ed. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 27–52.

<sup>236</sup> Ariel Salzman, "An Ancien Regime Revisited: 'Privatization' and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993): 393–425.

not necessarily negative for the empire, as a whole; however, they often benefited local notables and other smaller power brokers rather than the imperial center.<sup>237</sup> Simply put, power was being re/produced and re/negotiated in a different manner. Emergence of the local notables could only point to the flexibility of the Ottomans in terms of co-opting and integrating various elements in the provinces into the imperial structure,<sup>238</sup> an ability historians detect in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as well.<sup>239</sup>

These arguments have been made to show that the diffusion of power from the center to the provinces did not mean the “decline” of the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. At the same time, the Ottoman center’s power relative to the periphery was diminished and it can be argued that the imperial center sought ways to strengthen its reduced role. Both the imperial center and the local notables attempted to protect their spheres of influence and assert their competing superiority over one another. The establishment of a new army and a so-called “new order” should be understood in this context. It was not only a response to the military advances of their northern and western neighbors, the Russians and the Habsburgs. The unreliability of the janissaries

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<sup>237</sup> Roger Owen, “Introduction,” in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), 133–151.

<sup>238</sup> Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994); Karen Barkey, “In Different Times: Scheduling and Social Control in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 to 1650,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 38, no. 3 (1996): 460–483.

<sup>239</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *Coping with the State: Political Conflict and Crime in the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1720* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995); Suraiya Faroqhi, “Coping with the Central State, Coping with Local Power: Ottoman Regions and Notables from the Sixteenth to the Early Nineteenth Century,” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 351–381.



against the center's struggle against Paspanoğlu in the Balkans is an example of why the center may have felt compelled to institute a new army.

The idea of strengthening the central authority through the establishment of an efficient, disciplined and loyal fighting force also governed the logic of reform proposals in the seventeenth century.<sup>240</sup> The center's ability to project its power at the expense of the periphery could only be possible, reformers reasoned, through a capable and disciplined army at the capital's disposal. Selim III was faced with multiple regional powerbrokers that sought to extend their influence often at the expense of the center.

It was an Ottoman art to coopt and integrate such contenders but when the state had very little to offer in this time period, local notables had other options including international alliances.<sup>241</sup> The Ottoman center not only had to push back against the Russians and Austrians in the Balkans and the French in North Africa, but also against local notables such as Paspanoğlu, who complicated the center's efforts to reassert control. While the center used to be able to rely on the support provided by local notables, this was no longer the case. Military reform had in its rationale that the reformed forces would be utilized against such domestic contenders as much as against foreign armies.<sup>242</sup> Such "dual use" of the new forces was supposed to enhance the

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<sup>240</sup> Levy, "Military Reform and the Problem of Centralization in the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century," 228.

<sup>241</sup> Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 214–215.

<sup>242</sup> In fact, Muslim rulers throughout the nineteenth century would link resistance to European imperialism as well as establishing an Islamic order at home with military reform and adoption of European military tactics. For an example of this in the Moroccan context, see Amira K. Bennison, "The 'New Order' and Islamic Order: The Introduction of the Nizami Army in the Western Maghrib and Its Legitimation, 1830-1873," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 4 (2004): 591–612.

position of the reforming elite and the sultan and it was not only the Ottomans but also the Iranians who followed their example in conceiving of western style militaries as a tool to establish modern autocratic rule.<sup>243</sup>

One of the incentives for the center to use New Order soldiers against internal threats was to prevent soldiers from wreaking havoc in post-conflict situations. For example, soldiers, who had successfully suppressed a rebellion in a village in Dubrovnik, were ordered to return to their barracks without damaging the environs of the village.<sup>244</sup> Such instances of soldiers' unruly behavior especially in the Balkans in this time period were partially responsible for the widespread "banditry" problem. The government must have calculated that the more disciplined and organized New Order soldiers could help avoid local backlash and chaos caused by bands of soldiers creating instability.

### ***The Ottoman Elite's Conception of Military Reform***

The advisors to the sultan submitted their opinions and suggestions about reorganization and improvement of the Ottoman army in the form of treatises (*layiha*). It has been argued that with the treatises, Selim III asked his advisors to submit their opinions with regard to the reform of the army, a practice modeled after the French *cahiers*.<sup>245</sup> There are some common and diverging features of these treatises, which will be examined here. Our analysis will seek to understand how the Ottoman administrators

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<sup>243</sup> Stephanie Cronin, "Importing Modernity: European Military Missions to Qajar Iran," *Comparative Studies in Society & History* 50, no. 1 (2008): 197–226.

<sup>244</sup> BOA, C. AS, 7476 (10 November 1977).

<sup>245</sup> Sipahi Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında Avrupa Dengesi Ve "Nizam-ı Cedid" Ordusu* (İstanbul: Göçebe Yayınları, 1997), 76.

and statesmen identified and conceived of the problem and what kinds of solutions they offered. What they may have ignored or failed to see will shed light on the rationale in constructing a new army as well as the reasons for resistance to the new army.

Although dubbed as the “new order,” what the “reformers” at the time had in mind was “restoring the old order” in the sense that the newly established military barracks and new recruitment would bring back the glorious past of the Ottoman “golden age.” In order to accomplish this, they would overhaul the recruitment and discipline practices in place in the existing corps while creating new barracks along with setting up military schools to train officers in the “military science.”<sup>246</sup> According to this framework, the old order (*kanun-ı kadim*) had been corrupted and the “spirit of the times” required new measures and reform.<sup>247</sup> Taking a political position on reform either to advance the interests of a certain group within the elite or to promote a reformist agenda was nothing new. Even in the “classical age,” various treatises had complained about the decadence of the janissary corps and the ease with which one could buy his way into the corps.<sup>248</sup> Ottoman elites had always used these frames of reference to justify their political agendas in their particular time period. Thus, dismal state of affairs they portrayed needs to be viewed with a critical eye.

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<sup>246</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Hümayunları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1942), 44.

<sup>247</sup> Öz, “Kanun-ı Kadim: Osmanlı Gelenekçi Söyleminin Dayanağı Mı, Islahat Girişimlerinin Meşrulaştırma Aracı Mı?”

<sup>248</sup> Mehmet Mert Sunar, “Ocak-ı Amire’den Ocak-ı Mülga’ya Doğru: Nizam-ı Cedid Reformları Karşısında Yeniçeriler,” in *Nizam-ı Kadim’den Nizam-ı Cedid’e III. Selim Ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 500.

The Ottoman elite's conception of the solution, in late the eighteenth century, envisioned a combination of reform measures to render the army more efficient in order to restore the old glory of the empire. This was partly to avoid the political costs associated with disbanding the existing forces. The Ottoman decision to avoid an outright confrontation with the existing military corps was criticized by modern historians who charged that the Ottomans did not "realize" that achievements of modern Europe was no match for the achievements of the sixteenth century Ottomans.<sup>249</sup> Leaving aside the Orientalist tendency of such an approach, the Ottoman reformers of the late eighteenth century tried to use the golden age trope to implement certain policies they deemed necessary for the strengthening of the Ottoman military might. As such, the idealized discipline of the Suleiman the Magnificent era Ottoman army, according to these observers, could be restored through "drills" conducted in peacetime.

"Drill" (*talim*) and "rifle practices" (*tüfenk talimi*) became almost magic words in the late eighteenth century. The advisors presented the drills of the golden age as key to military success without direct reference to the drills practiced in the western European armies. In fact, although the janissaries were supposed to practice twice a week, regular drills had already been somewhat abandoned by the beginning of the seventeenth century. Janissaries were not always given the gunpowder needed for such regular practice.<sup>250</sup> It is not entirely clear if an imperial decision to stop drills was made or this was an incremental drift away from regular drills due to lack of immediate external threats. It is also not clear if it was a function of the janissaries' merger with the broader society or

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<sup>249</sup> Shaw, "Origins," 292.

<sup>250</sup> Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 24.

their refusal to obey orders. It was probably due to a combination of all these factors reflecting a larger reality that constant drills were not as central for conducting warfare. It is thus difficult to explain lack of drills among the janissaries merely with their insubordination or disorderliness.

The majority of the treatises of the late eighteenth century used phrases such as “sciences of warfare” or “bearing arms according to the new sciences of battle” to describe what they considered to be the European war craft. As such, regular drills would be critical to setting up a modern capable military force. However, this would be presented as the “law of the Suleiman the Magnificent” to prevent backlash against drills, against which resistance among soldiers were clearly anticipated by the authors of the treatises.<sup>251</sup>

The rhetorical use of the disciplined and orderly soldiers of the golden age, however, was not only connected to the effort to make proposed changes acceptable to soldiers. It seems to have also provided somewhat of a concrete reform proposal in the minds of the reforming elite. Mehmed Raşid Efendi, for example, argued that the youth recruited from Anatolia and attached to the janissary corps in the capital used to spend their time conducting constant drills and learning the “science of war making.”<sup>252</sup> He recommended that the recruits should be paid salaries reflective of the commodity prices in order to prevent them from engaging in “profit making” to support themselves.<sup>253</sup> Defenders of the New Order army made the argument that the janissaries had been

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<sup>251</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 77–81.

<sup>252</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, “Nizam-ı Cedid’e Dair Layihalar,” *Tarih Vesikaları* i (February 1941): 420.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

central to the Ottoman success during the time of Suleiman the Magnificent whose law required that the janissaries devote all their time to the “art of war” in their barracks.<sup>254</sup> As time passed and conditions changed, the “languor of peacetime” led to the disobedience and disrespect of the janissaries for the “ancient laws.” Selim III, in an effort to reverse this “decay,” ordered that they train regularly in using rifles.<sup>255</sup>

Clearly, the New Order army’s defenders sought to justify the forging of a new order with the glory of a past golden age. This was not necessarily an easy sell and the rhetoric could only go so far. In trying to rally support for the establishment of the new army, for instance, Selim III tried to appeal to the elites and bureaucrats that the New Order could bring about the restoration of the time of Suleiman the Magnificent. Frustrated, Selim III complained that he was not the “only one with a stake in the fate of the state” but his bureaucrats, whom he ordered to carry out measures to implement the New Order, should be deeply involved.<sup>256</sup> To what extent restoring the golden age may have seemed like a lofty goal is hard to judge. Yet, it clearly was part of the discussion as an important rhetorical tool for political justification, ideological legitimacy, and bureaucratic goal setting.

In addition to the time of Suleiman the Magnificent, reformers could draw upon more contemporary examples outside the Ottoman realm to justify their agenda. The most obvious choice would have been the very armies the Ottomans failed to confront and defeat effectively such as the Austrian army. One of the important advisors of Selim

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<sup>254</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 46.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>256</sup> BOA, HAT, 9410 (1207/1792).

III was Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, who reportedly had advised the sultan even before his accession to the throne while Selim corresponded with King Louis XVI of France about reform.<sup>257</sup> He drafted his memorandum about military reform in the Ottoman Empire during his less than a year presence as an ambassador to Austria in 1792. During his time there, Ratib Efendi was supposed to observe the institutions of the Austrians to understand their military success. Carter Findley has convincingly argued that Ratib Efendi was propagating the reform efforts in the Ottoman Empire rather than trying to understand the Austrian institutions in their own context. Hence, his writings produced in Austria are prescriptions for reform in the Ottoman Empire rather than accurate observations of the situation in Austria.<sup>258</sup> Ratib Efendi's use of Austria instead of observing it industriously indicates that the image of the West as the superior model that needed to be emulated was not yet established.

Findley also points to the overwhelming emphasis (about eighty percent) on military matters in Ratib Efendi's writings. Furthermore, he raises a question as to how it was possible that Ratib Efendi could draft such a long report in such a short amount of time without even speaking the language of the country he was writing about.<sup>259</sup> It is clear that Ratib Efendi held strong personal views as to the necessity for a new order and he only needed his Austrian experience to serve as confirmation. Ratib Efendi described an ideal age from which the Ottomans had declined due to the later rulers' inability to

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<sup>257</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Selim III'ün Veliht İken Fransa Kralı Lui XVI İle Muhabereleleri," *Bellekten* II (1938).

<sup>258</sup> Carter V. Findley, "Ebu Bekir Ratib Efendi's Vienna Embassy Narrative: Discovering Austria or Propagandizing for Reform in Istanbul," *Wiener Zeitschrift Fur Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* 85 (1995): 40–80.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 45–47.

make changes necessitated by the new conditions. Since they had not reformed, the military power of the Empire declined and the soldiers lost their former discipline.<sup>260</sup>

A treatise in defense of the New Order submitted to Selim III, until recently known as *Koca Sekbanbaşı Risalesi*,<sup>261</sup> belonged to the court historian Ahmed Vasıf Efendi.<sup>262</sup> Written in the aftermath of a loss against the Russians in April 1791, the author blames the janissaries for the defeat.<sup>263</sup> It is also argued that this treatise was written following the first success of the New Order forces in Acre against Napoleon's forces in order to both defuse the janissary reaction and to underline the significant achievement of the new forces.<sup>264</sup>

Vasıf Efendi claims that he and his father were janissaries.<sup>265</sup> In his account, the janissaries were attacked vehemently for their connections with various segments of society. The author projects the concerns of the pro-New Order camp in terms of efficiency, discipline, and composition of the army back to the sixteenth century. He portrays an ideal age (the reign of Suleiman the Magnificent) when the janissaries would not allow any outsiders into their ranks.<sup>266</sup> But nowadays, the janissary corps was full of people from all sorts of backgrounds (converts, gypsies, foreign spies etc.) The logical

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>261</sup> Kemal Beydilli, "Sekbanbaşı Risalesinin Müellifi Hakkında," *Türk Kültürü İncelemeleri Dergisi* 12 (2005): 221–224.

<sup>262</sup> Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 181.

<sup>263</sup> Hakan Erdem, "The Wise Old Man, Propagandist and Ideologist: Koca Sekbanbaşı [sic] on the Janissaries, 1807," *Individual, Ideologies and Society: Tracing the Mosaic of Mediterranean History* (2000): 153–177.

<sup>264</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 85.

<sup>265</sup> Erdem, "Wise Old Man," 160–161.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 167.



extension of this accusation was that the army was supposed to be disciplined and rid of any outside influences.

Vasıf Efendi holds the janissaries responsible for allowing non-Muslims into their ranks, employing a vocabulary appealing to Islamic sensibilities of the people.<sup>267</sup> The janissaries, in return, were also invoking such language when they criticized and refused the uniforms and drills of the new army. Religious language used by both the reformers and the janissaries point to a competition over legitimacy, as both sides were seeking legitimacy in the eyes of the people through the use of religious symbols. After all, military reform did not entail a “simple process of borrowing” but “competitive emulation, reform, and creative adaptation of existing religio-political discourses for purposes of legitimation.”<sup>268</sup> This creative yet contested process of legitimization entailed the idealization of a so-called golden age and vilification of various classes in society, which were some of the tools used to delegitimize the janissaries and justify the establishment of the New Order army. At the same time, efforts to legitimize the new army were not as superficial as they may sound. Proponents of the New Order army did not see a mutually exclusive relationship between reform and religion. In fact, reform, according to them, was being undertaken for the success of Islam.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> Mahmud II, who abolished the Janissary Corps in 1826, utilized this kind of religious rhetoric as well. He told the public that they had found bodies imprinted with crosses on their chests, allegedly proving the existence of “infidel spies” within the Janissary Corps. *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>268</sup> Amira K. Bennison, “The ‘New Order’ and Islamic Order: The Introduction of the Nizami Army in the Western Maghrib and Its Legitimation, 1830-1873,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 4 (2004): 591.

<sup>269</sup> Kahraman Şakul, “Nizâm-ı Cedid Düşüncesinde Batılılaşma Ve İslami Modernleşme,” *Divan İlmi Araştırmalar* 19, no. 2 (2005): 117–150.

The Ottoman advisors commonly cited absence of registered soldiers in battlefields as a cause for the military defeats. The most organized group among these soldiers was the janissaries who, according to these advisors, avoided performing their duties as a result of their corruption. The janissaries would be the ones to express the discontent of the army in general, as they were organized into regiments (*orta*) that expressed their discontent in a variety of ways including mutinies initiated with the symbolic overturning of the cauldron of the janissary corps (*kazan kaldırma*).<sup>270</sup> Historically, it was the janissaries that led such rebellions within the army and ended the reign of sultans such as Osman II.<sup>271</sup> Ottoman advisors of the late eighteenth century identified the janissaries as the source of the problem because they were the most organized military corps with a strong sense of comradeship and their absence from the battlefield would exasperate the army's mobilization problem.

Some Ottoman historians, like Enveri,<sup>272</sup> recognized the voice of the soldiers themselves, who complained about not having enough provisions and even having to sell their property to continue the campaign. As the soldiers' complaints indicate, the inefficiency was the result of the government's inability to muster resources, financial and otherwise, for the campaign to make the war effort attractive enough for the soldiers. When the soldiers did not yield the victories expected of them but rather showed

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<sup>270</sup> Mehmet Mert Sunar, "Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826" (PhD, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2006).

<sup>271</sup> Baki Tezcan, "Searching for Osman: A Reassessment of the Deposition of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1618-1622)" (Princeton University, 2001); Baki Tezcan, "The 1622 Military Rebellion in Istanbul," in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jane Hathaway (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002), 25-43.

<sup>272</sup> Aksan, *Ottoman Wars*, 183.

rebellious behavior, the Ottoman center diagnosed the problem as a matter of training and discipline of the soldiers. However, the late eighteenth century campaigns were not militarily and economically appealing for the soldiers, as they often lacked prospects for winning the war and handsome financial incentives such as war stipends (*ulufe*). Even if the Ottomans were able to pay war stipends as they used to, this would have gone against the logic of modern warfare, which increasingly relied on disciplined soldiers who did not seek additional financial incentives to embark upon campaigns. One of the main strengths of the Ottoman army during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had been how well they were provided for by the state.<sup>273</sup> In the eighteenth century, unable to rely on highly disciplined soldiers, the Ottomans could not afford to pay for war making in the way they used to but instead viewed the soldiers' unruly behavior as the main problem.

Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi, another famous advisor to the sultan, suggested that it was necessary to convince the disorderly janissaries that learning the *art of war* was in line with the laws of Suleiman the Lawgiver whose reign was idealized as the golden age. However, he opined that disciplining the janissaries would not be enough, so a new army should be built. Some forty to fifty unmarried soldiers from within among the janissary regiments should be recruited to man the new army. In this way, some forty to fifty thousand soldiers could be trained within five to eight years.<sup>274</sup> This proposal may have been motivated by a desire to integrate the janissaries into the new project while defusing their potential opposition through transforming them into the New Order soldiers. Such proposals reveal the logic that guided the Ottoman military reform in that what was

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<sup>273</sup> Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare*.

<sup>274</sup> Besim Özcan, "Tatarcık Abdullah Efendi Ve Islahatlarla İlgili Layihası," *Türk Kültürü Araştırmaları* 25 (1987): 59.

essentially being proposed was a new form of military. Whereas the janissaries had had a corporate culture and a stake in the successes and the prestige of the empire, the new soldiery was meant to be disciplined cogs in a machine.

In his advice to the sultan in 1803 about how they should go about implementing changes in the janissary corps, Ramiz Efendi, the Minister of Artillery (*Humbarahane*), suggested that the janissaries should not be told the details of the new measures at the beginning. The measures would ultimately provide the Corps with *orderliness* and *unity*, which are necessary for the strength of the Corps itself. Even the janissaries themselves want to have a strong order. However, Ramiz Efendi claims, these ‘brainless soldiers’ (*bimağzan asakir*) are incapable of comprehension. Hence, the suggested measures should be implemented one at a time so as not to cause a rebellion among them. The janissary officers would be told the details of the new requirements to prevent gossip. The sultan responded to these suggestions positively and ordered the grand vizier to attach this opinion piece to the law. These matters were to be discussed more in detail in a council that would include Ramiz Efendi as well.<sup>275</sup>

It is clear that advisors to the sultan were aware of the possible consequences of implementing the new measures and suggested careful strategies to avoid a revolt by the janissaries. Their elitist perspective is also clear from Ramiz Efendi’s remark about the intellectual capabilities of the opposing parties. Furthermore, Ramiz Efendi hoped to convince the janissaries that these measures are for the strength of their own corps. Clearly, there was a tension between an elite surrounding the sultan and especially the lower echelons of the janissary corps.

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<sup>275</sup> BOA, HAT, 1767 (22 April 1803).

Yusuf Pasha in his treatise complained that when prompted to provide soldiers for new campaigns the janissary corps responded by suggesting that new *dalkılıç* soldiers should be recruited, which would have required extra financial resources. Yusuf Pasha, in this way, expressed his frustration with the difficulty in convincing existing soldiers to join the war effort. Thus, he suggested that new barracks similar to *Tophane*, *Humbarahane*, and *Talimhane* should be established and “ten or twelve thousand youths who have not been to the vicinity of these [existing barracks] from Anatolia and Rumelia in a similar fashion as the earlier times [referring to the *devshirme*] should be recruited.”

By suggesting that these youths should be from among those who have not been to the existing barracks, Yusuf Pasha was expressing the belief that such youth would not be corrupt as the janissaries he complains about. These youths, he suggested, should be taught the cannon making and *humbara* science and drilled in these areas. He also suggested that they should be kept in their region instead of being brought to the capital to be ready for the war effort when needed.<sup>276</sup> He further recommended that a single youth from households with 2-3 youths should be registered as gunners (*tüfengci*) and they should be exempt from taxes. They should drill in the presence of their officers twice a week and be subject to tri-monthly inspections. If any would die, others from outside should be registered anew in order to prevent duplicate pay, a measure meant to prevent the common practice of pay ticket transfers within the corps.<sup>277</sup> In these suggestions, we can see the search for an orderly recruitment and drill structure proposed as a solution to the military woes of the government.

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<sup>276</sup> Ahmet Öğreten, “Nizam-ı Cedid’e Dair Islahat Layihaları” (Master’s Thesis, Istanbul University, 1989), 1–2.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–6.

Abdullah Berri Efendi concurred with Yusuf Pasha on the socio-economic background of the new recruits. He suggested that rural youths who had not experienced cities and towns but grown up in villages should be targeted. There were many orphans who would make brave soldiers. He noted that those youth who had not been circumcised should be circumcised by the state and taught religion, indicating the need to civilize them. He suggested that these recruits be trained under the direction of fifty to a hundred officers to be brought from Prussia.<sup>278</sup> Within a couple of years, twenty thousand youths could be recruited and they would “easily do whatever is asked of them anywhere in the empire.”<sup>279</sup>

Another treatise submitted by Abdullah Molla Efendi identified 1768 as the date when the janissaries began to be ineffective compared to their glorious days as a Bektashi dominated institution in earlier centuries.<sup>280</sup> Abdullah Molla Efendi cited the janissaries as saying that it was because the imperial government tended to favor the Turks and Turcomans that they were ineffective and that it was out of their hands.<sup>281</sup> He recounted that the janissaries themselves said, “One cannot overcome the infidel’s firepower, cannons, and rifles and enter their wheel of fortune.”<sup>282</sup> The janissaries would complain that the corps used to be favored in the time of the Suleiman the Magnificent but not

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<sup>278</sup> For an examination of the Ottoman-Prussian alliance in late eighteenth century, see Kemal Beydilli, *1790 Osmanlı-Prusya İttifakı: Meydana Gelişi, Tahlili, Tatbiki* (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1981).

<sup>279</sup> Karal, “Nizam-ı Cedid’e,” 424.

<sup>280</sup> John Kingsley Birge, *The Bektashi Order of Dervishes* (London, Hartford, Conn.: Luzac & co.; Hartford Seminary Press, 1937).

<sup>281</sup> Öğreten, “Islahat Layihaları,” 7.

<sup>282</sup> “Kafirin ateşine ve top ve tüfengine takat gelmez ve çarh-ı feleklerine girilmez.” Öğreten, “Islahat Layihaları,” 7.

anymore. It seems important that the advisor relayed that the janissaries admitted to their own ineffectiveness along with their complaints that they felt they were not treated in the same way as they used to be during the *Golden Age*. It is interesting to note that both the proponents of reform and the janissaries themselves referred to the time of Suleiman the Magnificent for justification of their respective positions.

On specific military measures, Abdullah Molla Efendi recommended that 40-50 janissaries from each regiment should be enlisted and offered salaries and extra payments (*ulufe*).<sup>283</sup> By enlisting from within the corps, advisors might have aimed at a gradual transformation of the corps, and simultaneously, incorporation of the janissary corps in the new army. By continuing to import military advisors such as Baron de Tott, newly recruited soldiers could be taught the military sciences in a few years. And in 7-8 years, the number of soldiers who were trained in these sciences and drilled accordingly could reach a contingent of 40-50 thousand strong.<sup>284</sup> In order to prevent the soldiers from having a permanent residence in Anatolia and Rumelia, they would be often recalled to the capital to demonstrate their newly acquired skills and would be redeployed by rotation to different provinces of the empire. He suggests that the drills and study of the new military sciences shouldn't be restricted to the janissary corps but should be applied to others such as *Cebeci*, *Topçu*, and *Arabacı*.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Öğreten, "Islahat Layihaları," 8–9.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*, 10–11.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

It was not only the advisors to the sultan who expressed their opinions on how to reform. Members of the *ulema*<sup>286</sup> as well as senior officers and elders of certain corps were asked about their opinions.<sup>287</sup> Although they have discussed these matters in detail in the imperial councils, we do not quite know of their approach to reform in general since they did not submit formal treatises on the matter. It would be revealing to know to what extent the formal treatises and the opinions of the military officers overlapped.

The common thread in the treatises submitted to the sultan on military reform seems to be the suggestion to discipline and reorganize the janissaries while simultaneously establishing a new army. According to them, the combination of overwhelming firepower of the Austrians and Russians<sup>288</sup> and the disobedience of the undisciplined janissaries was responsible for the military failures of the empire and this could only be resolved through discipline and constant drills.<sup>289</sup> The janissaries as well as the traditional corps of the army operated within the logic of comradeship and lacked the modern bureaucratic hierarchies and forms of power exerted through mechanisms of discipline.<sup>290</sup> There should have been no surprise about this. However, while the advisors

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<sup>286</sup> Yüksel Çelik, “Nizam-ı Cedid’in Niteliği Ve III. Selim İle II. Mahmud Devri Askeri Reformlarına Dair Tespitler (1789-1839),” in *Nizam-ı Kadim’den Nizam-ı Cedid’e III. Selim Ve Dönemi*, ed. Seyfi Kenan (İstanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 587.

<sup>287</sup> BOA, HAT, 14768 (5 June 1796).

<sup>288</sup> The Russian Empire had already “evolved into an autocratic centralized empire” partly in response to Ottoman might in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Russians were able to “extract resources and use military force more independently of local power holders” than their Ottoman counterparts. Gábor Ágoston, “Military Transformation in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, 1500–1800,” *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, no. 2 (2011): 283.

<sup>289</sup> Fatih Yeşil, “Nizâm-ı Cedid Ordusunda Talim Ve Terbiye (1790-1807)” no. 52 (2012): 37.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.



were focused on the corruption and inefficiency of the janissaries, the social and economic reasons for this situation were not explored, nor the implications of transitioning from comradeship to disciplined re-ordering of the army.

In terms of the prejudices of these advisors, studies show that those educated in the newly founded engineering schools<sup>291</sup> saw themselves as somehow superior in their understanding of “science.” Their special insight into science privileged them as the educated ones in opposition to the “ignorant” ones.<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, this new class of educated men equated the adoption of new military “science” and establishment of new military schools and barracks with loyalty to the sultan.<sup>293</sup> In presenting the issue of military reform in this manner, this group of men did not shy away from labeling the opponents of the New Order Army “a class of idiots and superstitious [people].”<sup>294</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

The “New Order” has been hailed as a full-fledged progressive modernization project with a high level of coherence and an internal logic modeled on Western standards. As the argument follows, the understanding on the part of the Ottoman ruling elite that they lagged behind their European counterparts prompted them to attempt to catch up with the West. Thus, they endeavored to modernize their army, rationalize their military and civilian administration, and discipline their finances following the European

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<sup>291</sup> Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim Ve Matbaacılık Tarihinde Mühendishâne, Mühendishâne Matbaası Ve Kütüphânesi: 1776-1826* (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Eren, 1995).

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

example. This ‘imitation of the West’ argument overlooks the fact that the Ottomans were creating and experimenting with new forms of power themselves in an effort to confront the political, economic, and social costs created by the military defeats and their decreasing influence in the international arena. Financial rationalization, fiscal discipline, rationalized re-ordering of military corps, and regular drills were some of their solutions to problems, which they did not necessarily see as “copying” the West but necessities for military effectiveness. Thus, there was not an ideological and psychological duality or incoherence in their approach to reform as a result of their aspiration to keep up with a “superior” center of power.

Fiscal rationalization (dedicated new budget), military discipline (continuous drills), efficiency (reform of the janissary pay tickets), and conscription were not simple imports from superior counterparts but the Ottomans’ arguably imperfect and insufficient responses and solutions to the political and financial crises of the time. These responses were not immediately effective in achieving military victories but it is clear that they had long lasting institutional legacies for the evolution of the Ottoman state. The immediate military challenge posed by the Russians and the Habsburgs externally and the political challenge posed by the local notables internally constituted distinct confrontations that forced Ottoman elites to rethink their military, administration, and finances with increasing emphasis on efficiency, rationalization, and discipline, features of the modern state’s logic.

As the Ottoman elites implemented hallmark features of the modern state as such, they were not necessarily committed to a single model. Only by abandoning the idea that there was a straightforward imported model from the West can we capture the complexity

and nuances of the late eighteenth century's reform efforts. This approach explains better the diversity of references the elites used to push forward their specific recommendations. While some argued that these measures had constituted the very basis of success of the Ottoman "golden age," others pointed to the success of the Europeans as the proof that their specific recommendations of reform were valid. Neither argument dictated a single approach to be implemented in this time period. Both the proponents and the opponents of reform in this period entertained diverse as well as conflicting conceptions of what the New Order army signified. Consequently, the opposition to reform was not an opposition to the West per se but to the dictates of modern forms of power the Ottoman statesmen sought to implement in a non-Western context.

The social reality on the ground did not matter all that much in the Ottoman elites' analyses. Rationalization and discipline of the finances and the soldiers represented the crux of their suggestions. By adhering to the idea of a golden age, the advisors sought to legitimize their efforts to make the army more efficient and rationalized. The narrow focus on creating an effective disciplined army prevented the advisors from addressing the more difficult and broader economic and social problems hindering military efficiency. Furthermore, they failed to discuss the social implications of rationalizing the military enterprise through establishing a new army by ignoring the connections the janissaries had with various societal groups. These groups benefited from affiliation with the janissaries through tax exemptions and evading recruitment. The elites did not adequately consider the possible consequences of recruitment from a society with such complex set of ties to the janissaries.

### Chapter 3 – The New Order Army

#### *Establishing the New Order Army*

The Ottoman efforts to prevent the Austrian and Russian encroachments upon Ottoman lands during the wars of 1787-1792 were largely unsuccessful. Through the Treaty of Sistova in 1791 with Austria and the Treaty of Jassy in 1792 with Russia, the Ottomans officially recognized the Russian annexation of Crimea in 1783 and loss of control over the Black Sea to Russia. Crimea's loss was a serious trauma for the Ottomans, as it represented the forfeiture of a Muslim majority land to the Russians for the first time. Since the end of the Ottoman advance towards Europe at the beginning of the century,<sup>295</sup> difficult years and successive defeats at the hands of the Russian armies throughout the eighteenth century culminated in the loss of the Crimea, laying bare the military failures of the empire, prompting debates over the overall outlook of the army and military reform.

The Ottomans decided to move forward with the establishment of a new army alongside the old one in this political context under the psychological impact of disastrous military losses suffered throughout the eighteenth century. Many reasons contributed to the Ottoman elites' decision to establish the New Order army at this point, some of which are discussed in the second chapter. Failed attempts at effective recruitment for the wars against Austria and Russia in addition to the reluctance and resistance of local notables in providing manpower and resources for the war efforts

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<sup>295</sup> Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, "The Formal Closure of the Ottoman Frontier in Europe: 1699-1703," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 89, no. 3 (1969): 467–475.

ensured that the central government found itself fighting various internal rebellions.<sup>296</sup>

When combined with the military inefficiency of the janissaries as well as of other corps, the recommendations of the advisors (*layihas*) convinced Selim III that he had to create a disciplined army at the disposal of the center beyond and in addition to the old units he could no longer count on.

In an attempt to create a formidable force at par with their contemporaries, the Ottomans were intent on transforming their existing army and add new units through constant drills and discipline. “Endless, repeated, systematic” drills had already proved to be crucial to military success in Europe.<sup>297</sup> The New Order army’s establishment was to be guided by the same principle, i.e. the centrality of constant drills to create a disciplined and loyal force. In the European armies, “obedience no longer depended on personal connections and inherited social ties, but on bureaucratic appointment and promotion” and “soldiers became replaceable parts in a sort of a human machine.”<sup>298</sup>

Initially, the new army was a modest attempt to create professional army units in the capital. Two new barracks were founded in the eastern and western parts of Istanbul, namely in Üsküdar, and Levend. By the end of 1806, the size of the new army reached some 1,590 officers and 22,685 men, half of them stationed in Istanbul and the rest in different barracks throughout Anatolia.<sup>299</sup> This is a considerable growth over the course

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<sup>296</sup> Dina R. Khoury, “The Ottoman Centre Versus Provincial Power-Holders: An Analysis of the Historiography,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3: The Late Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 135.

<sup>297</sup> McNeill, *The Age of Gunpowder Empires, 1450-1800*, 21.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>299</sup> Shaw, *Old and New*, 437–449.

of Selim III's reign but both the financial constraints and resistance by the existing corps and the society would prevent a true transformation of the Ottoman fighting force as a whole.

It is difficult to speak of a full-fledged launching of a new army, especially at the beginning. Prior to establishing the Üsküdar barracks, the government first set up the Levend barracks, which housed a mere 468 men and 20 officers and lacked the “magnificence” its name implied. The soldiers had to live in wooden shacks during the first year because the construction of the regular barracks was incomplete. Within three years' time, the construction of “three barracks, a rifle factory, two mosques, and a school” was completed. Regular training and drills went on under the direction of foreign military advisors and the sultan would frequently inspect the barracks.<sup>300</sup> Although we do not have the exact details of the new training and drills conducted in the new barracks, references to basic training twice a day indicate that the soldiers were subject to regular training and drills.<sup>301</sup> Training was most regular and intense in barracks in the capital and was probably less so in the barracks established later in various towns throughout Anatolia.<sup>302</sup>

At the time of the establishment of the new barracks, the government avoided a fanfare surrounding the new army corps out of concern for reaction by the existing forces including the janissaries.<sup>303</sup> The government named the new units “magnificent soldiers” and attached them first to the old Imperial Guard corps (*Bostaniyan-ı Hassa*) as its

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<sup>300</sup> Shaw, “Origins,” 299.

<sup>301</sup> Yeşil, “Talim Ve Terbiye,” 43.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>303</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 94.

infantry-rifle branch (*Bostani Tüfenkçisi*).<sup>304</sup> The old army units, who would have viewed the new ones as rivals to themselves, could have created problems for the government's efforts to establish a new corps. Thus, the decision was made to set up the new army in a seemingly subordinate position to the imperial guard within the context of an apparent reorganization of the army units. The government had the high level janissary officers sign a deed promising that they would not oppose the reorganization efforts in the army.<sup>305</sup>

In order to reduce a possible janissary reaction, the government also asked that the janissary regiments provide soldiers for the new army in addition to new recruitment from elsewhere. The janissaries were expected to conduct drills in the same way that the New Order soldiers did. Such precautions clearly helped the government avoid an immediate reaction by the existing army units but they would prove insufficient to stop janissary participation in the downfall of the New Order experiment. This was probably due also to the lack of a clear strategy to create an effective fighting force in the long run and transform the existing army units into stakeholders in the new effort.

This effort was more an "experiment" in creating disciplined professional army units than a full attempt at a solid new army to replace the old one. Nor can it be called a "state-of-the-art army" even in comparison to the janissaries and provincial troops,<sup>306</sup> as the New Order army cannot be treated as entirely outside the traditional forces. The

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<sup>304</sup> Shaw, "Origins," 297–298.

<sup>305</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 96.

<sup>306</sup> Christoph K. Neumann, "Political and Diplomatic Developments," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, ed. Suraiya N. Faroqhi, vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60.

establishment of a new army entailed integration of those existing forces as well. We cannot definitively prove that Selim III already had a plan to eliminate eventually “one of the best organized groups” in society<sup>307</sup> by wiping out the old army and replacing it with the New Order forces. Thus, it is difficult to argue that the reformists were simply paying lip service to the old forces by including the reorganization of the old corps in the New Order measures. The evidence suggests that the elites did not necessarily envision a radical change to the entire imperial army structure but conceived of the newly created corps as part of a broader agenda that included restructuring of the old forces. The hybridity in the reform efforts, reorganization and disciplining of the old forces while setting up new corps, may not necessarily have been intentional but a consequence of the financial constraints and the fear of a backlash.

### ***Funding the New Army: The New Revenue (İrad-ı Cedid)***

The Ottoman elites understood the need for a separate budget for the new army if the new corps were to truly serve as a modern standing army in the long run. The New Revenue (*İrad-ı Cedid*) was set up to fund the new army on March 1, 1793 under the directorship of Mustafa Reşid Pasha to function as a dedicated source of revenue for the financing of the New Order army. As it was not conceived of as a proper “budget,” it was not, especially at the beginning, non-military technocrats experienced in budgetary matters who oversaw the New Revenue. Mustafa Reşid Pasha assumed military responsibilities as the supervisor of the trained soldiers (*Talimli Askeri Nazırı*) as well as the financial management of the new revenue. It was only in 1801 when the New Order

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<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 61.



Army had grown close to 10,000 soldiers and officers that financial and administrative duties were detached from the military duties of the Supervisor.<sup>308</sup>

This was clearly not a “budget” in the modern sense of the term, as the effort was primarily focused on “recovering or confiscating abandoned tax farms or military fiefs.”<sup>309</sup> Financing the increased costs of raising and maintaining large land-based armies proved difficult for the pre-modern imperial administrations. The Ottomans were not alone in their inability to increase tax revenues.<sup>310</sup> Neither was privatizing the war effort through “outsourcing” to wealthy individuals, an Ottoman practice like their European counterparts.<sup>311</sup> On the contrary, the state was very much interested in shoring up the political and financial control it exerted over the provincial notables and administrators. The state’s efforts to find new revenue and to redirect existing sources through setting up a new fund were probably aimed at ensuring recentralization of lost revenues through the invention of new financial mechanisms.<sup>312</sup> To finance the new revenue, the state relied on redirection of existing resources while also exacting some new taxes, which caused displeasure and triggered reaction from various groups of power brokers as well as the general public.

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<sup>308</sup> The post of supervisor of training (*Talimli Askeri Nazırı*) was transferred to the supervisor of the cannon and cannon-wagon corps, while the New Order supervisor retained his financial and administrative duties. Shaw, “Origins,” 302.

<sup>309</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “The Ottoman Military and State Transformation in a Globalizing World,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 261.

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*, 260.

<sup>311</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, “War and Peace,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 116.

<sup>312</sup> Yeşil, “Kara Ordusunda Değişim,” 6.

The resources for the New Revenue would consist of extra taxes the government exacted on the population and some of the existing sources the government redirected towards the new fund.<sup>313</sup> A new tax on cereal grains in the amount of 10,000 piasters (*guruş*) was imposed and the income was to be channeled into the New Revenue. In addition, a new officer to oversee the cereal grains was to be appointed. Compulsory taxes were imposed on wine<sup>314</sup> and spirits,<sup>315</sup> which would be overseen by a new officer as well. Various other taxes such as customs taxes and taxes from sales of various goods (walnuts, coffee, grapes, wool etc.) were directed to the new revenue as well.<sup>316</sup> Some taxes that were considered relatively “easier to collect such as *Rüsum-ı Zecriyye* (revenue collected from the consumption of tobacco, rakı, wine, and coffee), wool, lint, bristle, cotton, and cotton-thread, gale-nuts, dyes, and acorn revenues were increased one *para* for the İrad-ı Cedid Treasury.”<sup>317</sup> These additional sources of income and new taxes were supposed to fund the clothing, boots, and rifles for the new “magnificent soldiers” (New Order soldiers) to be recruited for the Levend and Üsküdar barracks.<sup>318</sup> New taxes were imposed on sheep’s wool and goat hair, which had not been taxed previously.<sup>319</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Shaw, “Origins,” 295.

<sup>314</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 44.

<sup>315</sup> Shaw, “Nizam-ı Cedid,” 173.

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>317</sup> Musa Çadircı, “Renovations in the Ottoman Army,” *Revue Internationale D’Histoire Militaire* 67 (1988): 88.

<sup>318</sup> Fahri Ç. Derin, “Yayla İmamı Risâlesi,” *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3, no. 8 (1973): 216–217.

<sup>319</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 44.

More efficient collection of existing sources and their redirection helped contribute to the growth of the New Revenue. Cotton *mukataa* income was in the hands of several large estate (*malikane*) holders and the government judged that true potential of this source could not be realized as it was subject to a monopoly of large estate holders and they could not cope with the collection of all the cotton taxes throughout the empire. The government decided to redirect this source to the New Revenue administration.<sup>320</sup> The government had to ensure the safety of the sources for the new treasury. For example, the local officers in Belgrade had to make sure that the sources directed toward the *İrad-ı Cedid* were properly protected.<sup>321</sup> The task at hand for the officials was manifold, as they had to manage redirection, protection, and continuation of revenue sources.

In addition to new taxes and more efficient collection of existing sources, the fund's supervisor moved to channel income from vacated tax farms and fiefs in the provinces into the new revenue. In the wake of the end of war on the Austrian front in 1790-1791, the government conducted a survey of small and large fiefs to determine the absentee fiefs. Such revenues were reallocated to new individuals to avoid revenue loss. The government also used punitive measures to prevent holders of such revenue from remaining on the sidelines during the war campaigns while benefiting from the fief revenues.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> BOA, HAT, 2243.D (29 August 1801)

<sup>322</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 44.

By the end of 1792, more than four hundred fiefs brought revenues of seven thousand piasters monthly.<sup>323</sup> In 1798, such income had reached 6,500,000 piasters, 1,000,000 of which were paid to the imperial treasury to make up for lost revenues. The remaining balance paid for the salaries and expenses of the new recruits for the New Order army but training and creating a modern army was not the sole focus of the New Revenue. Funds were allocated for military campaigns against internal enemies, such as the mountain bandits in the Balkans and in Anatolia.<sup>324</sup> In a way, income from local sources was being channeled back to the same regions to finance the fighting against the local notables who were not always seen as illegitimate by the local population. The revenue was not dedicated exclusively to building a modern army but to wage the center's wars against decentralized loci of power. Lacking a modern "budget" constituted a problem for the new army while the state was struggling to come to terms with fiscal rationalization in general.

The New Revenue did not create or rely on new economic resources; instead, it focused on redirection of existing resources such as local fiefs<sup>325</sup> previously distributed to local notables. In 1800, for example, revenue of the districts of Bolu, Bursa, and Karaman were seized for the new fund.<sup>326</sup> This also created one of the sources of grievance against the New Order army, as it caused reshuffling of sources of income at the imperial as well as provincial levels. The revenue would now support the soldiers of the new army instead of supporting the local forces that would be recruited and trained by

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<sup>323</sup> Shaw, "Nizam-ı Cedid," 175.

<sup>324</sup> Shaw, "Origins," 299.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, 296.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

the local notables.<sup>327</sup> While some local notables participated in the new arrangement, others did not. Thus, the imperial government created a certain level of tension in the provinces between the new army's supporters and opponents, which also reflected the center-periphery conflict with regard to military reform.

The New Revenue's total income had reached some 32,250,000 piasters and growing by 1798.<sup>328</sup> However, the dire fiscal situation the empire found itself in and the fact that the revenue from the already collected tax resources was insufficient led the Ottoman elites to expect relatively marginal benefits from political conflicts in Europe. For instance, the Ottoman envoy to Paris, Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, hoped that the European merchants' displeasure and concerns about the war between France and Austria might result in an influx of merchants into the Ottoman Empire, which could bring about increased trade and increase sources of tax income for the Ottoman state to finance the New Order army.<sup>329</sup> Ebubekir Ratib Efendi does not seem to have outlined a clear strategy to enable European merchants' influx into the empire but instead relied on a hope that never seriously materialized. Ratib Efendi may not have presented this idea as a serious option but what is significant is that he recognized that the Ottoman government's lack of resources was a serious obstacle for the funding of a new army.

While a certain degree of fiscal discipline was envisioned to enable the creation of the new revenue, the central government still used it to pay for salaries of soldiers in various fortresses instead of dedicating it fully to the New Order army's expenses. The

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<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

<sup>328</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 45.

<sup>329</sup> Yeşil, "Looking at the French Revolution Through Ottoman Eyes: Ebubekir Ratib Efendi's Observations," 300.

new revenue, however, was not sufficient. For example, the janissaries of the Anapa fortress could not be paid, so the government officials had to stall them with excuses in an effort to prevent their reaction.<sup>330</sup> The sultan's repetitive calls to bring order to the Ottoman state's finances were met with the harsh reality that the Ottomans could not financially sustain the military forces. Thus, the discontent of the soldiers, be it the janissaries and the new recruits, was unavoidable.

The Ottoman government found it difficult to reach a targeted number of soldiers and to keep the new soldiers within their barracks because of financial constraints. In an undated document, we learn that the number of soldiers in the newly established Palace Guard Rifle Corps (*Bostancı Tüfenkçileri*) had reached a combined six thousand in Istanbul and in the provinces. The document details the expenses to be incurred to reach the targeted number of ten thousand soldiers. The chief accountant estimates that the necessary amount, nine thousand purses (*kises*),<sup>331</sup> is equal to about half of the New Revenue (*İrad-ı Cedid*). The chief accountant's suggestion was that no more money should be spent from the treasury. The sultan agreed and ordered that spending money from the new treasury be stopped while still trying to increase the number of soldiers. The chief accountant's remark that the continuation of the services of the already recruited soldiers depended on the timely payment of their salaries exposes another dimension of the financial dilemmas in this period.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> BOA, HAT, 9497 (1796).

<sup>331</sup> According to this calculation, each soldier was paid 15 *guruş* monthly as salary and for food in addition to 50-*guruş* annual allowance for clothing.

<sup>332</sup> BOA, C. AS, 9590 (Undated).

The new revenue was used to pay for the salaries of janissaries in various fortresses when the imperial budget failed to do so.<sup>333</sup> For instance, the New Revenue paid for salaries of the janissary artillerymen at the Ivarin fortress.<sup>334</sup> Similarly, Hotin fortress's janissaries and armorers were paid some 76,000 piasters towards their salaries.<sup>335</sup> The janissaries could go for months or even years without being paid due to their engagement in economic activities, their social networks, and group solidarity which ensured internal cohesion and discipline. Belonging to the corps entailed more than financial incentives only. However, this was not the case with the newly recruited soldiers; professional soldiers needed to be paid their salaries on time if discipline was to be maintained. However, betrayal of the fiscal discipline as such would prevent the new revenue from growing into a fully independent budget.

When the new revenue ran out of funds, it had to be supplied with money from the imperial mint. The officials were mindful of the negative psychological impact such news could create. The government tried to keep such borrowing between the new revenue and the imperial budget secret since it would expose that “there is no money in the New Revenue and money is being taken from the Mint.”<sup>336</sup> In 1806, the government had been unable to pay for the salaries of the soldiers in the Menteşe regiment housed in the Üsküdar barracks<sup>337</sup> although the New Order recruits were supposed to receive monthly payments. At the end of his rule, Selim III confessed that he had spent all his

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<sup>333</sup> BOA, HAT, 10775 (1796).

<sup>334</sup> BOA, C. AS, 31307 (25 March 1800).

<sup>335</sup> BOA, C. AS, 37725 (28 April 1805).

<sup>336</sup> BOA, HAT, 7958 (1797).

<sup>337</sup> BOA, C. AS, 37352 (18 November 1805).

money on the “Paspanoğlu problem” and asked the Mint to “try its best to make two thousand purses.”<sup>338</sup>

The new budget was not free of mismanagement and corruption. The sultan had to issue stern warnings to the vizier İbrahim Efendi, who was responsible for the management of the new budget, for his “disregard” for the New Revenue regulations, as he was making too much money off of the *mukataa* income. The sultan insisted that he be extremely careful and not waste “even a piaster” if he does not want to provoke the sultan’s fury.<sup>339</sup> This is yet another indication of the government’s failures to create an efficient way of financing the newly created corps. Inability to pay soldiers on time and mismanagement were only some of the many problems plaguing the new revenue. Ultimately, the government failed to transform the new revenue into an independent modern budget used only for the purposes of creating a modern army.

Included in the New Order regulations was the Ottoman government’s requirement that all persons who would be given or who would assume military fiefs upon the death of a fief-holder to present themselves in person in the imperial capital to undergo “examination.” Such an examination was to determine whether the would-be fief-holder was in fact an active military person.<sup>340</sup> This regulation must have been introduced because many fief-holders did not reside in the district where they held fief-holdings. Such government efforts to ensure fiscal discipline must have created discontent among fief-holders who enjoyed the financial benefits of a flexible system.

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<sup>338</sup> BOA, HAT, 1679 (7 February 1807).

<sup>339</sup> BOA, HAT, 7532 (7 February 1807).

<sup>340</sup> “*Harb u darb ashabından olduğu mu’ayene olunmağla*,” BOA, C. AS, 2040 (11 June 1797).



From the government's perspective, income from fiefs could only be enjoyed directly by active military personnel. But the reality was that fiefs exchanged hands between various financiers and many of them were not in a position to assemble soldiers to fight wars, as the center would have liked.

A similar recommendation for examination was made for the holders of *tumar* and *zeamet* in Cyprus. These individuals should show up in person and attendance (*yoklama*) would be taken every three years just like how the governor of Baghdad recently had done it.<sup>341</sup> However, the government made an exception for those who were protecting the Cyprus fortress upon a recommendation that their appearance in person before the tax collector would be sufficient.<sup>342</sup> Although it was decreed that the distribution of the fiefs in Cyprus were to be made based on the New Order rules<sup>343</sup> just like the other provinces, the exception seems to have been applied to the entire island<sup>344</sup> later on, as travel from Cyprus may have proven cumbersome.

Janissary pay tickets (*esame*) were one of the major targets of the New Order efforts to rationalize and discipline the government expenditures. The government documents revealed the practice of these pay tickets being accumulated in the hands of certain individuals and circulated among janissaries. When a certain janissary left the corps for one reason or another, his pay ticket was kept within the corps instead of being

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<sup>341</sup> BOA, C. AS, 45190 (1 June 1797).

<sup>342</sup> BOA, C. AS, 3040 (12 May 1797).

<sup>343</sup> BOA, C. AS, 45190 (1 June 1797).

<sup>344</sup> BOA, C. AS, 44724 (19 May 1801).

returned to the government. It had become a common practice that the pay ticket of a deceased<sup>345</sup> or absent soldier would be kept by and transferred between the regiments.<sup>346</sup>

One government document claimed that of more than half of fifteen thousand swordsmen's (*dalkılıç*) pay tickets were vacant (*mahlul*). The salaries being paid towards these vacancies should have been returned to the imperial treasury (*beytülmal*). The government forbid any "transfer of pay tickets" in an effort to "bring order" to these practices as late as 1807.<sup>347</sup> The sultan was sensitive to the matter of "transfer" of pay tickets between different regiments within the janissary corps. Upon the janissary agha's request to give some 73,000 piasters worth of janissary *zeamet* to a certain *solakbaşı*, the sultan opted to listen to the agha's advice probably because he wanted the income to remain within the same regiment instead of being transferred to another one.<sup>348</sup> In other instances, the imperial treasury simply overtook the salaries due to janissaries who had died. The government returned to the treasury some 5,701 piasters that would have been paid for the daily services of 209 janissaries in the fortress of İsmail.<sup>349</sup> Furthermore, the government tried to prevent the circulation of resources within and among the soldiers. Those soldiers who resold their *miri* could be punished with jail time; however, the

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<sup>345</sup> This was not a practice unique to the Ottomans, as the officers in the European armies too kept the names of the deceased soldiers on the books to receive additional pay and rations, Aksan, "One-Eyed Fighting," 226. See also Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan*, 30.

<sup>346</sup> BOA, HAT, 14060 (19 August 1802).

<sup>347</sup> BOA, HAT, 19360 (1807).

<sup>348</sup> BOA, HAT, 12703 (1805).

<sup>349</sup> BOA, HAT, 11743 (31 July 1791).

government avoided delivering such punishments publicly fearing the soldier's affiliation with the janissary corps.<sup>350</sup>

While trying to establish a semblance of fiscal discipline within the military, the state had to spend more money to supply the provisions for the army. The state used to buy foodstuffs for the army at artificially low prices mandated by the government in the past, which led to the producer's unwillingness to sell their crops to the government. Selim III had to introduce measures for the government to purchase at the actual market prices in an effort to address the producers' discontent and make available necessary provisions for the army's use.<sup>351</sup> The government's efforts to match market prices proved to be an extra burden on the imperial finances.

Of the many challenges this new experiment had to face, availability of financial resources both to attract and recruit soldiers in large numbers as well as to support them financially remained the most important one. The government's attempts to put its financial house in order through fiscal discipline and rationalization practices achieved mixed results at best. These measures were not applied universally and exceptions were endemic while they had the effect of bringing together individual soldiers, local notables, and over-taxed populations in their discontent against the New Order army and the revenue.

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<sup>350</sup> BOA, HAT, 11521 (1791).

<sup>351</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 45.

### *Manning the New Army*

Soldiers for the new army were recruited from among the unemployed youth of Istanbul and from other urban centers in Anatolia supplied by local notables such as Çapanoğlu.<sup>352</sup> Also, the expansion of the New Order army to Anatolian provinces, through Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha's efforts, served to increase the size of the army in a substantial way.<sup>353</sup> Nevertheless, the size of the army remained modest in the face of the domestic and international challenges facing the central government. More importantly, the military effectiveness of the new units was not a given. While there were strict rules to protect them from the problems that plagued the old army units, it proved difficult to establish discipline among the new forces as well.

The new soldiers found their pay insufficient and would occasionally leave their barracks to engage in trade and other occupations in the nearby marketplaces. This caused soldiers to miss the drills sometimes and led to lack of discipline,<sup>354</sup> a handicap of the old army corps that the new units were supposed to be immune from. The number of soldiers was greatly reduced in 1798, for instance, when desertion became a common occurrence<sup>355</sup> especially because of the government's deployment of the new forces against the French in Acre in the wake of the French invasion of Egypt. The New Order army officers often facilitated desertion, as they could hold onto the pay tickets of the

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<sup>352</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Çapan Oğulları," *Bellekten* 38, no. 150 (1974): 215–261.

<sup>353</sup> Yeşil, "Kara Ordusunda Değişim," 66.

<sup>354</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 128.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

deserters.<sup>356</sup> According to one calculation, the ratio of deserters to all the registered soldiers could be as high as fifteen percent.<sup>357</sup>

The Ottoman government tried subsequently to man the new barracks in Levend and Üsküdar by recruiting youths from various regions in Anatolia in addition to recruitment in Istanbul. Such recruitment efforts had to be accompanied by financial and other incentives for the soldiers as well as for the residents of the localities where recruitment took place. This was done so that people would not try to prevent their youth from enlisting for lack of sufficient incentives. For example, the new recruits were to be paid monthly salaries as opposed to tri-monthly and they could be promoted as higher-rank officers in the future,<sup>358</sup> as opposed to having to remain within the same rank throughout their career. The recruited soldiers would be subject to rotation as opposed to constant training and drills. They would also be exempt from taxes such as *tekalif-i örfiyye*, *şakka*, *avarız-ı divaniye*, and *imdad-ı hazeriye*.<sup>359</sup>

Such exemptions were not restricted to individual soldiers. In an order concerning recruitment of youths from Seydişehir, a small town south of Konya in central Anatolia, the government offered tax exemptions for all the residents of villages of the town<sup>360</sup> subject to recruitment orders. Istanbul's expectation was to recruit two to three youths

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<sup>356</sup> Yeşil, "Kara Ordusunda Değişim," 70–71.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>358</sup> Yücel Özkaya, "III. Selim Devrinde Nizam-ı Cedid'in Anadolu'da Karşılaştığı Zorluklar," *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (1963): 151.

<sup>359</sup> *Ibid.*, 150.

<sup>360</sup> BOA, C. AS, 4273 (June/July 1801).

from each village to be trained and taught the “art of war.”<sup>361</sup> Local community leaders often bargained with the state to receive tax exemptions in return for recruitment.<sup>362</sup> Promises of tax exemptions were not always honored because it could mean reduction in local notables’ financial resources. At times, local notables tried to disrupt the process, as they would be deprived of their own income from the collection of such taxes.<sup>363</sup> Even the overseer of the new revenue could foresee that recruitment of soldiers through tax incentives could trigger reaction by the notables and result in rebellion in the Rumelia provinces.<sup>364</sup>

There were also symbolic privileges attached to recruitment. To increase the “excitement” of the soldiers and show them that they were privileged over “other classes,” they were given “green” uniforms<sup>365</sup> and “western shawls”<sup>366</sup> for their use. Clearly, these enticements are indications of the broader recruitment difficulties, as youths (even if unemployed) were not in a rush to join the war effort.

After 1802, provincial officials and Anatolian notables also supplied the Levend and Üsküdar barracks with men for two or three year periods.<sup>367</sup> In this way, professionally trained soldiers in Istanbul could be sent back to the Anatolian provinces

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<sup>361</sup> This was a common phrase used in this time period. Vasıf Efendi’s treatise makes it clear that the Ottoman elites imagined a specific way of military training and war making.

<sup>362</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 152.

<sup>363</sup> Özkaya, “Nizam-ı Cedid’in Anadolu’da Karşılaştığı Zorluklar,” 150.

<sup>364</sup> Yeşil, “Kara Ordusunda Değişim,” 70.

<sup>365</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1985 (Undated).

<sup>366</sup> Özkaya, “Nizam-ı Cedid’in Anadolu’da Karşılaştığı Zorluklar,” 151.

<sup>367</sup> Shaw, “Origins,” 298–299. See also Shaw, “Nizam-ı Cedid,” 180.

and the new army would have created a loyal group of military men in the provinces in addition to the ones in the capital. In return, local notables could benefit from bolstering their forces at the local level. In the absence of universal conscription,<sup>368</sup> tensions between the center and the provinces could not easily be overcome, as the government continued to rely on the preferences of the local officials and notables in order to recruit soldiers for the new barracks. Universal conscription could have potentially solved this problem but the Ottomans only started to discuss this at the end of Mahmud II's reign after the abolition of the janissary corps.<sup>369</sup>

As of 1803, the sultan ordered that new barracks were to be built in different Anatolian cities to house and train New Order soldiers. By 1807, about 1,500 soldiers had been recruited, housed, and trained in Anatolia. Efforts to extend the New Order army to Anatolia remained weaker because of the opposition to this endeavor. On the one hand, new taxes were being imposed to support the new barracks instead of the central government directly paying for the costs. On the other hand, the central government found it difficult to impose its will as local forces were mingled with the local people a lot more than in the capital. The government's inability to increase the new army's size through recruitment in Anatolia resulted in lack of support for the new measures as well

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<sup>368</sup> Aksan, "War and Peace," 93.

<sup>369</sup> Jan Lucassen and Erik J. Zürcher, "Conscription as Military Labour: The Historical Context," *International Review of Social History* 43, no. 3 (1998): 439. As early as the 1840s, the Ottomans had near-universal conscription in place but it could not be turned into a universal one for lack of censuses and the exemptions afforded to broad segments of the population. According to Zürcher, the Ottomans eventually managed to create a "sophisticated system of recruitment through conscription modeled on that of Prussia/Germany," but the "lack infrastructure and industrial base" could not ultimately support the mass army as late as the early twentieth century. Lucassen and Zürcher, "Conscription as Military Labour: The Historical Context."

as the sultan himself. During the Kabakçı rebellion,<sup>370</sup> for example, these forces did not support the imperial government and fight the “rebels,” which indicates their lack of commitment to the whole project in the first place.<sup>371</sup>

There was also a serious difference between the New Order army soldiers in Levend and Üsküdar barracks and those in New Order barracks in Anatolia. The officials complained that the rules written down for the New Order army were not being followed in the Anatolian barracks.<sup>372</sup> It was difficult for the government to maintain the same standards across the board among the forces in Istanbul and in Anatolia. While Istanbul forces were under the direct oversight of the imperial military and political elites in the capital and its funding being watched over more carefully, the forces in Anatolia relied on the financial and military capabilities of the provincial governors and local notables. The inefficiency of the imperial bureaucracy appears to have been endemic throughout the reign of Selim III and the management of the new army would have been no exception.

Despite the government’s efforts in new recruitment by making it attractive to join the new corps, the state still had to rely on local notables and existing units to deal with domestic threats. Pre-New Order recruitment problems continued in the aftermath of the establishment of the New Order army. The sultan had to threaten those who did not

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<sup>370</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, “Kabakçı Vak’asına Dair Bir Mektup,” *Bellekten* 29, no. 116 (1965): 599–604.

<sup>371</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 174–210.

<sup>372</sup> BOA, HAT, 7540 (27 January 1808).



show up for duty by stripping their privileges (*gedik*)<sup>373</sup> and even of their fiefs if they insisted on their disobedience.<sup>374</sup> It was not only individual soldiers who did not show up but also certain pashas, who had been given the duty to go against rebellious pashas or notables, who failed to follow up on the government's requests.<sup>375</sup> The center's failure to mobilize soldiers as well as pashas against domestic threats must have contributed to the government's inability to make recruitment for the New Order army attractive in the eyes of the general public.

### ***Local Resistance to Recruitment***

Recruitment efforts created local unrest in Anatolia partly because the government pursued an inconsistent policy in terms of tax-exemption incentives. In an order dispatched to Kütahya and Karaman, for instance, it appears that it was not the entire town (as was the case with Seydişehir) but only the households of the soldiers who would be exempt from the taxes. Regardless of the number of soldiers they provided, the families willing to let their children join the new forces in Istanbul would be exempt from some major extraordinary taxes such as *tekalif-i örfiyye*, *tekalif-i şakka*, *avarız-ı divaniyye*, and *imdad-ı hazeriye*.

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<sup>373</sup> Engin D. Akarlı, "Gedik: A Bundle of Rights and Obligations for Istanbul Artisans and Traders, 1750-1840," in *Law, Anthropology, and the Constitution of the Social: Making Persons and Things*, Cambridge Studies in Law and Society (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 166–200.

<sup>374</sup> BOA, HAT, 1792 (20 June 1804).

<sup>375</sup> For example, the governor of Bosnia refused to go against Gürcü Osman Pasha. BOA, HAT, 1827 (1804).

These measures, however, created discontent and people in the locality harassed families of recruited soldiers by blocking their sheep and other animals from grazing. The local notables and influential people did not agree with the government's measures either. The source of the discontent seems to be the preferential tax-exemption policy itself as people are quoted as saying, "you are exempt; you do not pay taxes (*tekalif*) as we do!" Such disturbance prevented local military officials (*alaybeyi*) from recruiting soldiers and prompted orders from the center to the effect that local notables or any other rebel resisting the government recruitment should be punished for harassing others. The delay in the recruitment caused by the resistance of the local people in Kütahya and Konya resulted in the local *alaybeyis'* request that they be given a couple of months to recruit the necessary number of soldiers (about 2,000).<sup>376</sup>

This kind of delay because of local resistance was complicated by the logistical as well as psychological difficulties. There were two options for the government. The first option was to send the already registered soldiers to the capital in which case the recruitment would be completed during the upcoming spring season. The second option was to wait for the spring to send all soldiers together. The military officials, responsible for recruitment were charged with bringing the recruited soldiers to the Üsküdar barracks, suggested that the latter was a better option because splitting the soldiers and sending them to the center little by little would cause "disappointment" among the soldiers. The reason for such a disappointment is not given in the document but one can infer that being singled out would not have fared well with these newly recruited soldiers. In the meantime, they suggested, the soldiers should be paid five piasters monthly for food as an

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<sup>376</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1985 (Undated).

incentive to keep their morale high although they were not serving as soldiers in their barracks just yet. The officials recognized that paying for their food locally would be more expensive but it was necessary if the desired number of soldiers were to be recruited.<sup>377</sup>

Local resistance was not limited to supplying manpower for the new army. Exploitation of the local natural resources for the new army was also resisted. In a report dated March 1793, we learn that the government had to settle for lower quality wood from the Sakarya region to build three hundred large gunstocks from “dark tree wood” at the imperial arsenal of artillery as was required by the New Order. The Dervişıyan village in Varna, which had plenty of the right type of wood, and the district of Yenipazar were sent orders along with nine hundred piasters for the cutting down and purchase of the wood. Residents of both Varna and Yenipazar “hesitated and opposed” the deal finding the compensation insufficient. Some of the residents cooperated and cut down some wood but the amount was not large enough for the project. Next, the government decided to postpone the acquisition of the lumber to next year to be taken from Wallachia and Moldavia with only half the amount of lumber to be acquired from Wallachia at this time. It was remarked that demanding more would arouse the “hatred of the subjects.” Finally, it was commented that lumber from Salonika would not stand the heat from the sun so there was no other option but return the nine hundred piasters and contend with the available wood from the Sakarya.<sup>378</sup> This example shows that the government’s inability to offer competitive prices for the natural resources could be an important factor in

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<sup>377</sup> Ibid.

<sup>378</sup> BOA, C. AS, 3018 (8 March 1793).

causing resistance by the people against the most basic requirements of building a new army.

It was not only the local people who were unwilling to go along with the recruitment efforts. Some local affiliates of high-level officials could also try to obstruct recruitment efforts for the newly established barracks in Istanbul. Two individuals, one of whom was a local affiliate of Hüseyin Pasha, were executed for obstructing recruitment of soldiers from the town of Beypazarı for the Üsküdar barracks in Istanbul as they opposed the conscription orders.<sup>379</sup> The relevant document does not specify the reason why these individuals opposed the orders but the government's following actions give us clues. The document notes that the officials explained the imperial order for conscription to the local populace "letter by letter."<sup>380</sup> We can speculate that the individuals, executed for opposing the recruitment effort, actually represented the local discontent in this province. The broader problem for the new army to overcome was not so much teaching soldiers the new methods and technologies of contemporary warfare, but rather, to be able to recruit, control, manage soldiers, and supply provisions for the newly established corps in the first place. Even if these conditions were met and conscription was successful, there was no guarantee that the new soldiers in the new barracks would fully submit to the logic of the new army.<sup>381</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> "asakirin tertibine mümanaat ve izhar-ı muhalefet eylediğinden," BOA, HAT, 3407 (20 September 1802).

<sup>380</sup> "...kazalarının asakir-i hususi ahailerine etrafiyla ifade ve tefhime lazım gelen vesaya ve sunuh iden irade-i seniyyeleri harf be harf herbirlerine telkin olunmağla," BOA, HAT, 3407 (20 September 1802).

<sup>381</sup> Khaled Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men: Mehmed Ali, His Army, and the Making of Modern Egypt* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

### ***Resistance to the Expansion of the New Order Army***

In addition to the recruitment and funding issues, the imperial government's expectations of the new army were under pressure from the internal disorder (local notables' rebellions) and external wars (such as Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 or the Russian invasion of the Principalities in 1806). In response to such challenges, the government tried to increase the size of the new army very quickly, which resulted in loss of intended discipline and order among the new army's soldiers. "The rapid increase in the number of men in the corps had far outstripped the drill facilities ... so that it was impossible for all men to practice and drill daily."<sup>382</sup> Overcrowding of the corps and unwillingness of the individual soldiers in the face of harsh discipline and low pay were the main reasons why the new corps were now faced with the same problems that the Ottoman elites had always complained about the old army. The government's financial problems did not allow "professional soldiers" to be fully paid for by the government.

Pressed by the urgency of war, the Ottomans had to recruit soldiers for wars on an irregular basis while trying to build the New Order army. Military pressures by the Russians had already caused large immigrant influxes into the capital. The Ottomans had to both manage such irregular immigration and to recruit men to defend the borders of the empire. An imperial order recognized the difficulty in recruiting married men and men with children for the war effort. As a solution, the sultan ordered that single men, who had come from Anapa – a Russian port city on the Black Sea – living in the Tophane neighborhood in Istanbul, be recruited for the Anapa fortress's defense against the Russians. These bachelors would be paid fifty *guruş* as travel allowance and sent back to

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<sup>382</sup> Shaw, "Origins," 301.

Anapa.<sup>383</sup> However, such haphazard arrangements efforts incurring sporadic expenses put extra strain on the imperial budget.

The government used the New Order army against internal disturbances in addition to external threats. In fact, it has been argued that one of the major incentives for the government to expand the new army to the provinces was to confront the insecurity caused by bandits as well as the local notables, which in the process served to militarize the provinces further.<sup>384</sup> In May 1802, for instance, soldiers in Levend and Üsküdar barracks were mobilized against Nimetoka Pasha who had gathered two thousand “troublemakers” (*haşerat*) of his own and was marching against Bergos. The government ordered that all the irregulars and officers in the New Order army to be deployed, as it was seriously worried that bandits could cause embarrassment by reaching Istanbul given the “fatigue” experienced by the soldiers.<sup>385</sup> Such deployment could increase the fighting experience of the new army but fighting against internal opposition (in the form of banditry) could possibly prevent them from preparing for more serious confrontations against the more orderly Russian and Austrian armies. Such engagements clearly limited the new army’s ability to grow its size and capabilities to mount a credible threat to foreign armies in the long run.

The New Order army’s success against the French forces in Acre during the invasion of Egypt is often cited as a success story. The governor of Acre, Cezzar Ahmed

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<sup>383</sup> BOA, C. AS, 3883 (5 May 1797).

<sup>384</sup> Yeşil, “Kara Ordusunda Değişim,” 60.

<sup>385</sup> BOA, HAT, 7545 (12 March 1804).

Pasha, reportedly said, “let my tongue dry up if I ever spoke against them.”<sup>386</sup> Although the veracity of the governor’s actual words is open to debate, particularly because the quote is cited by the ideologically motivated Koca Sekbanbaşı (discussed in the first chapter), the New Order army may have had a limited success against the French forces as it was only 200 New Order soldiers that were sent to aid Cezzar Ahmed Pasha to fight against Napoleon’s forces attacking Syria.<sup>387</sup> This may have been a good opportunity for the Ottoman government to test the new army’s effectiveness and expand the army in Anatolia through the construction of new barracks. However, Selim III recognized himself that the soldiers trained in the capital and in Anatolia were not very impressive. Furthermore, those trained in Anatolia did not appear as effective and disciplined as those from the capital.<sup>388</sup>

The expansion in Anatolia would happen in the hands of Çaparzade Süleyman Bey and the governor of Karaman, Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha.<sup>389</sup> A plan to set up new barracks in Ankara was part of the expansion of the New Order army.<sup>390</sup> An ardent supporter of the New Order army, Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha was given the task of extending the reforms and recruitment efforts to Anatolia and later on to Rumelia. He was initially involved in the New Order efforts in Karaman.<sup>391</sup> In October 1801, he

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<sup>386</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 87.

<sup>387</sup> Çadırcı, “Renovations in the Ottoman Army,” 90.

<sup>388</sup> Karal, *Selim III’ün Hatt-ı Hümayunları*, 56–57.

<sup>389</sup> Çataltepe, *19. Yüzyıl Başlarında*, 90.

<sup>390</sup> Musa Çadırcı, “Ankara Sancağı’nda Nizam-ı Cedid Ortasının Teşkili Ve Nizam-ı Cedid Askeri Kanunnamesi,” *Belleten* 36, no. 141–144 (1972): 1–13.

<sup>391</sup> Uzunçarşılı, “Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa,” 249.

suppressed a rebellion in Bozkır.<sup>392</sup> His efforts earned him the governorship of Karaman.<sup>393</sup> However, his heavy-handed methods gave him a bad reputation, which meant that he would face resistance elsewhere.

The people of Konya rebelled against Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha when he was appointed as the governor of the city in the spring of 1804. The opposition claimed that his appointment was meant to raise soldiers for the New Order Army's Üsküdar barracks and blocked the pasha's entrance into the city.<sup>394</sup> While the pasha was able to enter the city secretly at first, he could not withstand the rebels with his two hundred men and was forced to leave.<sup>395</sup> The government sent orders threatening the general public with force if they did not allow order to be established.<sup>396</sup> Another local notable, Çaparzade Süleyman Bey, had to interfere to secure peace between the locals and Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha. He was ordered not to "hurt" the people of Konya and head back to the imperial center following Cabbarzade's efforts to calm the situation in Konya.<sup>397</sup> Cabbarzade reported that the people were not inclined to revolt if it were not for the injustices committed by Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha. He added that the people of Konya were strong enough to rebel against the imperial authority but chose not to do, so it was only fitting for the government to treat them with forgiveness despite their past misbehavior.<sup>398</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>393</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid., 256.

<sup>396</sup> BOA, HAT 1950.I (18 April 1804).

<sup>397</sup> BOA, HAT, 2037 (24 April 1804); BOA, HAT 1950.C (24 April 1804).

<sup>398</sup> BOA, HAT, 1950.A (24 April 1804).



It was not only local notables vying for influence or local people unhappy with recruitment and taxation efforts but also certain local administrators who were discontent with Abdurrahman Pasha's efforts to expand the new army. When he heard that the province of İçel would be given to Abdurrahman Pasha, the *mutasarrıf* of İçel, Ahmed Pasha, threatened that he would resist, which forced the sultan to cave in and leave the province under his rule.<sup>399</sup>

The people of Konya were eventually forgiven for their rebellion but also warned about severe punishment if they were to rebel again.<sup>400</sup>

Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha's relatively limited success against the bandits in Çorlu and Filibe convinced the sultan that Abdurrahman Pasha could expand the New Order army to Rumelia but this idea was postponed in the face of the presence of powerful local notables such as Paspanoğlu and Tirsiniklioğlu and the public's opposition. Outbreak of the Serbian peasants' rebellion in Belgrade forced the government to put off such plans for the time being and Abdurrahman Pasha went back to Anatolia.<sup>401</sup> He set out to expand the New Order army into Konya, Aksaray, Niğde, Nevşehir, Beyşehir, Akşehir, Alanya, Antalya, and Isparta while Çaparzade Süleyman Bey did the same in Bozok, Kayseri, Çankırı, Kastamonu, Ankara, Amasya, and Tokat.<sup>402</sup> While it is unclear how well this effort worked in all these central Anatolian cities but when Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha was sent to help suppress the Serbian rebellion and expand the New Order army to provinces

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<sup>399</sup> BOA, HAT, 1834 (10 April 1804).

<sup>400</sup> Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa," 261.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, 264–265.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

in Rumelia, he had already been delayed by a year because of the Konya rebellion.<sup>403</sup>

People of Edirne heard the news of Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha's arrival in their city and decided to rebel as they interpreted this as the New Order's expansion into their city. The government tried to assure them that the pasha was being sent there only to help the Rumelia governor Ibrahim Pasha fight the Serbian rebellion.<sup>404</sup> As the people in Tekirdağı<sup>405</sup> and Edirne were not convinced, in the summer of 1806, the people of Edirne refused entry to Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha, by closing down the bazaar and shops in the city for several days. The local people, notables, and the *ulema* in the city agreed that the *janissary issue* has to be respected,<sup>406</sup> implying that the Kadı Abdurrahman's plans to implement New Order measures in Edirne would not be tolerated. While he was successful in suppressing the rebellion in Silivri, Babaeski, and Elmalı, the pasha had to pull back, as his army could not secure provisions from the locals.<sup>407</sup> The central government understood that it could not win this fight so it ultimately had to acknowledge the strength of the local opposition to Kadı Abdurrahman's arrival. In the end, the pasha was ordered to declare to the residents of the city that he would not try to enter the city, one time capital of the empire whose *ulema*, corps members, and shop owners needed to feel as secure as those in the capital.<sup>408</sup> This episode shows the level of

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<sup>403</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 265.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>406</sup> BOA, HAT, 1893.D (7 June 1806); BOA, HAT, 1893.A (8 July 1806); BOA, HAT, 1893.B (3 September 1806).

<sup>407</sup> Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa," 281–286.

<sup>408</sup> BOA, HAT, 1893 (9 March 1807).

deep mistrust by the local populations and notables of the New Order project as a whole.

The central government failed not only to expand the new army into Rumelia but also to establish effective control over the areas under the influence of the local notables. This rendered the government helpless in the face of the Serbian rebellion as well as further Russian encroachments in this region.<sup>409</sup> While the local populations' intentions to oppose the new army may have been different than those of the local notables, it is clear that there existed a confluence of interests between the locals, the ulema, the janissaries, and the notables in the Rumelia region.

It also demonstrated the apparent failure of the New Order army in confronting a domestic rebellion supported by a variety of local notables whose interests in opposition to the center aligned at this point. Tirsinikli İsmail Agha, who had been loyal to the sultan until then, joined the alliance between Ali Pasha of Janina, the notables of Filibe (Plovdiv), Edirne, and Pazarcık, İsmail Bey of Serez, and Paspanoğlu of Vidin against the imperial center. After Tirsiniklioğlu's assassination in August 1806, Alemdar Mustafa would take over his *ayanlık* of Rusçuk and force Selim III to make concessions.<sup>410</sup>

### ***Disillusionment with the New Order: The Case of Tayyar Mahmud Pasha***

The New Order became part of the power politics between different notable families and the central government in late eighteenth century. When the Caniklizade

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<sup>409</sup> Uzunçarşılı, "Kadı Abdurrahman Paşa," 302.

<sup>410</sup> Fikret Adanır, "Semi-Autonomous Forces in the Balkans and Anatolia," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, vol. 3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 185. See also İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Meşhur Rumeli Ayanlarından Tirsinikli İsmail, Yıllık Oğlu Süleyman Ağalar Ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa* (İstanbul: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1942).

family in the Amasya and Sivas region failed to satisfy the central government's expectations against the Russians during the 1787-1792 wars, the government assigned the provinces under their control to the Çapanoğlu family "in return for their support of the New Order army."<sup>411</sup> Tayyar Mahmud Pasha of the Caniklizade family opposed the New Order once Selim III moved to punish the family for the loss of Anapa in the Caucasus to the Russians.<sup>412</sup> This opposition was clearly linked to the struggle for power among local notables rather than being an ideological one. In this context, supporting as well as opposing the New Order of Selim III determined who would be favored by the central government in the regional power struggle. As opposition to the New Order became a rallying point for Tayyar Pasha, the center was interested in re-centralizing the distribution of local resources while using the support for the New Order as a loyalty test for the local notables.<sup>413</sup> Proper analysis of opposition to the New Order needs to take into account this dimension of politics of local hegemony and control over resources among local notables.

The level of discontent with tax collectors among the local populations largely due to extra taxes imposed upon them as part of the New Order measures made it possible for local contenders for power to champion the anti-New Order cause. In 1801, a striking example of local resistance to tax collection occurred. The people of Sivas

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<sup>411</sup> Canay Şahin, "The Economic Power of Anatolian Ayan in the 18th Century: The Case of the Caniklizades," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 11, no. 1–2 (2005): 32. See also Canay Şahin, "The Rise and Fall of An Ayan Family in Eighteenth Century Anatolia: The Caniklizades (1737-1808)" (Bilkent University, 2003).

<sup>412</sup> Şahin, "The Economic Power of Anatolian Ayan in the 18th Century: The Case of the Caniklizades," 31–32.

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

refused entry to the tax collector (*mütesellim*) appointed by the governor of Sivas. The official reporting the incident commented that the tax collector Hüseyin Pasha had made a reputation for himself in Diyarbakır and elsewhere as an unjust official and drawn the ire of the locals by bringing along with him “so many soldiers.” Hüseyin Pasha “dared” collecting 15,000 to 20,000 piasters from Niksar and its environs upon which the local people surrounded his residence. The governor suggested that the state needed to get rid of Hüseyin Pasha by hanging him. He recommended that Tayyar and Mustafa Pashas and Cabbarzade were ready to march against Hüseyin Pasha from separate directions. When Cabbarzade attempted to enter the city to get Mustafa Pasha (the governor of Sivas) released, he was unsuccessful because the people had acquire soldiers from neighboring Divriği and dug trenches around the city. The locals cited the Pasha’s previous “crimes” elsewhere but this was probably not the only reason for their resistance. The fact that they could attract soldiers from neighboring regions to join them in resisting the governor and his men demonstrates the kind of alliances created between the local population and soldiers.<sup>414</sup> Abuse by government officials could also push locals to seek help from local notables such as Cabbarzade.<sup>415</sup>

Tayyar Pasha became an example of a disillusioned government official who turned against the government and eventually revolted against the New Order.<sup>416</sup> Although he expressed his willingness to work for the sultan along with some of his six

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<sup>414</sup> BOA, HAT, 1926 (1801).

<sup>415</sup> BOA, HAT, 1891 (15 June 1803).

<sup>416</sup> BOA, HAT, 1901 (12 May 1801).

thousand men,<sup>417</sup> he seems to have gone “astray” by opposing the New Order. Resistance to the New Order could appear in the form of rivalry between local notables, as officials like Tayyar Pasha and local notables vied for the support of local populations who were discontented with the extra taxes and new recruitment ran high.

During 1800 and 1801, Tayyar Pasha was appointed to Rumelia to deal with the banditry problem. The central government had dealt with the French invasion of Egypt and was now refocusing its efforts to reassert government control over the Balkans. Tayyar Pasha spent two years dealing with the situation and was negotiating with bandits to resettle them in Anatolia. The effort was often hampered, as the government could not pay the soldier-turned-bandits the promised bonuses (*ulufe*).<sup>418</sup> Tayyar Pasha was pleased to hear that he was given the control of Trabzon but disappointed to find out Amasya’s control had been given to Cabbarzade, his long time competitor.<sup>419</sup>

Tayyar Pasha set out to challenge Cabbarzade and moved against Amasya.<sup>420</sup> Although the government was preparing to promise the tax income of the upcoming year to Tayyar Pasha in an effort to appease him, he took over Turhal and claimed that this was done under the authority of the sultan and by a religious edict of the SheikhuIslam. Tayyar Pasha’s forces marched against Cabbarzade’s region and propagated that they were going to “abolish the New Order” and “end the injustice.” Tayyar Pasha was able to garner support from the ulema and janissaries and tried to expel Cabbarzade’s tax

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<sup>417</sup> BOA, HAT, 1901.B (12 May 1801).

<sup>418</sup> Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu’nda Dağlı İsyanları: 1791-1808* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, 1983), 72.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>420</sup> Beyhan Kıran, “‘1220 Senesi Vekayi’i’ Adlı Eserin Transkripsiyonu Ve Değerlendirilmesi” (Marmara University, 1993), 11.

collector in Tokat and Sivas. Tayyar Pasha was able to kick the local tax collector out of Sivas and was marching against Tokat and Amasya.<sup>421</sup> While Cabbarzade was able to retake Tokat, the government was considering ending Tayyar Pasha's duty and ordering his execution.<sup>422</sup> The fact that Tayyar Pasha sought to increase his influence in the region through exploitation of the anti-New Order feeling indicates the unfavorable reception of the New Order measures among the local populace.

The promise to end the New Order meant, for the locals, an end to extra taxes and to recruitment for the new army. In fact, this was expressed in government documents, which reported, "...the people of our time are inclined to revolt."<sup>423</sup> The report claimed that the people could not make up their mind about whether to lean toward Tayyar Pasha in the absence of a government order to the contrary. When Tayyar Pasha's men claimed that they were under the authority of the imperial center, the locals felt they had no choice but to accept them. The report added that it had been relatively peaceful to recruit soldiers from the region until Tayyar Pasha made it his mission - at least in rhetoric - to abolish the New Revenue. The report warned that if this problem is not taken care of soon enough, the revolt could spread to the more heartland regions such as Kayseri and beyond.<sup>424</sup> It is clear that Tayyar Pasha's promise to end the new taxes and recruitment resonated with the local people. As the pasha used this discontent to increase his

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<sup>421</sup> BOA, HAT, 4051.B (17 June 1805).

<sup>422</sup> BOA, HAT, 4051 (17 June 1805).

<sup>423</sup> BOA, HAT, 4051.A (17 June 1805).

<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

influence locally, the irony was that the center was unable to reach the locals to make its case but relied on local notables to do just that.

### *Conclusion*

In setting up the New Order army, there was no doubt in the Ottoman elites' mind that achieving absolute discipline and loyalty in the army would contribute to military success. The new enterprise, however, had to face many difficulties, most of which were related to broader political, economic, and social problems of the empire. Yet the Ottoman elites focused on the most pressing military difficulties. As the financing proved inadequate, establishment of an independent new army had to proceed rather slowly. The effort could not be spelled out openly, as the reforming elites needed to avoid triggering a reaction against the new army. While the New Order measures included expansion and reorganization of the existing army as well as the institution of a new disciplined army, it is difficult to argue that there was a clear recognition or an attempt at addressing the broader problems destined to prevent military reform from accomplishing an overhaul of the entire army.

Financing the new army proved extremely difficult and was guided more by the logic of centralizing and rechanneling of existing resources than creating new ones. A truly modern budgetary discipline was also lacking, which meant that the government regularly tapped into the New Budget to finance expenses unrelated to the maintenance of the New Order army. Corruption and inefficiency in the new budget's management could not be prevented, leading to the replication of old financing problems. The government tried to rationalize the finances by introducing disciplinary measures into the



financing of existing soldiers including the janissary pay tickets. The government was able neither to make it financially attractive to enlist in the new army nor to prevent disgruntlement against the newly introduced financial measures. More broadly, there was a broad failure at rendering the financing of the Ottoman war machine effective to meet the challenges of the time period.

Similar problems continued to dominate the efforts to man the new barracks and enlist soldiers throughout the empire. This was due to the unwillingness of the local notables to go along with the government's efforts to restructure center-periphery relations as well as local resistance to recruitment efforts. The New Order army barracks and enlisting for them were received in Anatolia and Rumelia as the center's effort to collect more taxes and more men for internal and external war efforts, which were highly unpopular. The central government's failures combined with its efforts to extract more resources led to various local revolts as well as disillusionment of powerful government officials who had in fact been loyal to the cause of the New Order. While the central government clearly failed to transform the New Order army into a viable alternative to the existing forces, the Ottoman public as a whole as well as various power brokers became largely disillusioned with and skeptical about the entire enterprise.

## Chapter 4 – Janissary Soldiers and Social Networks Resist the New Order

### *Reordering and Disciplining the Janissaries*

The establishment of the New Order army was accompanied by continued efforts to re-order and discipline the janissary corps as well as other existing corps. The janissary soldiers resisted the government's efforts to discipline their corps and to establish the New Order army simultaneously for a broad set of reasons. While these reasons may have included the commonly repeated charge of the janissaries' desire to "protect their privileged status," this is only part of the story. After all, in a time of financial crisis, political instability and pressing wars, it is difficult to argue that the janissaries were in a particularly privileged situation.

In a similar fashion to the resistance of the *fellahin* against conscription in the context of Mehmed Ali's efforts to create a modern army in Egypt,<sup>425</sup> there existed continuous resistance among the janissaries against the disciplining nature of the new army. The Egyptian *fellahin* resisted conscription and the modern army's disciplining mechanisms through various avenues. These included corruption and inefficiency of the bureaucrats who were recruited to the new army from among the *fellahin*,<sup>426</sup> certain cases of mutiny against higher officials,<sup>427</sup> denying authorities full surveillance of themselves,<sup>428</sup> soldiers' refusal to give accurate information about their health

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<sup>425</sup> Fahmy, *All the Pasha's Men*.

<sup>426</sup> *Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, 208.

conditions,<sup>429</sup> soldiers' refusal of medical treatment,<sup>430</sup> and subversion of rules such as access to prostitutes in the military camps.<sup>431</sup> Similarly, the janissaries resisted the government's attempts to discipline and reorder their corps through resisting officer appointments, resisting drills, refusing to adopt modern clothing, threatening the government with potential mutinies, and staging various mutinies. Unlike the *fellahin*, however, the janissaries were not simply the objects of modern disciplinary measures implemented by the government. They wielded power that could activate a broad coalition from various segments of society and threaten the very survival of the central government.

To be sure, the janissaries suffered from the inefficiencies of pre-modern armies just like their contemporaries such as corruption, desertion, mutiny,<sup>432</sup> and inability to mobilize quickly and efficiently.<sup>433</sup> Their mutinous behavior could also affect the decision-making mechanisms of the state<sup>434</sup> while inhibiting the army's ability to move

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid., 226–231.

<sup>432</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, "Mutiny and the Eighteenth Century Ottoman Army," *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (1998): 116–125; Jane Hathaway, *Rebellion, Repression, Reinvention: Mutiny in Comparative Perspective* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2001).

<sup>433</sup> Virginia H. Aksan, "Whatever Happened to the Janissaries? Mobilization for the 1768-1774 Russo-Ottoman War," *War in History* 5, no. 1 (1998): 23–36.

<sup>434</sup> Palmira Brummett, "Classifying Ottoman Mutiny: The Act and Vision of Rebellion," *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1998) (1998): 91–107.

swiftly.<sup>435</sup> Yet, in the late eighteenth century, their inefficiency did not necessarily derive from a narrowly defined resistance to a new army that threatened their privileged position as the traditionally historiography has argued. At the same time, an argument can be made that the janissaries felt threatened by the growing new army. One estimate puts the number of New Order army's soldiers at 22,685 and of janissaries at 98,539 as late as 1806.<sup>436</sup> The contrast in numbers is staggering but it can still be considered a large enough threat for the janissary corps as an institution. Moreover, implementation of fiscal rationalization and military discipline undermined the very logic of the janissary corps and threatened the sense of comradeship and belonging along with their *esprit de corps*. In addition, the janissaries' long established relations with the society at large positioned them as a bulwark against the central government's measures that upset similar interests of local populations around the empire.

One of the foremost complaints by the modern Ottoman historians about their own field is the prevalence of the state-centered view of the historical events they study. As has been explained in many works, the sources the historians use have a considerable influence in this. On the one hand, we often lack systematic statistical studies (for instance, there is no systematic statistical studies of the janissary salaries, whose evolution over time would be relevant for this study) that can provide us with at least the foundations for a solid overview of the phenomenon we are researching. However, we need not forget the fact that it is also historians themselves who have had difficulty

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<sup>435</sup> Brummett attempts to identify a common pattern in terms of timing of mutinies, as they frequently occurred at river crossings. See Palmira Brummett, "The River Crossing: Breaking Points (Metaphorical and 'Real') in Ottoman Mutiny," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2002): 45–60.

<sup>436</sup> Çadırcı, "Renovations in the Ottoman Army," 89.

thinking critically about these sources. Adoption of the state-centric viewpoint of the documents often results in an elitist perception towards the various groups involved in historical events. In the context of the New Order, which is supposed to be a comprehensive reform program (implying a conscious and clearly articulated agenda for positive change), the opponents of the New Order appear as villains in the story.

Transformation of the Ottoman polity in this time period was not undertaken only by a handful of so-called reform-minded bureaucrats. The “villains” have to be part of the story, as they are active participants/determiners of this process as much as the modern historiography’s “good guys.” Through their resistance, contestation, defiance, and revolts as well as their active participation in the reform process (consciously or unconsciously) suggested new directions the Ottoman state should take. If we include all parties as groups competing (surely) for their interests, but more importantly, over the way the policies should be made, we would be doing more justice to not only the realities on the ground but also to our historical understanding. This chapter attempts to understand the complex challenges the janissaries posed for the reform efforts because of their ties with various segments of the society both horizontally and vertically.

There is a strong connection between the street violence and the popular culture. Crowds could be mobilized as a result of pre-existing social solidarities based on urban networks.<sup>437</sup> Social protest took various forms including petitioning as well as denouncement of government measures.<sup>438</sup> Janissaries themselves were deeply embedded

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<sup>437</sup> James Grehan, “Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late-Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus (ca. 1500-1800),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 220–221.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

in these social networks and they did not always react with violence. The famous overturning of the cauldron (*kazan kaldırma*) happened at the end of negotiation processes that did not yield results to satisfy the janissaries and their social networks. Actively involved in the marketplace, the janissaries had a stake in the maintenance of market conditions, hence the very interests of their social networks. E. P. Thompson argues that social protest, in eighteenth century Britain, was intimately connected to a “consensus as to the moral economy of the commonwealth in times of dearth.”<sup>439</sup>

Successive failures in war efforts in the Ottoman context were the driver of social unrest and the Janissaries were adversely affected by economic conditions. When the central government demanded extra taxes and men to supply the new army with recruits, various socio-economic groups such as villagers and townspeople resisted such attempts through open disobedience (rebellion) as well as through more subtle ways (false declarations as to number of men in the household, desertion, tax exemption claims etc.).<sup>440</sup>

The Ottoman government, however, identified the main problem for the military losses as corruption, disorderliness, and lack of discipline among the janissary soldiers. The solution was to discipline the janissaries. Some of the fiscal problems concerning the janissary corps had to do with financial irregularities in how pay tickets were held by individual janissaries. The Ottoman officials called for an urgent re-ordering and reorganization of the janissary pay tickets. The main complaint was that those who did not deserve to be paid (ones who had not shown up during the military campaigns) had been receiving payments. An individual holding several pay tickets as well as the practice

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<sup>439</sup> E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past and Present* 50, no. February (1971): 126.

<sup>440</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*.

of transfer of a pay ticket to another janissary in another regiment were practices that had become commonplace over the previous centuries.<sup>441</sup> The pay tickets had been resold and exchanged in a pseudo stock market system involving government officials as well as local power brokers. This “lucrative business”<sup>442</sup> was a heavy burden on the imperial budget but one that benefited various circles within the imperial power structure itself.

Resistance and occasional rebellions by the janissaries in the face of government measures adversely affecting the janissaries’ power and status are nothing new. As early as the seventeenth century, the janissaries defied the authorities for reasons such as the impact of currency debasement on their salaries or when controversial appointments were made to the upper ranks of the corps. While the instances of rebellion in Istanbul are better documented, it is important to note that such mutinies could spread over the provinces and even be emulated by local power-holders such as the *emirs* in the Arab provinces.<sup>443</sup>

In the late eighteenth century when mobilization of janissary soldiers in numbers that were on the books became virtually impossible,<sup>444</sup> the government decided that easy circulation of janissary pay tickets constituted violation of the laws of the Janissary Corps. Promotion through bribery - which would ensure janissary control over recruitment and awards system in the Corps - within the janissary ranks was also condemned. The government tried to put an end to such practices and labeled those

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<sup>441</sup> Sunar, “Ocak-ı Amire,” 509.

<sup>442</sup> Ágoston, “Military Transformation,” 317.

<sup>443</sup> Rafeq, “Syrian Provinces,” 53.

<sup>444</sup> During the Russo-Ottoman war of 1710-11, percentage of janissaries who partook in the campaign was 17 percent. In the seventeenth century, this number was higher than 30 percent. Ágoston, “Military Transformation,” 306.

involved as “traitors.”<sup>445</sup> The officials’ deliberations on the janissaries aimed to “bring the janissary corps back to its ancient order (*nizam-ı kadim*) by changes in certain areas.”<sup>446</sup> Attempting to rationalize the finances in the janissary corps created discontent among the janissaries as well as those officials benefiting from the system. Ultimately, the government failed to bring fiscal mayhem in the janissary corps under control.<sup>447</sup>

Since the janissary corps represented much more than a simple military unit that could be done away with, the Ottoman officials were content with establishing a new army alongside the existing forces. Yet, the move towards a more rationalized system of recruitment, finance, and hierarchy in military forces through the establishment of the new army went hand in hand with similar measures in the janissary corps. The government ordered that a new division of rifle gunners (*tüfenkçi neferatı*) within the janissary corps be drawn up. The government tried to ensure janissary compliance and prevent their estrangement from the reorganization measures by enlisting new gunners from among the janissaries.<sup>448</sup> They were to drill in using rifles twice a week and the government spared funds for the necessary ammunition.<sup>449</sup> The Ottoman government made funds available to make the janissaries study the “science of rifles” and for training and drills with rifles.<sup>450</sup> Janissary comrades were paid to start rifle drilling; they even shot

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<sup>445</sup> BOA, C. AS, 5197 (4 July 1790).

<sup>446</sup> BOA, HAT, 9775 (1793).

<sup>447</sup> Sunar, “Ocak-ı Amire,” 509.

<sup>448</sup> *Ibid.*, 504.

<sup>449</sup> BOA, C. AS, 3053 (24 September 1796).

<sup>450</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1096 (22 July 1798).



some bullets in the sultan's presence and received tips for the exercise.<sup>451</sup> The training of the janissaries was not rigidly separated from the New Order army's training in that sense. Janissaries were given new training and they did not oppose such measures in their entirety. It is not entirely clear how long the janissaries continued to conduct rifle drills but the reason for the failure of the enterprise seems to stem from the fact that it was not a well-funded project to ensure a wholehearted participation by the janissaries.<sup>452</sup>

In trying to bring the army to the warfront, the Ottomans tried to extract a certain number of soldiers from among the janissaries, which implied some level of reorganization of the janissary regiments. Reorganization, however, created discontent among the janissaries especially because their ties with their own regiments could be severed. During the winter of 1791, the government was trying to assemble the army to go to campaign against Russia in the upcoming spring. In a document discussing the recruitment of the janissaries, we learn that an imperial council had been convened and ordered the chief officer of irregular troops (*sekbanbaşı*)<sup>453</sup> to raise and deploy soldiers from especially Istanbul and the provinces.

The *sekbanbaşı*, however, had not yet announced this order to the janissaries because of the large size of the number of soldiers. He suggested that the soldiers should be organized in a way to collect 200 soldiers from each of the 30 regiments (*orta*) of the janissary corps totaling 6000 soldiers in order to keep a count of soldiers who did and did not actually join the campaign. Organized in this manner, the usual problem of desertion,

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<sup>451</sup> Câbi, *Cabi Tarihi*, 38.

<sup>452</sup> Sunar, "Ocak-ı Amire," 505–506.

<sup>453</sup> *Sekbans* were auxiliary forces recruited into the Janissary Corps; their chief officer, *Sekbanbaşı*, had already been integrated into the Janissary Corps by this time.

which could leave each regiment with only 30 men with auxiliary duties by the time they arrive in Silivri (just outside Istanbul), could be prevented. The larger target of 30,000 men from various corps for the campaign in the spring could be met with this kind of reorganization.<sup>454</sup> In preparing for the upcoming campaign, the government officials were well aware of the desertion problems and they could expect it to happen again. Although the main causes of desertion in pre-modern armies were “lack of food and pay,”<sup>455</sup> the Ottoman officials’ solution was to make the number of soldiers more ascertainable and quantifiable by organizing them into new regiments as opposed to leaving it up to the regiment leaders to bring their regiments to the war front. Government’s reorganization efforts in this way violated the relative autonomy enjoyed by the janissaries.

The Ottoman government needed easily identifiable units of soldiers for recruitment purposes. Intermingling of various military corps obstructed “legibility”<sup>456</sup> in the literal sense of the word. The advantage of mingling of the various corps for the individual soldiers seems to have been that a soldier could claim affiliation with a corps to receive the protection of that particular corps. The traditional janissary uniforms seem to have been worn not only by the janissaries themselves but other military corps such as boatmen and imperial guards (*bostancı*) in Istanbul making it difficult for the government to distinguish these different groups. When instructed to organize 30 new regiments out of the janissary corps in 1789, for example, the *sekbanbaşı* complained that these various groups wore each other’s uniforms, which made his job difficult. He reported that, just

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<sup>454</sup> BOA, HAT, 7926 (16 February 1791).

<sup>455</sup> Aksan, “Danube,” 3.

<sup>456</sup> Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*.

recently, a janissary, who had previously been bailed out by a higher-level officer (*odabaşı*) of the janissary corps, was released after being captured for another crime he had committed. From now on, the boatmen and the imperial guards should hang out with their own group and they would be punished if they wore one another's uniforms.<sup>457</sup> In trying to assemble and organize soldiers for the army, the government needed more clearly identifiable and quantifiable units, which would create discontent as their established practices were being violated.

While trying to impose legibility as such, the government was not unaware of the existing realities on the ground where there was the long accepted phenomenon of janissaries who could fight and those who could not. We learn, in a dispute over the inheritance of a certain janissary named Kahveci Mehmed, that he left one-third of his estate to certain local notables in Yenikapı, Istanbul. Since he was a member of the seventy-first regiment of the janissary corps, the remaining part of his estate would belong to the public treasury. However, a dispute with the religious endowment (*waqf*) that managed this property at the time of his death ensued and the question was whether the religious endowment had a right to seize the military (*ocaklu*) property, especially given that the janissary in question was not claiming to be a janissary only through a muster roll (*esame*) but he in fact held a revenue for livelihood (*dirlik*). The sultan decided that the endowment could not take over the property in question as it belonged to the military class.<sup>458</sup> What is interesting in this episode is that we learn that the government distinguished between a “real janissary” and a “janissary in name only.” The

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<sup>457</sup> BOA, HAT, 8745 (9 September 1790).

<sup>458</sup> BOA, HAT, 1765 (1800).

practice of claiming janissary titles through a muster roll had transformed into a fact of life but it seems to have been recognized that janissaries who could not show anything else such as a *dirlik* did not count as true janissaries in the eyes of the government.

From the military efficiency perspective, there were problems the government had in assigning janissaries to specific duties. In a memorandum to the sultan, it is advised that the janissary commander (*ağa*) should be warned about some of the common practices among the janissaries. These practices included movement of individual soldiers between different regiments, registering with several regiments at the same time, and desertion. An individual janissary could move from one regiment to another with the permission of that regiment's commander. An individual janissary would register with several regiments in order to receive more than one salary. Desertion "without fighting bravely in battlefield" was also commonplace.<sup>459</sup> Another document mentions that the New Order soldiers stationed in Hamid, Kastamonu, and neighboring districts were bribing their superiors to desert their assigned stations in Anatolian towns and head to Istanbul.<sup>460</sup>

These practices prevented the government from using the janissaries as an effective military force during military campaigns since the bookkeeping records must have exaggerated the number, hence, the strength of the janissary corps. From the perspective of the janissaries, however, these practices were their way of dealing with the government's demands for service without creating the necessary conditions. It was possible only through these irregularities that they could maintain a reasonable amount of

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<sup>459</sup> BOA, HAT, 14534 (1791).

<sup>460</sup> BOA, HAT, 3686 (9 March 1807).

income. When that was not possible, the soldiers would not hesitate to desert the battlefield.

From a fiscal standpoint, reform of the pay ticket (*esame*) system seemed inevitable. Yet, from the standpoint of the janissaries, these irregularities allowed them to maintain the janissary corps' group solidarity and attractiveness for newcomers. By continuing to pay those who had not taken part in the campaigns, the janissaries could take care of their comrades and maintain their group solidarity instead of making distinctions, hence creating frictions, between those who attended the campaigns and those who did not. Also, holding several pay tickets as a result of vacant positions (*mahlul*) mostly due to deaths of individual janissaries instead of surrendering them to the government would make it possible for them to transfer pay tickets across different regiments. This must have helped janissaries keep to themselves the decision about who fills in the vacant positions, thus, controlling who enters the Corps and who does not.

The government tried to prevent this practice by promising to give an award, amounting to 10 percent of the pay ticket, to whoever informed the government of the vacancy.<sup>461</sup> However, it was probably not very common that an individual janissary would inform the government of such a vacancy, especially because of the *esprit de corps* within the regiments. And finally, promotion through bribery, if true, indicates a lack of a strictly merit-based promotion system. Instead, the influence (financial and otherwise) and connections of an individual janissary within the corps must have mattered more than his qualifications as a military person. All these practices, deemed to be outright corruption by the government's military and fiscal efficiency perspective,

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<sup>461</sup> BOA, HAT, 10614 (1789).

were closely related to maintenance of social cohesion and solidarity within the janissary corps.

For the purposes of military efficiency, group solidarity<sup>462</sup> among the janissaries, expressed in a variety of ways, constituted a serious problem. One of the ways in which the janissaries resisted the government's control over them was through protection of janissary "comrades" (*yoldaş*) even when they may have committed crimes. In one such instance, the janissaries of the forty-second division of the janissary corps stationed in Candia (*Kandiye*) refused to hand over comrades of their division who had been found guilty of murder and invasion of people's homes. In such situations, only the janissary officers (*serdars*) could detain or punish an individual janissary. Involvement of an outsider was considered against the law.<sup>463</sup> In the case of the janissaries in Candia, it appears that they were unwilling to punish members of their corps. Furthermore, when these soldiers were finally captured and imprisoned inside the barracks until their punishment was decided, some other janissaries freed them. The state official reporting this event expresses fear about a possible spread of such subversive acts to the other divisions of the Corps. Although the details of the mentioned crimes are not mentioned in the document, what is clear is that the state had to break the resistance of janissaries who prioritized their comradeship over punishment of one of their own. Although this may be

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<sup>462</sup> The historian Ahmed Cevdet Pasha acknowledges the strength of the Janissaries' group solidarity but views it in negative light because it results in disobedience to the government. Neumann, *Amaç Tarih*.

<sup>463</sup> For an imperial order criticizing the punishment of janissaries in Aleppo by the governor instead of the janissary officers (*serdars*) themselves, see BOA, C. AS, 1518 (6 December 1795).

seen as a typical corruption story, it is important to note that the janissaries saw it as an intrusion violating their communal solidarity.<sup>464</sup>

What the historians have labeled as corruption and unruly behavior on the part of the janissaries often derived from the fact that the janissaries contested and negotiated what the Ottoman government expected of them. There were several things that prevented the janissaries from simply following the orders of the government. The code of honor, interpreted in a variety of ways, enabled them to negotiate, contest, and resist what they saw as the intrusions into their communal identity. Interpretations of this unwritten code were not always uniform, which allowed them flexibility in their relationship with the government. While they could resist a reform measure for it being an *infidel invention* speaking to Muslim sensibilities, they could also invoke their opposition to *excessive wealth* of the reformers speaking to their non-elite connections.

The janissary soldiers could also organize among themselves to demand their salaries that had not been paid to them. In one such instance in Bosnia, Kara Hamza and Kara Hüseyin of Istolca established a “society” among themselves and “used” the issue of salaries to promote their cause in the words of the central government. They demanded that the income from certain *mukataa* and *cizye* in Bosnia should be used for payments of janissaries.<sup>465</sup> The government’s accusation that these janissaries were “trying to advance their cause” is noteworthy in itself. Furthermore, it is reported that they were able to convince the Saraybosna’s *ulema* and *eşraf*. This event points to the fact that the

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<sup>464</sup> BOA, C. AS, 21798 (6 October 1792). See also BOA, C. AS, 21898 (6 October 1792); BOA, C. AS, 13769 (31 October 1792).

<sup>465</sup> BOA, HAT, 9925 (1795).

janissaries could organize around a cause and convince local leaders to endorse their efforts.

The janissaries' opinions mattered in the appointment of their leaders as well. Janissary soldiers' approval of the Janissary Agha was taken into consideration in behind-the-scenes discussions about appointment of the janissary officers (*aghas*). Such discussions were sensitive and the government officials were extremely careful so as not to expose their preferences publicly. Documents relating to internal discussions of such matters, however, reveal that the caliber of a prospective janissary *agha* as well as his influence and respectability among the janissaries were important considerations for the state elites.<sup>466</sup>

In addition to their collective action, their long-established connections with the society at large prevented them from following the government's orders. Whenever there was a conflict between the demands of the government and the interests of their allies (notables, merchants, commoners), they gave it a second thought before following the orders of the government. Their internal esprit de corps combined with their societal connections rendered them unruly, rebellious, and corrupt in the eyes of the government – a view often adopted by historians as well.

### *Compensating the Janissaries*

The imperial inability to provide funds for the war effort or the composition of a new army of a great size would hamper the government's efforts to turn the army into an effective fighting machine required to wage wars effectively. The janissaries' ability to

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<sup>466</sup> BOA, HAT, 8770 (1789).



devote themselves to the campaigns was greatly imperiled by the lack of timely financial rewards. The soldiers had to worry about their livelihoods during the campaigns and they even ended up borrowing from local financiers against their future earnings, getting trapped in a vicious cycle of debt and borrowing. Yearlong delays had become commonplace, which can partly explain the “creative” ways the janissary corps came up with finding income, such as circulating and exchanging their pay tickets in a stock-market-like fashion. When the government tried to implement measures to end such practices, it triggered janissary discontent, particularly because these financial mechanisms helped them survive. There were larger financiers benefiting from this situation but for the low-level janissaries, easy circulation of these pay tickets must have been essential. Delays in payment of janissary salaries simply exacerbated the need to resort to borrowing as well as manipulation of janissary pay ticket practices.

In the 1790s, for instance, the compensation owed to the janissaries protecting various fortresses throughout the Balkans continued to be a source of difficulty for the central government. The payments for the service of the janissaries stationed in the fortresses of Belgrade, Bender, Hotin, İbrail, and Akgirman were yet to be paid in October 1793.<sup>467</sup> In a document discussing the back-wages owed to the janissaries protecting various fortresses in the eastern parts of the empire, we learn that the janissaries stationed in the fortress of Anabolu found themselves heavily indebted because they had not received any payments from the central government from 1771 through 1780. The officials themselves described the situation of the janissaries as “miserable” because of their debt. The document reveals a deal struck between the

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<sup>467</sup> BOA, C. AS, 4995 (23 October 1793).

janissaries and the central government upon the payment of these past wages. The janissaries agreed that they would give up past wages (since 1780) if the government paid the current salaries of the janissaries (1796) in the fortress of Damascus on time. The government's condition for this deal was that the janissaries would submit accurate records of janissaries who were absent and present.<sup>468</sup>

Janissaries did not necessarily rebel when faced with financial problems. We learn from a document concerning the salary payments of the janissaries and their affiliates (*yamaks*) stationed in the fortress of İnebahtı that these soldiers left to the imperial treasury almost half of their salaries earned during the previous two decades. In return for payment of their salaries for the year 1796 along with some 80,227 *guruş* for the first of these two decades, some 797 soldiers in İnebahtı fortress accepted that they would not receive their salaries for a whole decade. It is also mentioned in the same document that the state had to sell some imperial property in the vicinity of İnebahtı to pay the due salaries amounting to 80,227 *guruş*.<sup>469</sup> Beyond the generally known enormous budgetary problems, there seems to be an implicit acknowledgment of the soldiers' extra-military engagements. Or else, how would they be able to survive without their salaries for two decades? As the government could not pay the janissaries in a timely manner and allowed them to engage in trade and other economic activities, the janissaries remained on the government payroll but continued to experience financial difficulties.

Such difficulties seem to have continued later in the decade in other parts of the empire. The janissaries of the fortress of Belgrade were in a dire situation in May of 1803

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<sup>468</sup> BOA, C. AS, 7530 (15 December 1796).

<sup>469</sup> BOA, C. AS, 3767 (8 April 1797).

for not having received their salaries of the previous two years. Having paid the salaries for the year 1800 from tax-farming rents (*mukataa*) in Niş area, the government officials discussed the payment of the salaries for the years 1801 and 1802. A comment by the *İrad-ı Cedid* accountant stated that it is not an imperial custom to pay salaries due for two years at once, so the janissary salaries for 1801 would be paid once the proper summaries (*icmal*) are submitted.<sup>470</sup> This shows us that it had become commonplace to pay the janissaries at various fortresses several years late.

According to the long-accepted custom, the expenses of the serdarship of the *kazas* would be paid for out of the independent budget of the janissary corps so the *kaza* serdarship would be given to the corps. However, by 1805, the abuse of this custom by the local notables was noted in the imperial documents. Local notables of certain *kazas* were auctioning off these serdarships to “unqualified” individuals against the accepted custom. The sultan issued orders to both the Rumelia and Anatolian governors that they prevent such abuses and punish the responsible ones.<sup>471</sup> Clearly, attacks on such privileges and entitlements of the janissary corps (which they saw as protected by the ancient imperial customs) by the local notables or their allies in the central government would create discontent among the janissaries.

One of the main problems of the central government’s own doing was that the janissaries appointed to various localities were not compensated for properly. In the case of Palestine, for instance, the local governor had to rely increasingly on local sources of financial resources as well as to supply men for the local janissaries. As recruitment from

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<sup>470</sup> BOA, C. AS, 11213 (1 May 1803).

<sup>471</sup> BOA, HAT, 4823 (1805).

among the local population became a necessity, *local (yerliyan)* janissary became a separate category of soldiers who would identify their interests more and more with the local interests.<sup>472</sup> Such distinctions among janissary groups as the local and imperial led to exploitation of such differences by local and military leaders throughout the eighteenth century. These differences became instrumental in opposing the New Order as well when the local janissaries often sided with the local interests against the imperial janissaries.

### ***Mobilizing the Janissaries***

The willingness on the part of the janissaries in the military campaigns, hence military success, was closely related to satisfactory pay. The janissaries in the fortress of Belgrade gathered together and went to Belgrade's governor, Vizier Osman Pasha. They asked for extra rations saying that it was a traditional rule of military campaigning (*kaide-i seferiye*) that they be given more rations than usual. The government's order to the governor was that this request should be ignored and they should be given the regular rations.<sup>473</sup> The government's inability to meet such expectations combined with its demands for participation in the campaigns must have created discontent among the janissaries.

The janissaries were not always at odds with the government's demands in terms of supplying men for the military confrontations. In 1790, several thousand janissaries were sent from Istanbul to Danube to fight as marines in the navy under the leadership of

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<sup>472</sup> Amnon Cohen, "The Army in Palestine in the Eighteenth Century: Sources of Its Weakness and Strength," *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies* 34, no. 1 (1971): 44–45.

<sup>473</sup> BOA, C. AS, 39384 (19 March 1789).

Mehmed Pasha against the Russians.<sup>474</sup> In 1791, when they were asked to supply five hundred janissaries to be under the command of the navy, five hundred janissaries seem to have obeyed the order and joined the navy although they were not trained as sailors. Janissary participation in the navy alongside trained sailors was not an uncommon practice.<sup>475</sup> Yet, the fact that the order regarding this appointment mentions that the janissaries had come to join the navy by “their own wish,”<sup>476</sup> indicates that the government was not always sure that the janissaries would respond positively to such a request.

The Ottoman government used an amalgam of threats as well as rewards in order to convince the soldiers to report for duty. These included threats against those who did not join the campaign the government intended to engage in. In an order for recruitment of soldiers for the upcoming campaign in 1790, the government ordered the janissaries and all of the capable [males] to gather in Anatolia. The order included strongly worded reminders/threats against those who might not show up for the campaign.<sup>477</sup>

Threats were often combined with rhetoric appealing to the Islamic sensibilities of the intended audience. An order sent to the governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Bozok and Çankırı, Çaparzade Mir Süleyman, blames the lack of effort on the part of the soldiers for the last couple of years for desertion even before facing the Russian and Habsburg armies. As a result of laxity (*rehavet*) of the soldiers of Islam, the infidels were able to inflict their

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<sup>474</sup> BOA, HAT, 11305 (1790).

<sup>475</sup> Daniel Panzac, *Barbary Corsairs: The End of a Legend, 1800-1820*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage v. 29 (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2005), 70.

<sup>476</sup> BOA, HAT, 1458 (29 August 1791).

<sup>477</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1949 (5 February 1790).

sedition with relative ease. Encouragement through the use of rhetoric for the war was accomplished through the government's argument that *ghaza* and *jihad* are absolute religious obligations upon the able ones. If those able men do not perform their obligations, they will be punished and made examples for others. Further, since this will mean that they have let Islamic lands "to go under the feet of the infidels," they would not receive the Prophet's intercession in the afterlife.<sup>478</sup> Those who practice jihad will receive their rewards whereas those who abstain from jihad would be relegated to the level of commoners (*reaya*).<sup>479</sup> Religious rhetoric couched in this way indicates the government's desperate effort to recruit soldiers with a discourse that combines earthly and other worldly punishments while at the same time blaming the soldiers for their lack of enthusiasm for the war effort.

Efforts to achieve military mobilization were accompanied by efforts to mobilize the general public. Complaining that those in the capital, Istanbul, were not making the sacrifices that the soldiers were making in frontier zones, the chief judge (*şeyhülislam*) suggested to the sultan that those who do not attend the mosques to pray for the victory of the Ottoman armies should be reported. Convinced that this would have a spiritual impact, the sultan asked that the necessary orders to that effect should be sent to the local judges throughout the empire.<sup>480</sup>

The government placed a strong emphasis on religion as a source of military and social mobilization in this time period. Praise and criticism, promises of reward and

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<sup>478</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1417 (29 December 1789).

<sup>479</sup> BOA, HAT, 10623 (26 January 1790).

<sup>480</sup> BOA, HAT, 10151 (1790).

punishments, often in line with Islamic sensibilities, are repeatedly used in the government's rhetoric. In an effort to appeal to the janissaries, the 'past glory' of the janissary corps was cited in recruitment orders. As one such order puts it, "everyone knows through history books as well as the elders of the corps that all these [past] conquests and *ghazas* were the result of the fact that the soldiers of the corps of the exalted threshold, especially the janissary soldiers, worked really hard, did not turn away from wars, remained steady and patient, and became victorious through much effort." Having acknowledged the value of the true spirit of the corps, the document goes on to identify those who were recruited into the corps as state soldiers (*miri*), who did not understand the "spirit of the corps" (*ocađı bilmeyen*), and who did not work for religion. These were the ones who deserted even without facing the enemy. The soldiers of the corps (*ocaklu*) and the janissaries, on the other hand, had worked really hard as foot soldiers in trenches and in siege making, which were not necessarily one of their specialties. They had always obeyed the ancient law and worked for the sake of religion.<sup>481</sup>

While using the rhetoric as described, the sultan often dismissed newly appointed janissary *aghas* because they proved not to be "useful" men, as they could not bring janissaries under their command to the war front. Such failure could be labeled as "treason" by the sultan.<sup>482</sup> At the same time, assembling the janissaries who could take part in actual fighting seems to have been subject to negotiation. In a record from the fall of 1799, the call for janissaries from Aleppo to arrive in Damascus as soon as possible

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<sup>481</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1095 (December 1789).

<sup>482</sup> BOA, HAT, 10189 (1790).

seems to have been ignored at first. The official reports that Es-Seyyid Ibrahim Agha had delivered the order and read it aloud in the presence of higher-level janissary officials. In return, these officials had promised that the janissaries able to fight (*harb ü darb erbabi*) would be ready in mid-month.<sup>483</sup> In addition to the fact that there was a need for repetition of such an order to mobilize the janissaries, it is also significant that there was a distinction between janissaries “able to fight” and those who could not. This indicates the general understanding that there was a significant portion of the janissaries in Aleppo who could not fight. How formal this distinction is difficult to determine but it seems to have existed and accepted by the state elites and administrators.

By describing an ideal janissary corps, the Ottoman officials were able to argue that it was a small minority within the janissaries, not the janissaries as a whole, who were unwilling to fight and disobedient to the ancient and sacred laws of the corps. By invoking religious rewards, the appeal was made to the janissaries’ sense of valor as defined by the government. This kind of appeal was simple rhetorical tools common in the Ottoman documents; yet, we see a sense of urgency and even helplessness on the part of the government that seems unable to exert its coercive powers to recruit soldiers. Hence, it attempts to define two types of corps soldiers: patriotic and unpatriotic. Such a distinction, however, would not fare well with the janissaries because they did not necessarily consider these ‘outsiders’ as alien to the corps. As late as 1807, the government was still having to threaten the janissaries in Istanbul and elsewhere that the consequences of not joining the war effort would be grave. The government’s desperation and appeal to the janissary *aghas* reflected in official documents attest to the fact that

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<sup>483</sup> BOA, C. AS, 35723 (21 August 1799).



reporting to duty for the war effort on the part of the janissaries on a desirable scale was a “lost cause.”<sup>484</sup>

It is important to note that it was not only the janissaries who found aspects of the New Order objectionable and even transformed them through their resistance and negotiation. A report from Humbaracı Corps’ chief officer, Seyyid Mehmed Efendi, attests to this fact. Seyyid Mehmed Efendi first declares that Humbaracı Corps accepts the New Order regulations and pledges that his soldiers will remain within their barracks (indicating that they will not revolt). Yet, the chief officer requests at the same time that the fiefs be assigned to the descendants of the soldiers, a practice the New Order regulations clearly banned, when the fiefs become vacant in case of the death of the fiefholder.<sup>485</sup> This instance of negotiation with the New Order regulations shows us that soldiers outside the janissary corps did not necessarily embrace the New Order.

### *Janissary “Fanaticism”*

The new clothing, especially the headgear worn by the New Order soldiers was a source of tension. The janissaries had their traditional distinctive clothing that was an important marker of identity and status. It was not only a matter of military efficiency or expediency for the janissaries. Their clothing and other markers such as tattoos, knives etc. were part of their being a “janissary comrade.” As Quataert explains, “clothing and headgear helped give status and a sense of identity to members of the specific religious,

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<sup>484</sup> BOA, HAT, 10791 (1807).

<sup>485</sup> BOA, HAT, 14954 (16 July 1795).

ethnic, and occupational communities in Ottoman society.”<sup>486</sup> As a group with a high sense of social solidarity, the janissaries were no exception. Their “resistance to martial fashion”<sup>487</sup> was due to the fact that they felt their identity was being attacked.

Various aspects of military uniforms and headgear, such as their color and the religion of their producers carried significant symbolic value for the janissaries.<sup>488</sup> As these were markers of soldiers’ group solidarity and identity as a janissary, they also became a source of conflict in the application of the reform measures by the Ottoman government. The symbolic meaning of clothing was strong enough to be part of the trigger for the famous Kabakçı Mustafa rebellion, which would end Selim III’s reign. Selim III communicated to his close advisors his plan to require janissary affiliates (*yamaks*),<sup>489</sup> who had been stationed on both sides of the Bosphorus to prevent foreign ships from entering the Straits, to drill and wear the new uniforms. According to another source, the sultan expressed his intention to go to the Friday prayer on May 23, 1807 wearing the uniforms. In both reports, the Captain of the Irregulars (*sekbanbaşı*) is said to have warned the sultan about the possible consequences of such an act.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> Donald Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 29, no. 3 (1997): 407.

<sup>487</sup> John P. Dunn, “Clothes to Kill For: Uniforms and Politics in Ottoman Armies.,” *Journal of the Middle East & Africa* 2, no. 1 (January 2011): 85.

<sup>488</sup> Janissaries preferred blue instead of red and the tailors making their uniforms were a specialized corps of Muslim artisans despite the fact that it was the Jews of Salonika who supplied the bulk of janissary uniforms. See Gilles Veinstein, “Sur La Draperie Juive de Salonique (XVI-XVII Siecles),” *Revue Du Monde Musulman Et de La Mediterranee* no. 66 (1992): 55–61.

<sup>489</sup> *Yamaks* were irregulars recruited in times of need for extra manpower and were often attached to the janissaries.

<sup>490</sup> Gilles Veinstein, “Sur La Draperie Juive De Salonique (XVI-XVII Siecles),” *Revue Du Monde Musulman Et De La Mediterranee* no. 66 (1992): 55–61.

Angered by such a warning, the sultan turned to the Commander of the Imperial Guards (*bostancıbaşı*),<sup>491</sup> for his opinion. His telling response was that he would “not only make them wear the uniforms but even hats if so ordered.”<sup>492</sup> The soldiers resisted the sultan’s order by saying, “we do not accept anything new, we will go on as we are accustomed to. Let the bonus and the uniform be yours.”<sup>493</sup> Halil Haseki Aga threatened them with killing the rebellious ones among them and repeated what he said to the sultan, namely that he would have them wear even hats. The ensuing fight cost Halil Haseki Aga and later on “British”<sup>494</sup> Mahmud Raif Efendi, who had authored one of the treatises defending the New Order, their lives.<sup>495</sup> These janissary affiliates consulted and joined with the janissaries in Istanbul and revolted under Kabakçı Mustafa’s leadership, whose previous career is virtually unknown to historians.

Kemal Beydilli has argued that this event was the culmination of a conspiracy. Köse Musa Pasha and Şeyhülislam Topal Ataullah Efendi, who were against the New Order, had been agitating the janissary affiliates about the prospect of being forced to wear the new uniforms. Since these soldiers were discontented elements due to attempts at their reorganization, they could be used for the aims of certain pashas.<sup>496</sup> Whether or

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<sup>491</sup> Commander of the Imperial Guards had jurisdiction over the shores and waters of the Bosphorus.

<sup>492</sup> Georg Oğulukyan, *Georg Oğulukyan’ın Ruznamesi 1806 - 1810 İsyanları: III. Selim, IV. Mustafa, II. Mahmud Ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa*, trans. Hrnad D. Andreasyan (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1972).

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>494</sup> Mahmud Raif Efendi had gotten the nickname “British” (İngiliz) because of his service in London as the Ottoman ambassador and the fact that he spoke English.

<sup>495</sup> Derin, “Yayla İmamı,” 223.

<sup>496</sup> Beydilli and Şahin, *Mahmud Raif Efendi*, 30.

not this was actually a conspiracy to undermine the New Order project is beside the point. What is important here is that what has often been interpreted as a reactionary revolt derived its source from resistance to new uniforms representative of the New Order's disciplinary nature not simply from the soldiers' opposition against a progressive innovation. This could only have served as ignition of a wider discontent with the military reforms being implemented. Being forced to wear modern uniforms, by itself, could not have resulted in a rebellion to bring down the entire reform project but it resonated with broad segments of the existing janissary corps who felt that their status and communal identity was being threatened by the proposed changes penetrating their daily routines, drill structures, and even uniforms.

It seems that the janissaries presented themselves as the protectors of religious identity and made "being Muslim" part of their discourse against the New Order. In Tekfurdağı (modern day Tekirdağ), when the notables of the district refused to comply with the New Order and were about to go to the Friday prayer, the qadi of the city reportedly said, "executing this imperial edict was more important than observing the Friday prayer." It is reported that "a few youths from the janissary group"<sup>497</sup> killed the local judge after he made this comment. Whether or not such an event actually occurred is as important as the fact that the janissaries were perceived as the real protectors of religion even against the local judge himself who was supposed to represent the religious authority in the city.

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<sup>497</sup> Derin, "Yayla İmamı," 218.

### *Janissaries' Relations with Socio-Economic Groups*

The janissaries were affiliated with and had profound connections to various societal groups. They established such relations over previous centuries through their involvement in economic activities and processes of socialization in the public space. Coffeehouses were places for social engagement and interaction among many groups including the urban merchants, guild members,<sup>498</sup> and local notables among others. Yet, it would be erroneous to assume that they served all groups in the same way. The more organized the social group, the stronger the political influence of that particular group. When combined with the fact that the janissaries could carry arms, their influence in these social spaces could be much stronger than others. They could even dominate some of them and we have evidence of certain coffeehouses being called a “janissary coffeehouse.” One could identify even the specific regiment to which a particular coffeehouse belonged, as the janissary signs would be on display on the walls of the coffeehouse. To a contemporary, it was probably not very difficult to figure out the political alignment of these coffeehouses.<sup>499</sup>

It was not a new phenomenon during the reign of Selim III that the janissaries gathered and discussed politics in coffeehouses. As one of the most common public spaces available to them, coffeehouses served as venues for socialization<sup>500</sup> as well as

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<sup>498</sup> For a discussion of general functions of guilds in the Ottoman Empire, see Gabriel Baer, “The Administrative, Economic and Social Functions of Turkish Guilds,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, no. 1 (1970): 28–50.

<sup>499</sup> Mehmet Mert Sunar, “Cauldron of Dissent: A Study of the Janissary Corps, 1807-1826” (PhD, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2006).

<sup>500</sup> James Grehan, “Smoking and ‘Early Modern’ Sociability: The Great Tobacco Debate in the Ottoman Middle East (Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries),” *The American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 1, 2006): 10.

politicization for the janissaries. “By the seventeenth century, janissaries not only gathered and criticized the state but actually planned riots while in these coffeehouses.”<sup>501</sup> Especially in the imperial capital, the coffeehouse became a “principal institution of the public sphere, a channel and site of public communication, and as an arena linking the socio-cultural with the political.”<sup>502</sup> Given that the janissaries were often stationed in the urban centers throughout the empire, availability of coffeehouses made it natural for them to spend their leisure time in coffeehouses and establish relations with various socio-economic groups.<sup>503</sup>

These societal connections constituted a serious impediment for the Ottoman government’s recruitment efforts in the late eighteenth century. At the same time, it is telling that the government did not consider it an anomaly that civilians could be involved in military affairs. In a petition to the government, a former janissary captain of the fortress of Kaş, Kör Hasan Ağazade Eyüb Ağa, asks to be given the job of digging of trenches around the fortress. In his letter, Eyüb Ağa claims that the owners of some 190 shops around the fortress used to voluntarily serve as soldiers without *ulufes* in time of need but now had abandoned the area due to lack of attention to them. However, the government’s investigation found out that the fortress needed trenches and manpower to dig them. Further, these shop owners need not be recruited as soldiers (the government

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<sup>501</sup> Eminegül Karababa and Güliz Ger, “Early Modern Ottoman Coffeehouse Culture and the Formation of the Consumer Subject,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 37, no. 5 (February 1, 2011): 746.

<sup>502</sup> Uğur Kömeçoğlu, “The Publicness and Sociabilities of the Ottoman Coffeehouse,” *The Public* 12, no. 2 (2005): 6.

<sup>503</sup> Cengiz Kırılı, “Coffeehouses: Public Opinion in the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Empire,” in *Public Islam and the Common Good* (Brill, 2004).

would have to pay them which would be an extra financial burden) since they would naturally help, as they are the inhabitants of the fortress and they constitute the bulk of the local people. What is interesting here is that the government did not take issue with these commoners to be part of the defense of the fortress, which makes it harder to argue that the military versus non-military distinction was seriously maintained in practice.<sup>504</sup>

Local people could avoid enlisting for the army by claiming to be janissaries. What is also interesting is that the government officials did not necessarily dispute such claims and often honored them. In one such instance, Çalıkzade Halil Ağa had been provided with funds and given orders to recruit and register one thousand foot soldiers from Bolu and its environs. Halil Ağa reported that since all of the people (reaya) in Bolu were janissaries, imperial (miri) soldiers could not be enlisted from Bolu. Instead, he suggested, the desired number of soldiers could be recruited as *serdengeçti*. As is explained in the document, an imperial soldier would only have to receive his imperial salary until the end of his service and could not claim anything else from the government. In contrast, a *serdengeçti* was by definition entitled to a one-time sum of enlistment fee (ulufe) paid for by the sultan just like janissaries. Thus, the government gave up the idea of recruiting one thousand imperial foot soldiers from Bolu acknowledging that recruitment of *serdengeçtis* would cost the government a lot more. Instead, the funds available for this recruitment effort would be redirected to Rumelia *kaymakam* Rüstem Zaimzade Mustafa Ağa for recruitment of the desired number of soldiers.<sup>505</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> BOA, C. AS, 55 (Undated).

<sup>505</sup> BOA, HAT, 8301 (1788).

While the government was trying to recruit soldiers in the most cost-efficient way, the common people avoided participation in a not-so-profitable enterprise. The implication in Halil Ağa's report is that people would be willing to enlist as soldiers only if they were paid a considerable sum. When attractive pay was missing, people subverted the government's recruitment efforts by claiming to be janissaries. Similarly, when an order for recruitment of cavalymen was proclaimed in Çorum and Osmancık, most of the people claimed to be janissaries and refused to provide men for the army.<sup>506</sup> The fact that the Ottoman officials did not explicitly dispute such claims underlines the relative paralysis of the state's coercive abilities during this time period as a result of overwhelming preoccupation with war efforts. It also points out the fact that the people negotiated and shielded themselves against state coercion through a claim to membership in the Janissary Corps, ironically another state institution.

Claims by the locals that they were janissaries, hence they had privileges, drew strong reaction by the governors appointed by the imperial center. In a petition and a thinly veiled threat by the janissaries of Vidin against the sultan, the janissaries complained about the governor of Rumelia, stating that the governor had apparently "sworn to kill all who claimed to be a janissary save the 7 year olds." He had already severed the heads of eight janissaries and forced janissary officers (*Sekbanbaşı*) to kill their own junior officers (*odabaşı*). He sent their heads to the capital claiming that these belonged to the Belgrade exiles. Among the janissary complaints was that the governor of Rumelia had killed (without guilt) the former *kulkethüdası* and all traders from Vidin and confiscated their property. The janissaries of Vidin concluded their letter with a warning

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<sup>506</sup> BOA, C. AS, 22465 (13 March 1790).



that Vidin would witness a rebellion (*ihtilal*) although they did not wish that.<sup>507</sup> Besides the unjust practices of the governor in the eyes of the janissaries, it is important to note that the governor was furious over large groups of people claiming to be janissaries in the Balkans.

One of the incentives for the common people to both support and protect the Janissaries and claim to be a janissary themselves seems to be the military persons' tax-exempt status. For artisans and merchants, entering the janissary ranks and acquiring janissary pay tickets would guarantee "full exemption from all imperial taxes (except for those imposed by Islamic law)."<sup>508</sup> When janissaries were summoned from a certain locality, the local population could have a say in the category under which the local janissaries were drafted. In one such instance, the local population insisted that the local janissaries would leave the town under the *serdar* flagship instead of as *dalkılıç*.<sup>509</sup> This must have had to do with the prestige of the town or it may have had taxation implications for the locals as drafting of soldiers often implied tax exemptions or other real and symbolic privileges.

A classic discussion on the janissaries, as discussed in the first chapter, has to do with the janissaries' engagement in the economic sphere despite their supposed "purely" military nature. The fact that a janissary widow could demand to inherit her husband's estates shows that the janissary inheritance was possible and this must have led to broader

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<sup>507</sup> BOA, C. AS, 2010 (28 August 1795).

<sup>508</sup> James Grehan, *Everyday Life & Consumer Culture in 18th-century Damascus* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 15.

<sup>509</sup> BOA, C. AS, 48620 (14 October 1800).

ties with the society at large.<sup>510</sup> Janissary participation in the economic sphere and tax-exemptions local populations could benefit from through affiliation with the janissaries created a coalition around shared interests, which needed to be defended against the New Order measures.

When the New Order was to be implemented by powerful pashas who supported the project, such as Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha, the common people and the janissaries forged alliances to resist the New Order. One of the clues as to the existence of such alliances is the social legitimacy that being a janissary carried with it. People of Tekfurdağı (modern-day Tekirdağ) in 1806 refused to comply with the imperial demands for supplying soldiers as required by the New Order. Their defense is reported to have been “we are janissaries and our ancestors were also janissaries, hence, we do not accept the New Order.”<sup>511</sup> This defense, by itself, does not prove any real direct connections between the “people” of Tekfurdağı and the janissaries. However, what it does show us is the fact that “being a janissary or descendants of a janissary” provided people with a discourse against the imperial demands of manpower and financial support for the new project. Resistance to the New Order does not seem to have been strictly limited to the urban areas. When Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha moved against Tekfurdağı and the Balkans to extend the New Order army to the city, the villages around Çorlu resisted and fought the Pasha’s troops causing him to realize that he would not overcome the resistance and he would have to go back to Anatolia.<sup>512</sup>

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<sup>510</sup> BOA, C. AS, 412 (August/September 1803).

<sup>511</sup> Derin, “Yayla İmamı,” 217.

<sup>512</sup> Ibid., 218.

Banditry in Rumelia in this time period is well documented. Janissaries played their part in this phenomenon as well. Many janissaries and their associates joined with the famous local bandits. In an order sent to Karaferye (Veroia/Veria, Greece) on 6 July 1797, we learn that the local people of the town asked the town's military commander (*serdar*) to prevent the return of five janissary-turned-bandits to their town because of their harassment of the poor of the town. It had initially been reported that these individuals had fled the town before the arrival of an official (*çavuş*) sent from the center. However, it turns out that these janissary-bandits had not left the town but found refuge with a local notable named Molla İsa who was accompanied by other notables.<sup>513</sup> The janissary-bandits were trying to go to Bosnia with the help of these notables. The local notables, who were also accused by the center of wronging the local people, were helping these janissary-bandits. Although we cannot ascertain the degree of truth about the accusations leveled against the janissary-bandits and the local notables, it is certain that there was a network established between these two groups and they used it to escape government scrutiny.

Janissary presence was not always welcome as they could involve themselves in competition in the market place, as it was not out of ordinary that they had strong influence in local business environment by virtue of their close-knit networks. We see such anti-janissary feeling among the residents of Filibe (Bulgaria). Following a fire in the marketplace, the people of Filibe petitioned the government expressing their discomfort with janissary presence in the district. Janissary captains were living in the market for a while and three separate fires had taken place since the arrival of the

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<sup>513</sup> These local notables (*vücuğ*) included Deli İbrahim, Molla Sadıkoğlu Hasan, Salih Kethüdaoğlu, Kalyoncu Mehmet, and Tatar Deliveli.

janissaries in their district. Although the people could not tell exactly if the janissaries perpetrated these fires, it was a distinct possibility in their eyes that the janissaries would cause mischief. Accordingly, the janissaries needed to be sent to another district.<sup>514</sup> Regardless of whether the janissaries actually committed these crimes (which would be focus of traditional historiography to show their *corruption*), it is clear that the janissaries' presence in the marketplace was a source of discomfort for the local tradesmen and other residents as their involvement in economic activity created unnecessary economic competition for the locals.

Andre Raymond documented the connections between the merchant classes and the military (and more specifically the janissaries) in Cairo.<sup>515</sup> Raymond finds that there existed two distinct parties among the military class with regard to their role in economic activity. While one party favored their economic involvements and commitments, there existed a “reformist” camp that advocated the janissary corps to be brought back to its barracks. The idea that the janissaries were not supposed to be involved in economic activity and that *reform* entailed them getting out of economic activity, hence professionalization, is a late eighteenth century discussion. This argument portrayed an ideal state of affairs where the military and the population were strictly separated and compartmentalized was the general rule prior to the eighteenth century. Yet, the reformers had a vested interest in presenting the issue in this manner to be able to argue for a restructuring of the traditional military forces such as the Janissaries.

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<sup>514</sup> BOA, HAT, 2061 (14 February 1798).

<sup>515</sup> Andre Raymond, “Soldiers in Trade: The Case of Ottoman Cairo,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 18, no. 1 (1991): 16–37.

The fear was that such discontent could be expressed through the armed groups like the janissaries. The crowds' politicization as a result of their relations with the janissaries was a serious concern for the state. "Power in the bazaar and in the street was exactly what the classic constitution of Ottoman society had been designed to prevent. But once the janissary corps had evolved into a kind of militia, melting into a population with whom it married and whom it fathered, it was impossible to prevent the participation of the Istanbul crowd in matters of war and peace and in other questions affecting the fortunes of the state."<sup>516</sup>

It should not surprise us that the janissaries were involved in local politics in the capital as well as in the provinces as they had developed extensive relationships with different segments of the society. This was the case also for Mosul in late eighteenth century. What is more interesting, however, is that although they were supposed to impose the center's will on the provinces, the establishment of the New Order army alienated the provincial janissaries, as much as it did the local notables who interpreted it as the center's attempt to regain its ability to monopolize violence and war making. The Jalili family in Mosul served as "contractors" and profited from "privatization and commercialization of the process of making war." Interpreting the new army as an end to their position, the Jalili family was joined by the janissaries in a "generalized rebellion." But in this case, the center was able to defeat their coalition thanks to the "help of the mercantile and landowning elite of the city."<sup>517</sup>

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<sup>516</sup> McGowan, "Age of Ayans," 640.

<sup>517</sup> Dina R. Khoury, *State and Provincial Society in the Ottoman Empire: Mosul, 1540-1834* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 48.

Janissaries' relations with local groups could also be adversarial. In a document from Aleppo dated October 1797, we learn that a group of janissaries got into a fight with a group of local elites (*sadat-ı kiram*), which resulted in the deaths of a few local elites and one janissary. While the document does not mention the specific reason for the fight, it does talk about the local residents who were harmed (we do not know exactly whether this was physical or psychological only). What we do know is that the local authorities reported to the center that the local people complained to them about the janissaries' behavior. In the local *qadi*'s note to the document, there is talk about the janissary groups' (*ocaklu ahalisi*) disobedience to their own officers and their involvement with the affairs of the other groups and the general public. The document calls for punishment of such behavior and reports that the janissaries agreed to obey their traditional rules (which reportedly prohibited them from minding the business of the civilian population). This document points to the fact that the janissaries competed with various local networks and a discourse about their prohibited involvement in non-military affairs was used against them. This discourse indicates the increasing power of the argument about what janissaries should look like, i.e. act like soldiers proper and nothing else.<sup>518</sup>

In Izmir, for instance, janissaries competed with Venetian tradesmen. In a report about a fight between the janissaries and the Venetians, we learn that a customs official (*Venedik yasağcısı*), who was also a comrade of the thirty-first regiment of the janissary corps, was shot dead following an argument with a Venetian tradesman. The fight broke out after an Austrian acrobat staged a performance in the city town without permission. The janissaries gathered at the court and asked the judge to hand them over the Venetian.

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<sup>518</sup> BOA, C. DH, 2539 (26 October 1797).

Eventually, the janissaries stormed a commercial building (*han*) in the French quarter and a firefight occurred between the janissaries and the Venetians. The incident turned into a major confrontation between the Venetians and the local Muslim community.<sup>519</sup> Once again, we see janissaries displaying group solidarity in considering the killing of one of their own by the Venetians as a collective attack on themselves and the larger Muslim community. At the same time, this clearly shows there existed tensions between the local community and Venetian traders prior to this incident. Such incidents were not unique to the late eighteenth century. Janissary involvement in the politics of maritime trade in Izmir dates back to early seventeenth century. Janissaries, along with some *sipahis*, “illegally prohibited Venetians from purchasing cotton” and appeared as protectors of the rights of porters employed by the Venetians.<sup>520</sup>

As such, the view that the janissary involvement in the economic sphere was the direct cause of the military defeats throughout the eighteenth century needs to be revised, as the janissaries were involved in the economic sphere during the earlier centuries when the Ottomans enjoyed great military successes. The fact that the janissaries had become embedded in the society may have undermined their military ineffectiveness in the late eighteenth century to a certain extent but the broader weaknesses of the empire had a more consequential role in the state’s military failures.

The janissaries’ connection to the Bektashi sect is often cited but the extent of this connection is under-researched. Selim III’s connection to the Mevleviyye order (*tarikât*)

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<sup>519</sup> BOA, HAT, 8784.G (8 April 1797); BOA, HAT, 8805 (1797); BOA, HAT, 6859 (1797); BOA, HAT, 2061 (14 April 1798).

<sup>520</sup> Daniel Goffman, *Izmir and the Levantine World, 1550-1650* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 107.

is known and he may have used Mevlevism as a counterweight to the Bektashi order in ideological as well as in real political terms.<sup>521</sup> The great Mevlevi figure Şeyh Galib praised, in his poetry, Selim III's efforts to "modernize military instruction, the manufacture of gunpowder, the foundry, and corps such as the cannonries and artillerymen."<sup>522</sup> However, it is difficult to argue that this meant unconditional Mevlevi support for the New Order. In fact, the head of the Mevlevi *tarikat* from 1785 to 1815, Hacı Mehmet Çelebi, joined the opposition to the New Order because of his connections to the provincial notables whose interests ran counter to Selim III's centralizing policies.<sup>523</sup> While the janissaries' connections to the Bektashi *tarikat* may have rendered it impossible for them to strike an alliance with the Mevlevis in Istanbul, the janissaries' connections with local notables in Anatolia provided them with a different sort of alliance (political and social) that could trump the ideological affinity between Selim III and Mevlevism.

### ***Local People Use Janissaries against the Center***

Already in the sixteenth century, the janissaries in Damascus had been well established in the local community and married into some of the leading families. They also had tax collecting duties, which they exercised without opposition by the local power holders. Their ties to the society became problematic only when the central government preferred to employ the janissaries of Damascus instead of the janissaries of Aleppo in

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<sup>521</sup> George Gawrych, "Şeyh Galib and Selim III: Mevlevism and the Nizam-ı Cedid," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* IV/I, no. Summer 1987 (1987): 93.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.



tax collection duties.<sup>524</sup> The janissary ties to the locals by themselves were not regarded as unacceptable or out of the ordinary even in the sixteenth century. The fact that these ties complicated the government's plans to exercise its authority locally was part of life already.

In the politics of tax collection within a center versus province dynamic, the janissaries could represent the interests of the local communities and disobey the central government depending on what kind of ties they had established with the local communities. As part of the growth of local Ottoman ruling groups, local janissaries became more and more involved in the local communities, who in turn benefited from privileges the janissaries could provide.<sup>525</sup>

Discussions about the extent to which the Ottomans were able to extend their control over the provinces have been the subject of various scholarly debates. Depending on the time and locality, historians found that Ottoman control varied from region to region. Ottoman influence did not necessarily correlate with distance from the Ottoman center. For instance, Ottomans could exercise more authority over Damascus as opposed to Aleppo in the sixteenth century despite the latter's closer proximity to the center.<sup>526</sup> This was demonstrated in the center's preference of Damascene janissaries over Aleppo janissaries in overseeing the financial affairs of Aleppo in the second half of the sixteenth century. Yet, the Ottomans could not contain the eventual domination of the Damascene

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<sup>524</sup> Abdul Rahim AbuHusayn, "Janissary Insubordination in the Province of Aleppo at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century as Depicted in Ottoman Documents," in *Actes Du VIe Congres Du CJEPO Tenu a Cambridge Sur: Les Provinces Arabes a L'Epoque Ottomane*, 1987, 35.

<sup>525</sup> Hourani, *Arab Peoples*, 236.

<sup>526</sup> AbuHusayn, "Janissary Insubordination," 33.

janissaries over Aleppo's local politics. What is more important for our purposes here is that the Ottoman center was sensitive to the kind of influence the local janissaries could exert over the local affairs in Aleppo. In the late sixteenth century as well as the late eighteenth century, we see janissaries emerge as one of the local factions<sup>527</sup> and become involved in local power struggles between local administrators of Damascus and Aleppo.<sup>528</sup> Furthermore, the Ottoman center was not able to get Damascene janissaries out of Aleppo completely.<sup>529</sup> This points to the fact that the janissaries in various localities in the peripheries could carve out their limited autonomy and disobey the center in favor of their local interests as early as the sixteenth century when the Ottoman state is supposed to have exerted the greatest control over its territories.

In the eighteenth century, there was at least a two centuries old history of janissary presence in these localities in one form or another. They could have tax-collection privileges in addition to their involvement in various guilds in competition with the local *ashraf* in Aleppo. The janissaries were increasingly locally recruited from among the locals and rural migrants as a result of reduction in troop numbers that were sent from the imperial center. This meant that the locally recruited janissaries could have tribal as well as rural origins.<sup>530</sup>

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<sup>527</sup> Herbert Luther Bodman, *Political Factions in Aleppo, 1760-1826* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963).

<sup>528</sup> AbuHusayn, "Janissary Insubordination," 37.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>530</sup> Bruce Masters, "Aleppo: The Ottoman Empire's Caravan City," in *The Ottoman City Between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17–79; Bruce Masters, "The Political Economy of Aleppo in an Age of Ottoman Reform," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 53, no. 1–2

The janissaries could also be involved in center versus periphery struggles as much as local power struggles between different groups. In one such instance, when the janissaries in Aleppo found out that the government was going to try and punish them for their unruly behavior, around four to five thousand of them ran away from the city. The governor of Aleppo reported that a coalition of the governor's forces and the local people would execute the janissaries if they ever returned to the city.<sup>531</sup> The government made a pact with the local people that would prevent the return of the janissaries. The deal stipulated that if the people of Aleppo allowed janissaries back in the city they would have to pay 150,000 piasters as a fine. What is interesting is that the local notables in Aleppo accepted this deal.<sup>532</sup>

One of the consequence of relations between the people and the janissaries or their affiliates was that the Ottoman state often tried to break these connections by disciplining the behavior of the people in a locality. The people of Aleppo swore to capture and deliver the “seditious and rebellious bandits and affiliates of the Corps” (*erbab-ı fesad ve ihtilal olan eşkiya ve ocaklıyan*) if they were ever to return to Aleppo. Aleppo janissaries, four to five thousand of them, heard that they were going to be punished so they left the city. If their leader returned, the local people and the governor would execute them.<sup>533</sup> The people of Aleppo were read the government's orders in July

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(2010): 290–316; Abraham Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity : Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989).

<sup>531</sup> BOA, C. AS, 21090 (1 June 1802).

<sup>532</sup> BOA, C. AS, 21333 (July 1802).

<sup>533</sup> BOA, C. AS, 21090 (1 June 1802).

1802 not to accept rebellious janissaries into their locality. If not, they would have to pay the government 150,000 gurus.<sup>534</sup>

In line with the process of so-called decentralization in the eighteenth century, the Ottoman administration was relatively weakened in various provinces. As the influence of the local power groups increased, the relative power of the soldiers and administration officials sent from the center was reduced. In Damascus, parallel to the decreasing control of the Ottoman center over the eighteenth century, the janissaries sent from the center started to include local people,<sup>535</sup> especially because the janissaries were integrated into the society as local craftsmen were increasingly militarized and established close connections to the janissaries.<sup>536</sup>

For instance, in 1739, local *yerliya* janissaries had allied with the Damascene power groups and were able to expel “mercenary” troops of the Ottoman center. *Yerliya* janissaries could become instrumental in the local actors’ assertion of their own control at the expense of the imperial center’s control.<sup>537</sup> While this was an “unintended consequence” for the Ottoman center, this example makes it clear the extent to which the janissaries could become integrated into the society and resist the imperial center that sent them to the particular locality in the first place. Examples of successful alliances between the imperial forces and local rebels were not restricted to the late eighteenth century. In 1703, the janissaries and *timar* holders joined the rebels in Jerusalem to

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<sup>534</sup> BOA, C. AS, 21333 (July 1802).

<sup>535</sup> Rafeq, “Syrian Provinces,” 63.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

oppose the *mütesellim*.<sup>538</sup> This phenomenon has been studied under the rubric of decline of Ottoman imperial control in the Arab provinces, which often overlooked the fact that the janissaries' connection with the local networks and power groups went beyond superficial and occasional alliances and participation in power struggles. Clearly, they relied on participation in the local economy and extensive business networks, especially since the opposition to the center meant that their stipends and salaries would be cut off by the imperial center.<sup>539</sup>

For the locals, the janissary garrison could signify a lot more than a symbol of the imperial control. In Aleppo, for instance, membership in the janissary garrison meant various means of economic, social, and political advancement such as performing police duties, contributing troops to the imperial army, and tax exemptions.<sup>540</sup> The janissaries themselves took part in public and private sectors of the economy as well as in the administrative structures such as the governor's consultative council over the course of the eighteenth century.<sup>541</sup> Similar to the situation in Damascus, the janissaries became involved in local resistance to imperial control exercised by the governor in Aleppo in the late eighteenth century. This was clearly not an ideological fight for them but protection of their interests that were aligned mostly with those of the local power-holders. In their fight against the alliance of the governor and a group of local *ashraf* in 1805, their prize consisted of the acquisition of a "monopoly over the import and sale of sheep, food

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<sup>538</sup> Adel Manna, "Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Rebellions in Palestine," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, no. 1 (1994): 54.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>540</sup> McGowan, "Age of Ayans," 640.

<sup>541</sup> Marcus, *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity : Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*.

supply, land, orchards, and various trade guilds.”<sup>542</sup> The janissary control over Aleppo lasted until 1813 when the Ottoman governor was able to eliminate the janissary leaders and reestablish Ottoman control in the city.<sup>543</sup>

There existed a strong correlation between decreased Ottoman control over these localities and the increased autonomy of the local power-holders. These local power-holders used their connections to the janissaries and the *yerliya* janissaries became a tool for the local governors or leaders to oppose the Ottomans in localities such as Damascus.<sup>544</sup> The janissaries in Anatolia rebelled against local power-holders as well. Especially in North Africa (Tunisia, Egypt) and certain Arab provinces (Damascus),<sup>545</sup> the distinction between the local janissaries and the imperial janissaries was somewhat clear-cut. Men from Anatolia filled the janissary ranks and ended up launching a rebellion against the *dey* of Algeria in 1811. In this context, however, they were not powerful enough to take on the *dey* and the rebellion failed.<sup>546</sup> For our purposes, this shows that the janissaries, who had not established long-term relationships with the local population or power groups, could not exert influence to the degree that the janissaries in other provinces could due to such strong connections.

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<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>544</sup> Rafeq, “Syrian Provinces,” 53.

<sup>545</sup> Asma Moalla, *The Regency of Tunis and the Ottoman Porte, 1777-1814 : Army and Government of a North-African Ottoman Eyâlet at the End of the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 88.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid., 106.

## ***Conclusion***

This chapter has demonstrated that the government's effort to discipline the janissaries and "bring order" to the corps was largely a lost cause. This cannot be explained away by the conventional frameworks that focused on janissary insubordination, as an example of a military clique that tried to protect its narrowly defined corporate interests. We have to factor in the government's inability to transform the janissaries into an effective fighting force, as they no longer were merely soldiers partly as a result of their long-established profound ties to the society at large. Janissaries had become part of a social and economic reality that had little to do with their service as a military fighting force. Furthermore, lifetime professional military service required modernized and rationalized financial structures the Ottoman government was able to offer neither to janissaries nor to the New Order soldiers. Unable to spur a socio-economic transformation throughout the society that would render the janissaries true soldiers in the modern sense, the imperial center's efforts to create a modern army as well as to reform the janissaries were largely unsuccessful.

The rationalizing and disciplining logic of the New Order provoked opposition from various segments of the society, including the janissaries. However, the janissaries' reaction was more complex than simply opposing the New Order measures. The janissaries' reaction to reform efforts can be described in three different attitudes: 1- they obeyed the government's orders to re-organize and rationalize the corps organizationally and financially; 2- they resisted measures that infringed upon their collective identity; 3- they opposed measures that targeted their ties with socio-economic groups. None of these attitudes was displayed in isolation and they often overlapped with one another.

The socio-economic realities surrounding the janissaries allowed their allies in the broader society to resist the government's attempts to infringe upon their own autonomy. Local people utilized their connections with the janissaries to rebuff and resist the government's attempts to tax them more and integrate the peripheral forces into the center. In this dynamic process, reform efforts had to be modified as a result of the resistance of the society. Similarly, the janissaries had to adjust their own organization and finances accordingly. This was not a zero-sum game between the government and the janissaries, or between the *reformers* and *conservatives* in ideological terms. The imperial center was in the business of rationalizing and disciplining its finances and military; however, key segments of Ottoman society resisted the newly emerging modernizing logic of the reform measures.



## Chapter 5 – Local Notables and the End of the New Order

### *Local Notables' Relations with the Center*

Conventional wisdom would suggest that we analyze the resistance to New Order by local notables in various provinces through a zero sum game perspective couched in a center versus periphery dynamic.<sup>547</sup> According to this perspective, the center-periphery conflict occurred as a result of the struggle to control the economic resources in the provinces and because of the center's efforts to recentralize power.<sup>548</sup> There is no doubt that the central government was interested in concentration of power in its own hands and the creation of the New Order army was certainly part of this plan. However, there existed much more of a symbiotic relationship between the center and the local notables in the late eighteenth century than traditional historiography would have us believe. In other words, the causes of the resistance to the New Order were not always founded on ideology and were not as confrontational as often depicted.

Local notables tended to increase their regional influence and the New Order efforts were constantly negotiated between the center and the local notables. This contestation took place in a time of greatly dispersed loci of economic and political power and in the context of numerous domestic and international crises.<sup>549</sup> A review of the emergence of the local notables throughout the eighteenth century is in order, as it would help explain their alliances with socio-economic and political groups as well as

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<sup>547</sup> İnalçık, "Centralization."

<sup>548</sup> Karpat, "The Transformation," 253–254.

<sup>549</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, "Osmanlı Tarihinde Ayanlık Düzeni Devri: 1730-1839," *Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* VIII–XII (1975): 51–61.

their opposition to the New Order army.

Some recent studies argued that the rise of the notables was not necessarily at the expense of the power of the center.<sup>550</sup> They have argued that this development must be understood within the context of privatization and decentralization policies of the *ancien regime* as part of the “evolution of the modern state.”<sup>551</sup> Ariel Salzman suggests a reinterpretation of the local notables as “microeconomics of state power that continually redefined the polity and power of the *ancien regime*”<sup>552</sup> instead of perceiving them as mere *troublemakers*, as described by the imperial center. In Dina Khoury’s words, “to a significant degree the state ‘made’ provincial power elites, as much as provincial power holders made the state at the local level. Provincial elites *localized* the hegemony of the state.”<sup>553</sup> At the same time, intra and inter-elite struggles were reflected in the provinces between *households* that could be considered replications of the imperial palace on a smaller scale.<sup>554</sup> While the imperial bureaucrats maintained the relations between the

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<sup>550</sup> Salzman, “An Ancien Regime.” See also Linda T. Darling, “Ottoman Fiscal Administration: Decline or Adaptation?,” *Journal of European Economic History* 26, no. 1 (1997): 157–179.

<sup>551</sup> Salzman, “An Ancien Regime,” 394. See also Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991).

<sup>552</sup> Salzman, “An Ancien Regime,” 395.

<sup>553</sup> Khoury, “The Ottoman Centre Versus Provincial Power-Holders: An Analysis of the Historiography,” 136.

<sup>554</sup> Jane Hathaway, “The Military Household in Ottoman Egypt,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995): 40; Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaglis* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jane Hathaway, *A Tale of Two Factions: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen* (Albany: State University of New York, 2003); Rifaat A. Abou-el-Haj, “The Ottoman Vezir and Pasha Households 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 4 (1974): 438–447.

localities and the imperial center, the local notables often sought favor with the power groups in the center, rendering households a “nexus between center and province.”<sup>555</sup>

Especially in the economic sphere, the local notables acted as powerbrokers often lobbying through their representatives in the center. The well-established tradition of bargaining and negotiation<sup>556</sup> with the imperial center continued in the eighteenth century. The difference perhaps was that the notables were now able to claim semi-autonomous status as opposed to the bandit leaders of the earlier centuries who were more likely to individually settle for an appointment to a government post. In the eighteenth century, however, the local notables most often were not individuals with a small retinue of soldiers. They acted on the model of the Ottoman imperial households<sup>557</sup> by establishing social, economic, and military ties to their locality. Thanks to the lifetime tax-farming (*iltizam*) system, they also continued to enjoy their privileges as local tax-collecting agents of the center.<sup>558</sup>

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, through assuming military fiefs (*arpalık*), positions such as deputy governorship (*mütesellim*), and lifetime tax-farming leases, they were able to accumulate wealth and exercise influence over the local administration.<sup>559</sup> In the process of “transformation of the provincial fiscal system from a

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<sup>555</sup> Hathaway, “The Military Household in Ottoman Egypt,” 44.

<sup>556</sup> Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994).

<sup>557</sup> Hathaway, “The Military Household in Ottoman Egypt.”

<sup>558</sup> Engin D. Akarlı, “Provincial Power Magnates in Ottoman Bilad al-Sham and Egypt, 1740-1840,” in *La Vie Sociale Dans Les Provinces Arabes a L'époque Ottomane* (Zaghuan, Tunisia: CJEPO, 1988), 2–3.

<sup>559</sup> İnalçık, “Centralization,” 30–33.

fief/prebend-oriented to a tax-farm-oriented system,<sup>560</sup> local notables' power and influence became permanent in the eighteenth century. In trying to respond to military challenges by the Habsburgs and the Russians, the Ottomans attempted to adapt their military forces and instituted a new fiscal system<sup>561</sup> in order to fund the military engagements. According to İnalcık, this was one of the major causes of the increased influence of the local notables, who benefited from long-term leases from the center.<sup>562</sup> In addition, the *commercial revolution* of the seventeenth and eighteenth<sup>563</sup> centuries enabled them to benefit from local trade, which was less vulnerable to political upheavals,<sup>564</sup> and to rely less on government appointments. When bargains were to be struck with the center, the notables did not only speak for themselves but also for the society at large, as they assumed the dual role as agents of the center and the representatives of local interests, thanks to their connections in their locality as well as in the center.<sup>565</sup>

The central government depended on military assistance by local notables in times of war and offered them official titles and administrative posts. Hacı Ahmed Ağa of

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<sup>560</sup> Ali Yayıoğlu, "The Provincial Challenge: Regionalism, Crisis, and Integration in the Late Ottoman Empire (1792-1812)" (Unpublished Dissertation, Harvard University, 2008), 84.

<sup>561</sup> Gilles Veinstein, "İnalcık's Views on the Ottoman Eighteenth Century and the Fiscal Problem," *Oriente Moderno* 1, no. XVIII (LXXIX) (1999): 2.

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>563</sup> Deena R. Sadaat, "Rumeli Ayanları: The Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of Modern History* 44, no. 3 (1972): 346; Necmi Ülker, "The Emergence of İzmir as a Mediterranean Commercial Centre for the French and English Interests, 1698-1740," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4, no. 1 (1987): 1-37.

<sup>564</sup> Owen, "Introduction," 140.

<sup>565</sup> Akarlı, "Power Magnates," 4.

the Karamanoğlu family, for example, was given the guardianship of Sancakburnu (*muhafizlik*) and the governorship of Izmir (*voyvodalık*) in 1769 when the Ottomans declared war on Russia.<sup>566</sup> The Porte recognized the local notables in Rumelia and offered them official status in return for men and supplies for the war preparations against Russia.<sup>567</sup> The center relied on even the more troublesome notables, such as Kara Mahmud Pasha of İşkodra, who had previously survived a military expedition sent by the center to punish him. The central government had no choice but to solicit the services of men at the disposal of such notables.<sup>568</sup> Following the Austrian march against Bosnia in 1788, Kara Mahmud Pasha was given the title of *vezir* and the province (*eyalet*) of Anatolia, in return for which he was to defend Yeni Pazar (Novi Pazar, Serbia).<sup>569</sup> When faced with an international crisis, the Ottoman government sometimes incurred difficulty in raising troops and leading them to war, forcing it to rely on local notables.

The local notables increase in autonomy rendered the Ottoman center more and more reliant on their support. However, the interests of the notables did not always lie with the Ottoman center and they “rejected the entire concept of their power as derivative from or pertaining to the state.”<sup>570</sup> Nevertheless, they continued to negotiate with the center often exchanging material support for political recognition but such recognition by itself remained an insufficient incentive to recruit enough manpower and other resources

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<sup>566</sup> Yuzo Nagata, *Tarihte Ayanlar: Karaosmanoğulları Üzerinde Bir İnceleme* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1997), 35.

<sup>567</sup> Sadaat, “Rumeli Ayanları,” 351.

<sup>568</sup> Anscombe, “Mountain Bandits,” 98.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>570</sup> Sadaat, “Rumeli Ayanları,” 359.

for the war effort. The Ottoman center was often far from being the only option for the notables, which meant that they were concerned about political legitimacy in the eyes of local populations just as much they were intent on acquiring political recognition and autonomy from the Ottoman center. International competitors, as in the case of Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, tempered the attractiveness of recognition and legitimacy drawn from the imperial center. Tepedelenli Ali Pasha was a provincial administrator who was able to play the international context to his advantage at least to a certain point without really breaking off with the Ottoman center.<sup>571</sup> Notables often had to follow a careful strategy balancing their local interests with the demands of the Ottoman imperial center.<sup>572</sup> At times, they could manipulate local affairs by allowing a state of controlled anarchy as a means to sustain autonomy from the central government.<sup>573</sup>

The imperial center sought military help from local notables not only in wartime against international threats but also in its efforts to reorganize the army through establishing the New Order army. Notables such as İsmail Bey, *Ayan* of Serez, and Çapanoğlu Süleyman Bey, *Derebey* of Central Anatolia all supported Selim III in setting up the New Order army in Anatolia.<sup>574</sup> The central government's increasing reliance on

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<sup>571</sup> Tepedelenli “was torn between loyalty to the Porte and collusion with his new ‘friend’ Napoleon Bonaparte.” K. E. Fleming, *The Muslim Bonaparte : Diplomacy and Orientalism in Ali Pasha’s Greece* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 91.

<sup>572</sup> Dennis N. 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, no. 3 (1971): 220–221.

<sup>573</sup> Sadaat, “Rumeli Ayanlari,” 354.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, 360.

military help of the notables was partly because of the janissaries' inefficiencies.<sup>575</sup> However, the notables had connections with the janissaries as well, which makes it difficult to argue that janissary inefficiency could be made up for by the military strength of the local notables, as these two groups were never fully independent of each other in the first place. Moreover, the local notables and local janissaries often had shared interests and resisted the New Order in an alliance against the central government.<sup>576</sup>

It was the local notables and their local allies that ultimately ended the New Order. When Selim III tried finally to extend the New Order army to Rumelia through Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha, the effort met with a stiff resistance from a coalition of the local notables in Silivri, Tekfurdağı, and Çorlu. Kadı Abdurrahman's New Order soldiers failed in their endeavor and the infamous "Edirne Incident" would seal the fate of the reform efforts, as it represented the beginning of the end for Selim III's rule.<sup>577</sup> The center's demands from the local notables in helping to build the new army combined with its inability to contain international threats created discontent among the notables, who were themselves under pressure locally to provide security and economic welfare.

### ***Chaos in the Balkans: The Banditry Phenomenon***

The insecurity created by widespread banditry and international threats in the late eighteenth century rendered the Balkans an enormous challenge for the imperial center and arguably doomed the New Order to failure. The banditry phenomenon in the Balkans

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<sup>575</sup> McGowan, "Age of Ayans," 663.

<sup>576</sup> Sadaat, "Rumeli Ayanlari," 360.

<sup>577</sup> Beydilli, "Aydınlanmış Hükümdar," 49.

was a result of a variety of factors, the most important of which was the disorder caused by roaming unruly soldiers and recruits as a result of the wars with the Russians and Austrians. Whereas the center could not contain post-conflict instability, the local notables were able to control the disorder at least to a certain extent. The central government sent pashas with large armies to end banditry but it did not work because they could not address the underlying socio-economic problems. Notables were probably well positioned to deal with it because of their influence and familiarity with local conditions.

At the same time, it was no secret that the mountain bandits constituted a source of power to be won over between the notables and the center, as their shifting alliances could be beneficial for different political actors. It would help notables to assert their power locally. While notables had closer control over the local bandits, they did not require as much discipline as the center would. The central government's control was a lot more diminished than that of the notables but the center was more interested in discipline, as the new logic of governance categorized undisciplined forces as a dangerous source of instability. In contrast, the local notables saw an opportunity and benefited from discontent created by banditry.

Some studies have presented the *Celali* rebellions of the seventeenth century as a comparable phenomenon to banditry in the Balkans.<sup>578</sup> In both instances, it is argued, similar problems were experienced mainly because of the lack of central authority. Taking the view of the central government, Özkaya considers local notables such as Paspanoğlu as a rebel upon whom was bestowed the rank of pasha in a similar fashion as

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<sup>578</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 6.



the bandits in the sixteenth century.<sup>579</sup> Moreover, Özkaya depicts the protection offered by such notables for the bandits in negative terms and does not delve into any discussion of *networks* created between bandits, notables, and local populations as a result of the widespread banditry in the Balkans in this time period.<sup>580</sup> Özkaya identifies the wars of 1768-1774 and 1787-1792 as the reason why banditry in the Balkans became so commonplace in late eighteenth century.<sup>581</sup> When bandits come under the notables' protection as *sekban*, Özkaya does not consider the significance of this as a potentially stabilizing factor but sees it as the notables' attempt to simply take advantage of these elements at the expense of the center.<sup>582</sup> At the same time, he acknowledges that the state failed to take care of the needs of the soldiers, contributing to their disarray. According to him, when combined with corruption and ineffective governance by state officials, who went onto involve themselves in the local affairs for personal benefit, the situation was ripe for the emergence of the banditry phenomenon.<sup>583</sup>

Anscombe argues that there was a major difference between the deal-seeking bandits of the seventeenth century<sup>584</sup> and the Albanian brigands of the late eighteenth century; the latter did not look for deals with the central government. Rather, they were interested in “taking advantage of the state’s weakness.”<sup>585</sup> There did not exist many

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<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> Ibid.

<sup>581</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid., 14–15.

<sup>584</sup> Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*.

<sup>585</sup> Anscombe, “Mountain Bandits,” 88.

rewards to be gained through the service for the state, which meant that the brigands were motivated by “obvious opportunities for immediate enrichment.”<sup>586</sup> Clearly, the state did not have much to offer due to its financial problems and Selim III was seriously uncomfortable by the fact that the state could not control the bandits. The sultan expressed his frustration by saying that the bandits’ activities [and the government’s inability to contain them] had caused *shame* to the state.<sup>587</sup>

The bandits did not seek employment from the government, as the center lacked such incentives as offering offices as was the case in the earlier centuries. Consequently, the bandits sought protection from and employment with local notables such as Paspanoğlu. Another problem the government experienced was that many of the irregular forces it relied upon to deal with bandits were cooperating with bandits or switching their allegiances, as many of them were of the same ethnic background (Albanian) as the bandits.<sup>588</sup> Some bandits offered to switch back to the government’s side but the state was unable to offer the financial incentives Paspanoğlu could.<sup>589</sup>

The Ottoman efforts to deal with banditry in the Balkans were hampered by financial constraints as well as the government’s mistrust of its own officials. For instance, in August of 1789, the *voivoda* of Eflak asked the central government for additional funds to deal with bandits in the village of Çarnış. The government’s response was that he would be provided with funds from the New Order treasury once he managed to expel these bandits but not before. There seems to have been a clear distrust in the

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid.

<sup>587</sup> BOA, HAT, 7538 (19 September 1789).

<sup>588</sup> Anscombe, “Mountain Bandits,” 91.

<sup>589</sup> Ibid., 92.

*voyvoda*'s ability to use the funds effectively against the bandits. This was also probably because the government wanted to reward success against bandits instead of funding the effort to go against the bandits from the start in a financially difficult period.<sup>590</sup> Such conditionality of funding indicates a lack of trust as well as insufficient government resources to deal with banditry.

The central government also relied on local notables and appointed certain pashas to various provinces to deliver harsh punishments to be exacted on the bandits. In addition to local notables such as Çapanoğlu and Karaosmanoğlu, the government ordered soldiers to be raised from Anatolia and sent to serve under the Rumelia governor Hakkı Pasha's command in February 1796.<sup>591</sup> Such orders included specific directives for prevention of desertion. While soldiers were recruited from Çankırı, İskilip, and Kırşehir, districts such as Aksaray, Niğde, and Çankırı were opposed to providing soldiers. People of Ankara, in particular, were opposed to the assembly of all recruited soldiers in Ankara before deployment to Rumelia via Istanbul probably because they did not want to host so many soldiers, even briefly, as they would have to provide provisions for the soldiers in the meantime.<sup>592</sup> It took more than a month for all the soldiers to be deployed to Rumelia in the end, which indicates the local displeasure with having to provide soldiers to be deployed against domestic problems such as banditry in the Balkans.<sup>593</sup>

Hakkı Pasha's efforts in Rumelia resulted in many severed bandit heads to be sent to Istanbul but the problem was not going away. If anything, the locals were supporting

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<sup>590</sup> BOA, HH, 16078 (19 September 1789).

<sup>591</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 36–37.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*, 38–39.

and protecting the bandits sometimes out of fear of bandits, and other times, because they had closer relations with the bandits than the pashas sent by the central government. The government even ordered that the names of local residents be collected in a register to identify those *leaning toward* bandits, whom the local notables would have to deliver to Hakkı Pasha.<sup>594</sup> Such methods backfired, however, as the local notables chose to support the bandits anyway. Hakkı Pasha's heavy-handed policies did not bring about the end of brigandage and cost him the governorship of Rumelia in the summer of 1797.<sup>595</sup>

Archival documents indicate a “bandit-turned-janissary” phenomenon in the Balkans in the 1790s. Five such janissaries who had engaged in banditry were thought to have run away from the town of Karaferye once they found that execution orders for themselves had been issued by the central government. Serturnacı Abdullah was ordered to kill them if they ever returned to Karaferye but it was found out that the janissaries were *hanging out* with the bandit leader Molla Isa, who was intending to go to Bosnia.<sup>596</sup> This is significant in the sense that there was close association between individual janissaries and bandit leaders in towns such as Karaferye, which called for the central government's intervention into the local power struggles.<sup>597</sup>

Local notables in Edirne found their own solutions as well so that the bandits did not “destroy our villages and estates.” Some local notables decided to recruit *sekban* soldiers from among bandits, which meant that they were giving money to bandits to

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<sup>594</sup> Ibid., 40–41.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid., 42–44.

<sup>596</sup> BOA, C. AS, 1089 (7 July 1797).

<sup>597</sup> Antonis A. Anastasopoulos, “Crisis and State Intervention in Late Eighteenth-Century Karaferye (Mod. Veroia),” *Princeton Papers: Interdisciplinary Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 13 (2005): 11–33.

protect themselves. Notables also paid villagers in their region to keep quiet about this arrangement. The government frowned upon this practice and urged everybody in Edirne (including the notables, elites, villagers etc.) to fight the bandits with everything they had (guns, knives, scythe, ax etc.). If the local notables continued this practice in the future, the government promised that they would be punished.<sup>598</sup> It is unclear to what extent such threats were effective, as the government had to renew assignments of various pashas to take care of the banditry issue throughout Selim III's period. Great insecurity and disorder created by the banditry became a source of instability while at the same time derailing the government's efforts to exert control and expand the New Order army in the Balkans.

### *Paspanoğlu, Janissaries, and Yamaks*

Paspanoğlu Osman, the local notable of Vidin, presented the most formidable challenge against the government's efforts to pacify bandits and the success of the New Order in the Balkans.<sup>599</sup> Paspanoğlu's relationship with the imperial center was rocky throughout Selim III's reign. Paspanoğlu's father Ömer Ağa was the local notable of Vidin and he fought the Austrians in the wars of 178-1791, yet Koca Yusuf Pasha<sup>600</sup> eventually executed him. His son, Paspanoğlu Osman, spent a couple of years in exile but was able to restore his status in Vidin after he proved his utility in fighting the Austrians

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<sup>598</sup> BOA, HAT, 1452 (14 June 1798).

<sup>599</sup> Rossitsa Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoglu of Vidin: Between Old and New," in *The Ottoman Balkans* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 2006), 115–161.

<sup>600</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, "Sultan III. Selim Ve Koca Yusuf Paşa," *Belleten* 39, no. 154 (1975): 233–256.

just like his father had done. However, Paspanoğlu proceeded to take advantage of the rebellion of the *yamaks* in Belgrade and champion the cause of anti-New Order feelings triggered by the newly imposed taxes, in an effort to increase his local influence and autonomy.<sup>601</sup> Paspanoğlu's story was not very different from other local notables who opposed the centralizing efforts of Istanbul in the late eighteenth century but his challenge epitomized the constellation of various domestic and international challenges.

Many studies still adopt the state-centered view<sup>602</sup> when examining the forces resisting the centralizing efforts of the Ottoman government. For instance, some scholars attribute the reasons for Paspanoğlu resistance against the New Order to his *conservative* spirit, *reactionary* policies, and dedication to the *old order*.<sup>603</sup> At the same time, much evidence is provided that Paspanoğlu enjoyed “wide base of support”<sup>604</sup> from the janissaries, *yamaks*, brigands, and the masses. These different groups seem to have all independent reasons for supporting Paspanoğlu. While the janissaries felt threatened by the ‘reforms’ just like Paspanoğlu himself whose rule would be diminished by centralization efforts, brigands looked for employment and the broader public sought tax relief. As this overlap of interests is not presented in a positive light, Paspanoğlu appears as an opportunist who took advantage of the *impoverished individuals* to turn Vidin into

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<sup>601</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 33.

<sup>602</sup> For a study that takes issue with this label in favor of a more reconciled perspective on the state versus society separation, see Karen Barkey and Sunita Parikh, “Comparative Perspectives on The State,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 523–549.

<sup>603</sup> Robert Zens, “Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791-1807,” in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2002), 93.

<sup>604</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

the “hub of discontent with the sultan and his reforms.”<sup>605</sup>

International forces also had a hand in the instability in the Balkans from the Ottoman government’s perspective. Unrest in Belgrade predated the resistance to the establishment of the New Order army, as Austria (*Nemçeli*) was agitating the locals in Belgrade to rise up against the Ottomans. As a result, several villages in Belgrade rose up against the government in the spring of 1788. Ottomans sent some 3,000 soldiers to quell the unrest but to no avail at first. At the end, through the intercession of Izvornik, a deal was struck between the Ottoman government and the villagers.<sup>606</sup> As much as it became a central battleground between Paspanoğlu and the Ottoman government to further their respective influence, Belgrade also became a battleground between the Ottoman center and outside players such as Austria. In the meantime, Paspanoğlu sought to expand his influence taking advantage of the international powers’ interest in continued instability and the Ottoman failure to respond adequately.

Paspanoğlu’s first rise against the center occurred in 1795 when the janissaries and *yamaks* of Belgrade rebelled and attacked the local Christians’ properties, pushing them to the side of the commander of the city. The Christian population aligned themselves with the imperial center and fought the janissaries<sup>607</sup> but there were also other

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<sup>605</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>606</sup> BOA, C. DH, 1102 (16 April 1788).

<sup>607</sup> Bieber identifies janissaries as one of the two Muslim groups that dominated the Southeast European cities and countryside. The janissaries were the only Muslim population groups that increased in number in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Florian Bieber, “Muslim Identity in the Balkans Before the Establishment of Nation States,” *Nationalities Papers* 28, no. 1 (2000): 15.

Christians among Paspanoğlu's supporters,<sup>608</sup> a fact that attests to the diversity of groups from which the local notables could draw support. Upon their expulsion from Belgrade, the janissaries sought refuge in Vidin, Paspanoğlu's stronghold.<sup>609</sup> As the notable supported them by offering ammunition and provisions, the center tried briefly to lay a siege around the city of Vidin but abandoned the effort, as the winter was approaching.<sup>610</sup>

On a document dated 31 May 1795, we learn that some 8,000 *yamaks*, who had been exiled from Belgrade, marched against Belgrade. They attacked the Belgrade fortress and lost against the forces of Mustafa Pasha, the Belgrade fortress's governor. As more than half of them were killed, some 400 of them sought refuge in a synagogue, which was set on fire by the governor's forces. The governor reported that those who escaped would probably be assisted by the city of Vidin and regroup in the Hisarcık area to attack Belgrade once again. He reported that necessary orders to support the fortress were sent to various officers charged with taking care of these bandits.<sup>611</sup> Reports by the deputy lieutenant governor of Niş and Şahsuvar Pasha, however, stated that Mustafa Pasha was stuck inside the fortress. They added that Mustafa Pasha was able to fight the rebels nevertheless<sup>612</sup> but this might have been an effort by the local government officials to show to the center that things were under control and they were capable of defending

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<sup>608</sup> Frederick F. Anscombe, "The Balkan Revolutionary Age," *The Journal of Modern History* 84, no. 3 (September 2012): 577.

<sup>609</sup> Robert Zens, "In the Name of the Sultan: Hacı Mustafa Pasha of Belgrade and Ottoman Provincial Rule in the Late 18th Century," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 44, no. 1 (2012): 129–146.

<sup>610</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 34–35.

<sup>611</sup> BOA, HAT, 57748 (5 July 1795).

<sup>612</sup> BOA, HAT, 55046 (16 July 1795).



their territories.

The government was prompted to consider a new commander to lead the regional efforts against the rebels without much success, as many of the individuals considered for the job had various handicaps in terms of their capabilities and government's trust in them.<sup>613</sup> One interesting detail provided about this episode is that Paspanoğlu was promising to give support to these rebels in the following words, "ammunition and necessities are from me, the effort is from you."<sup>614</sup> The notable's support for the *yamaks* triggered Hacı Mustafa Pasha and Gürcü Osman Pasha's march against Vidin but the imperial forces were unable to continue the siege because the winter was approaching. The sultan subsequently issued an order of forgiveness for Paspanoğlu on the condition that he does not support the Belgrade *yamaks*.<sup>615</sup>

Paspanoğlu was able to command and benefit from the Belgrade rebellion. Rebel leaders such as Börüceli Köse Mustafa joined Paspanoğlu in Vidin and they agitated those expelled from Belgrade to regroup and attack Belgrade once again.<sup>616</sup> Some ninety-two rebels had managed to escape to Vidin and found support from Paspanoğlu who provided them with shelter in an inn. Paspanoğlu made sure that the *yamaks* were medically treated and he forbid anyone from going in and out of the inn. In the government's eyes, Paspanoğlu was helping them undertake their *sedition* ideas. Paspanoğlu reportedly argued that Vidin *yamaks*' rebellion was because they had not

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<sup>613</sup> BOA, HAT, 55117 (16 July 1795).

<sup>614</sup> "cebehane ve malzeme-i saire benden gayret sizden deyu tenbih ile kuvvet vermek üzere olduğu," BOA, HAT, 12538 (31 May 1795).

<sup>615</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 35.

<sup>616</sup> BOA, HAT, 55117 (16 July 1795).

been paid their salaries, which he promised to pay himself. Paspanoğlu apparently threatened that he could not guarantee that the *yamaks* would not attack Eflak if their salaries were not paid. The central government calculated the risk of Paspanoğlu entering Eflak and concluded that the governor of Vidin would not be able to raise enough men to confront both the Belgrade rebels and the troublemakers in Vidin. Thus, it was recommended that some *sekban* soldiers should be recruited.<sup>617</sup> One of the most interesting aspects of this episode was that Paspanoğlu championed the cause of the Belgrade *yamaks* and was able to threaten the government as their patron and protector. The center, in return, tried to counter the notable's strength through more recruitment, further straining the imperial budget while unable to contain the rebellion.

Repeated orders against the *yamaks* in Belgrade were sent to regional commanders and governors in Rumelia<sup>618</sup> but to no avail. The *yamaks* expelled from Belgrade were secretly convening in Vidin once again with the help of Paspanoğlu. The commander of the Vidin fortress was helpless in confronting Paspanoğlu. The government seems to have made an effort to seek help from his regional competitors against Paspanoğlu but it was largely unsuccessful. At least some local notables had reasons to align themselves with Paspanoğlu as they feared for the loss of their *mukataa* revenue or that they would be the next ones in line to be dealt with after the government took care of the brigand rebels. The solution, from the government's perspective, was to charge the governor of Rumelia with the task of taking care of the *yamaks* expelled from

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<sup>617</sup> BOA, HAT, 55046 (16 July 1795).

<sup>618</sup> BOA, HAT, 57758 (16 July 1795).

Belgrade and Tepedelenli Ali Pasha's nephew Mehmet Pasha would join him.<sup>619</sup>

Paspanoğlu's relations with the local janissaries are well known. In an effort to deprive him of the legitimacy associated with the janissary title, the government declared that Paspanoğlu was not a janissary and he would be executed.<sup>620</sup> The exact manner in which Paspanoğlu and the janissaries collaborated is not entirely clear. It seems that they worked to establish their control over the lands, which normally belonged to local peasants in Vidin. The Janissaries purchased the legal titles (*tapus*) to lands that the villagers had access through tax payments. In effect, the janissaries were "depriving villagers of their legal possession rights on the land"<sup>621</sup> by circumventing the peasants' use of the land by purchasing the title deeds of these lands. Their justification seems to have been that "property rights on land in the border areas belonged exclusively to Muslim soldiers from these fortresses."<sup>622</sup> Paspanoğlu himself was involved in divestment of the lands from the peasants.<sup>623</sup> There was obviously land to be grabbed and the manpower janissaries provided Paspanoğlu with would prove to be crucial in increasing his power. The janissary discourse of the *Muslim* ownership of the land could be possible only if there existed an authority such as Paspanoğlu to recognize the validity of such a claim. In the context of widespread disorder in the early 1790s, known as the

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<sup>619</sup> BOA, HAT, 55078 (16 July 1795).

<sup>620</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyanları*, 46.

<sup>621</sup> Rossitsa Gradeva, "The Activities of a Kadi Court in Eighteenth-Century Rumeli: The Case of Hacıoğlu Pazarcık," *Oriente Moderno* 1, no. XVIII (LXXIX) (1999): 119.

<sup>622</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

Kırcalı unrest,<sup>624</sup> conditions were ripe for Paspanoğlu's patronage of the janissaries whom he could offer land ownership in addition to other material support.

The newly appointed governor of Vidin undertook certain measures that alienated janissaries and resulted in their implicit threat to rebel in a letter to the sultan. In their account, the governor had sworn that he would kill "all who claim to be a janissary save the seven year olds." He had already severed the heads of eight janissaries and killed their *sekbanbaşı* and sent the severed heads to the capital declaring that these belonged to the exiles of Belgrade. The governor also killed the former *kulkethüdası* who was in fact innocent. He killed all tradesmen just because they were from Vidin and confiscated their property. The janissaries concluded by threatening that their frontier (*serhad*) Vidin would surely witness a rebellion if the situation remained the same although this was not what they would have preferred.<sup>625</sup>

Clearly, the governor did not see much difference between the *yamaks* from Belgrade, the janissaries in Vidin, and tradesmen of Vidin. The governor's actions are reflected from the point of view of the janissaries and it is not easy to definitively authenticate their account. Nevertheless, from the government's perspective, there existed an association between the people, the janissaries, the rebel leaders, and the local notables, which challenged the government's authority in this region. At the same time, some residents of Vidin ran away from the town to remain outside the rebellion, which indicates that there were small groups who did not necessarily align themselves with the janissaries or tried to get away from violence. They reported that there were other

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<sup>624</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>625</sup> BOA, C. AS, 2010 (28 August 1795).

residents of the town willing to escape but they were not be able to do so.<sup>626</sup> While these local people of Vidin did not specify the reason why remaining outside the rebellion would prove impossible, the tone of the report suggests that the majority of people in Vidin joined the rebellion, which would prove impossible for a minority group to remain on the sidelines of the conflict.

Eflak's *voyvoda*, in the meantime, attempted to achieve the expulsion of Belgrade's janissaries from the fortress of Ada by trying to convince Zeynel and Köçek İsmail to abandon Paspanoğlu through bribery. İsmail had rebelled against the government the year before and took hold of the fortress of Ada. He had subsequently joined Paspanoğlu and the *voyvoda* now wanted to rid the Ada fortress of bandits supporting Paspanoğlu. In trying to convince İsmail, the *voyvoda* argued that he had nothing to fear from Paspanoğlu, as he had a fortress as imposing as Ada. He added that İsmail should at least expel those loyal to Paspanoğlu if he could not kill them. The *voyvoda* offered that he would intercede on İsmail's behalf and he would be given money and "many more royal gifts." In his response, İsmail said that he had convinced Muhafiz Pasha to help drive out the expelled *yamaks*. However, he added, he would need money to convince Zeynel. The *voyvoda* concluded his report with a request for three to five thousand piasters, the loss of which, he argued, would be the worst-case scenario if this deal did not go through.<sup>627</sup> As this example demonstrates, Paspanoğlu's alliances were not necessarily built on a common ideological cause but on relatively shaky alliances built on common interests as well as fear of Paspanoğlu's power in the region. In this

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<sup>626</sup> BOA, HAT, 2309.G (15 September 1795).

<sup>627</sup> BOA, HAT, 2765 (17 September 1795).

case, the center seems to have opted to send the money to buy Zeynel's allegiance, who was depicted as a *notable* of Ada in a spy report from Vidin a month later.<sup>628</sup> As Zeynel could shift his position through the government's financial incentives, he could be given titles such as a notable in this manner.

Paspanoğlu, for his part, played this kind of politics of shifting allegiances and alliances relatively well, as he appears to have sought intercession for himself through Turnacı Agha. He suggested that he had never challenged the sultan and all he tried to do was to serve the state. He argued that it was because he could not control all the soldiers from attacking and rebelling in the face of an enemy army of a hundred thousand.<sup>629</sup> Paspanoğlu was referring to the chaotic situation in the Balkans at this time where mobs of soldiers roamed around outside and against government control. What Paspanoğlu did was to patronize some of these groups and use them to enlarge his influence. While Paspanoğlu enjoyed the support of large groups of janissaries in this manner, he could not rely entirely on their allegiance or full compliance. He had to expel seven regiments of janissaries who eventually joined the forces of Vidin *kapıkethudası*.<sup>630</sup>

Competition between Paspanoğlu and the local commanders loyal to the central government over the loyalty of soldiers in various localities continued unabated. Belgrade commander Vezir Mustafa Pasha reported that while he was preparing a major attack on Vidin under Paspanoğlu's control, additional forces should be sent to the fortress of Ada because Paspanoğlu might try to run from Vidin to Ada. Although the government had

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<sup>628</sup> BOA, HAT, 2309.A (6 October 1795).

<sup>629</sup> BOA, C. DH 680 (15-25 October 1795).

<sup>630</sup> BOA, HAT, 2309.C (5 November 1795).

achieved Köçek İsmail's cooperation through bribery, Paspanoğlu still had many supporters in Ada. Vezir Mustafa Pasha asked the *voyvoda* of Eflak to provide the provisions for these additional soldiers. Vezir Mustafa Pasha issued orders to various other towns around Vidin to ensure no assistance was given to Paspanoğlu and various pashas close to Paspanoğlu could be neutralized through relocation.<sup>631</sup> Despite the government's success in bribing the fortress of Ada into cooperation, Paspanoğlu remained popular there. Next year, Paspanoğlu summoned the help of Albanians and another mob (in the government's vocabulary) from Sarigöl and Albania by sending them money. The government took measures to block any Albanians from heading toward Vidin to help Paspanoğlu.<sup>632</sup> Paspanoğlu continued to agitate other groups such as the *mountain bandits* (who had already rebelled against the center) to join his forces. The local officers asked the government to send Cabbarzade who commanded 5,000 Turcoman horsemen, as these bandits could "cover a distance of twenty hours in one night."<sup>633</sup>

It was not only financial incentives that Paspanoğlu offered various groups to achieve their allegiance. He reportedly propagated to the janissaries that the government was planning to abolish the janissary corps, which the government officials qualified as *fabrications even the government could not conjure up*. Although Paspanoğlu had been pardoned and he was supposed to behave, the officials noted, he had gathered janissaries and others around him and invaded the environs of Danube with 8,000-10,000 soldiers.

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<sup>631</sup> BOA, HAT, 2295 (26 February 1796).

<sup>632</sup> BOA, HAT, 2168 (26 March 1797).

<sup>633</sup> BOA, HAT, 2457 (25 June 1797).

Not all the janissaries joined Paspanoğlu and he did not shy away from attacking them also. Local officials once again agreed to gather in Rumelia and march against Paspanoğlu's stronghold, Vidin.<sup>634</sup> Local officials suspected that Paspanoğlu had set his eyes on attacking Wallachia,<sup>635</sup> as Paspanoğlu continued his pressure on Belgrade. The governor of Rumelia reported that Paspanoğlu sent a rabble of bandits to the fortress of Belgrade. The people of Semendire joined the bandits and the group came to the vicinity of the fortress (as close as an hour and a half away) without confronting resistance. At this point, the forces of the *kaymakam* of the town of Bölüce fought them but the rabble entered the suburbs of the fortress. Finally, the fighters (*dilavers*) inside the fortress attacked the group and killed most of them.<sup>636</sup> The rebel leaders were captured along with some 170 men and around 200 men died in the clashes.<sup>637</sup>

The news of Paspanoğlu's defeat in Rusçuk, a city he had attacked in the company of 10,000 men, could mean that the tide was turning against Paspanoğlu. However, commanders marching against Paspanoğlu's allies (Macar Ali) in Rusçuk admitted that the additional forces they brought with them did not fight the bandits. The commanders had to rely on their own forces and some locals of Rusçuk to drive Macar Ali's 8,000 bandits out of the city.<sup>638</sup> Paspanoğlu's forces had been defeated and returned to Vidin. Paspanoğlu reportedly did not feel entirely safe from the chiefs of these irregular groups who had just been defeated and did not know what to do. People of

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<sup>634</sup> BOA, HAT, 12851.A (1797).

<sup>635</sup> BOA, HAT, 2273 (24 December 1797).

<sup>636</sup> BOA, HAT, 2224 (3 January 1798).

<sup>637</sup> BOA, HAT, 2877.E (6 January 1798).

<sup>638</sup> BOA, HAT, 2293 (10 January 1798).



Niğbolu feared that they might attack the fortress of Niğbolu as they observed some armed men coming from Rusçuk. If there was an attack on the fortress, they promised to fight Paspanoğlu's forces.<sup>639</sup> As we have seen so far, alliances were fluid and depended on which way the balance of power could tilt or if there were strong enough incentives to join one side or the other.

Now, the joint forces of local government officials were going after the bandits loyal to Paspanoğlu in Zıştovi, Plevne, Sirklioğlu, and Deliorman. Kule and Niğbolu fortresses were also under siege, the governor of Silistre Osman Pasha reported.<sup>640</sup> By March, Niğbolu fortress had been conquered and one of Paspanoğlu's best men (*the apple of Paspanoğlu's eye*) Otuzbiroğlu had been killed.<sup>641</sup> The Rumelia governor reported that the fortress of Belgradcık near Vidin had also been taken but Paspanoğlu had already burnt the haystacks and the governor was in need of provisions to be sent from Eflak and Nemçe.<sup>642</sup> Belgradcık's capture and the overall losses on Paspanoğlu's side prompted some 1,200 Albanians to desert Paspanoğlu and seek refuge in Belgradcık.<sup>643</sup> Other associates of Paspanoğlu such as Borçalı Hüseyin Alemdar, a certain Osman Aga and Köse Mustafa's brother switched their allegiance from Paspanoğlu to the sultan as well.<sup>644</sup>

The fluidity of allegiances was exemplified by the difficulties the governors

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<sup>639</sup> BOA, HAT, 2277 (22 January 1798).

<sup>640</sup> BOA, HAT, 2199 (16 February 1798).

<sup>641</sup> BOA, HAT, 2283.A (7 March 1798).

<sup>642</sup> BOA, HAT, 2272 (17 March 1798).

<sup>643</sup> BOA, HAT, 2094 (21 March 1798).

<sup>644</sup> BOA, HAT, 2267.E (22 March 1798).

experienced in incorporating former bandits by enlisting them as *sekbans* forces. Some mountain bandits who had been forgiven by the government and joined the Rumelia governor were now refusing to go to Sofia from Filibe. The governor allowed some 700 *sekbans* to remain in Filibe, as they promised not to cause trouble until the arrival of Kapucubaşı Kara Ahmed Ağa from Edirne. Some 600 *sekbans* refused to go to Niş with the governor claiming that their salaries had not been paid and they simply left. The officials reported that these *sekbans* were “inclined towards” Paspanoğlu.<sup>645</sup>

In the spring of 1798, awaiting additional forces from the center, the Rumelia governor Mustafa Pasha was busy trying to gather cannons to attack the Vidin fortress but Paspanoğlu’s guerrilla tactics seemed to be working.<sup>646</sup> Skirmishes continued through the spring,<sup>647</sup> however, the governor’s forces were not strong enough and they were divided among themselves. Paspanoğlu was able to push them away from Vidin thanks especially to 1,000-2,000 horsemen he sent out against the governor. Both sides captured small numbers of fighters who were exchanged afterwards. The governor also presented the brigands with the choice of being sent back home or being enlisted as *sekbans*.<sup>648</sup> Paspanoğlu tried to attack the fortress of Kalafat but failed to capture it.<sup>649</sup> While the center did not help the governor enough to defeat Paspanoğlu, it was not always easy for Paspanoğlu to mobilize his own forces either. Some *aghas* in Vidin asked Paspanoğlu to provide them with *fatwas* that would allow them to shoot at the imperial forces; otherwise

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<sup>645</sup> BOA, HAT, 2073 (27 March 1798).

<sup>646</sup> BOA, HAT, 2230 (22 April 1798).

<sup>647</sup> BOA, HAT, 2226 (22 April 1798).

<sup>648</sup> BOA, HAT, 2269 (16 May 1798).

<sup>649</sup> BOA, HAT, 2244 (14 June 1798).

they would be considered *infidels*.<sup>650</sup> As such, allegiance and loyalty of soldiers as well as notables on both sides were subject to manipulation, bribery,<sup>651</sup> and questions of legitimacy. *Sekbans* recruited through such methods often proved unreliable. For example, *sekbans* of Belgrade surrounded the Rumelia governor's tent and demanded their pay despite the fact that the governor had already paid Karslı Ali Pasha substantial sums to be distributed to the *sekbans*. However, these new recruits were unsatisfied, which demonstrates the tricky business of stabilizing the Balkans in this period.<sup>652</sup>

The navy commander Küçük Hüseyin Pasha supported a major effort against Paspanoğlu in the summer of 1798. However, the alliance of local notables on which the government relied to march against Paspanoğlu proved unsuccessful. Local notables sought to increase their influence but they were not necessarily committed to an all out war against Vidin. Paspanoğlu was fortunate as the 80,000 strong force assembled against him did not achieve his demise because the French invasion of Egypt came at an opportune time and aided him. The navy commander Hüseyin Pasha had to steer the navy toward Egypt. Once again, Paspanoğlu was issued an imperial order declaring forgiveness by the state on the condition that he would not agitate the janissaries again or cause trouble in Vidin's environs.<sup>653</sup>

Bandits from Vidin attacked the forces of Belgrade's governor Mustafa Pasha, and at first, his forces were able to push them back.<sup>654</sup> The *yamaks* in Belgrade were

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<sup>650</sup> BOA, HAT, 2267.C (14 June 1798).

<sup>651</sup> BOA, HAT, 2191.A (28 July 1798).

<sup>652</sup> BOA, HAT, 2137 (5 August 1798).

<sup>653</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 50–59.

<sup>654</sup> BOA, HAT, 2089 (9 June 1801).

warned about causing trouble but Mustafa Pasha thought that without *yamaks* being contained, this measure would not be enough to control the situation in Belgrade.<sup>655</sup> One of the ways to ensure that there was no unrest was to pay the *sekbans* in a timely manner. Musa Pasha had pawned his own estate in order to pay one month's salaries of the *sekbans* to prevent them from attacking the fortress of Niğbolu, but there were still two months' worth of payments the sultan should have paid. This was the only way to prevent a potential uprising. In addition, the Albanian fighters had arrived in the vicinity of the fortress and they had created additional pressure on the fortress.<sup>656</sup> This situation made the notables of Belgrade nervous and they demanded that Mustafa Pasha expel the *yamaks* he had employed. Notables argued that the *yamak* forces were acting against the law and if they were not expelled, blood would surely be spilled, the *qadi* of Belgrade warned.<sup>657</sup> This request seems to have been accepted as the Janissary Agha in Belgrade wrote to Mustafa Pasha about the expulsion of the *yamaks*.<sup>658</sup>

The *yamaks*' expulsion from the city does not seem to have helped to resolve the banditry trouble in Belgrade. The Rumelia governor reported that the 10,000 men under his command in Edirne were not enough to control the bandits in the region and he had to supplement them with more men and cavalry forces.<sup>659</sup> Paspanoğlu continued to agitate (in the government's words) the *yamaks* in Belgrade and the local administrators found it difficult to avoid submitting to Paspanoğlu who was able to solicit the support of *yamaks*.

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<sup>655</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.Y (17 July 1801).

<sup>656</sup> BOA, HAT, 2177 (28 July 1801).

<sup>657</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.Z (15 August 1801).

<sup>658</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.C (16 August 1801).

<sup>659</sup> BOA, HAT, 2282 (4 October 1801).

The *yamaks* had overtaken estates that belonged to the local people in Belgrade.<sup>660</sup> The government threatened the *yamaks*, who were apparently digging trenches around the city and preparing to resist the center's forces, with removing their titles and affiliation with the janissary corps and expelling them from the city.<sup>661</sup> Negotiations resulted in the government's acceptance to pay the *yamaks* and other forces' sums (*ulufe*) out of the *jizya* collected from Belgrade and distribution of 300-500 janissary pay tickets to reach an agreement to return the estates to their owners.<sup>662</sup> As all sides agreed to submit to the rule of Belgrade's Muhafiz Mustafa Pasha and keep the order,<sup>663</sup> local people reported that they were pleased that the estates were returned to them.<sup>664</sup>

In the meantime, the difficulties in Belgrade seem to have pushed Mustafa Pasha to seek reappointment to Bosnia where he promised to recruit new soldiers.<sup>665</sup> Despite the deal with the local village heads that the "ancient" estate system would remain in place (which meant that a semblance of calm and order had been established),<sup>666</sup> Mustafa Pasha reported that he feared for his own life, as the Belgrade rebels threatened him with revenge for the killing of one of the bandit leaders, Kara Ismail.<sup>667</sup> Mustafa Pasha's fear

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<sup>660</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.B (2 November 1801).

<sup>661</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.R (7 November 1801).

<sup>662</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.S (7 November 1801).

<sup>663</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.A (13 November 1801); BOA, HAT, 1954 (18 November 1801).

<sup>664</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.P (13 November 1801).

<sup>665</sup> BOA, HAT, 2035 (18 November 1801).

<sup>666</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.G (19 November 1801).

<sup>667</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.N (23 November 1801).

came to pass soon afterward,<sup>668</sup> which is a testament to the precarious situation the central government's officials found themselves in when dealing with the janissary affiliates such as *yamaks*, local bandits, local notables, and often a coalition of the three. Whatever relative peace and order were briefly established at various points in Rumelia, the situation was always subject to setbacks and resurrection of opposition over various issues.

The Belgrade *muhafiz*, who succeeded Mustafa Pasha, recommended to the government that a deal should be struck with Paspanoğlu because if the center sent new forces to Belgrade to deal with these rebels, the rebels in Vidin would surely come back to the aid of their comrades in Belgrade. Thus, there was no other way but to offer Paspanoğlu some sort of favor.<sup>669</sup> Paspanoğlu's appeal was not limited to the janissary affiliates expelled from Belgrade. Soldiers in the Belgrade fortress continued to defy the authority of the commanding pasha and expressed their loyalty to Paspanoğlu. In turn, they were threatened with losing their provisions if they did not submit to the sole authority of Muhafiz Pasha. While they seemingly accepted the pasha's authority, they continued to cause trouble by getting greedy (in the official's words), by demanding speedier delivery of provisions. The officers predicted that if sufficient amounts at levels the rebels demanded from the estates previously were received, the situation would remain calm for the time being. However, they also recommended that the local *qadi* and the fortress's commander should be ordered out of the city if the center were to go ahead

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<sup>668</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.T (10 January 1802).

<sup>669</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.F (8 February 1802).

with its plans to dispatch forces to deal with the rebels in Belgrade.<sup>670</sup> Reports from Belgrade indicated that soldiers sent from outside would not be accepted by the soldiers and local people in Belgrade and fighting would ensue.<sup>671</sup> Local people and the notables even gathered in the local *qadi*'s presence to declare that they had heard rumors about Albanian units being dispatched from Albania to Belgrade and that they would resist such a move.<sup>672</sup>

Clearly, Paspanoğlu's influence among the soldiers and the broader population remained one of the major challenges for the officials appointed from the center, which failed to exert its authority convincingly. Having proved his relevance, Paspanoğlu promised calm and order in the region in return for his appointment as the governor of Vidin. He further demanded that no future governor would be appointed to Vidin<sup>673</sup> and sought intercession through the Janissary Agha,<sup>674</sup> probably because of his close connections to the janissaries and their affiliates in Vidin and Belgrade. His local challenge to the imperial authority allowed Paspanoğlu to seek the intercession of the Russian consul on his behalf as well.<sup>675</sup> Paspanoğlu affiliates continued to pose problems despite his negotiations with the center.<sup>676</sup> Even when Paspanoğlu seemingly proved useful by providing Eflak *voyvoda* with his soldiers, loyalty of the soldiers was very

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<sup>670</sup> BOA, HAT, 2291 (2 May 1802).

<sup>671</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.Ü (2 May 1802).

<sup>672</sup> BOA, HAT, 2213.H (2 May 1802).

<sup>673</sup> BOA, HAT, 2519.A (2 May 1802).

<sup>674</sup> BOA, HAT, 2519 (2 May 1802).

<sup>675</sup> BOA, HAT, 2070 (8 September 1802).

<sup>676</sup> BOA, HAT, 2111 (19 February 1803).

fragile as they reportedly joined with the bandits.<sup>677</sup> Paspanoğlu had great influence over these rather unreliable bands of soldiers and various bandit leaders who continued to roam the countryside,<sup>678</sup> yet, the banditry phenomenon was larger than any single force or notable could contain in its entirety.

Paspanoğlu emerged as a powerful local notable, who vied for power and regional influence with the center by both exploiting and representing the local grievances, janissaries' and *yamaks*' discontent, and the vacuum created by the widespread banditry. This was a regional perfect storm in which different groups opposing and resisting against the center came together. Their energy was channeled through Paspanoğlu's struggle against the center, complicating the New Order army's implementation and expansion in the Balkans. The center had to revise its plans accordingly by prioritizing to limit the local notable's activities while attempting to secure order.

### ***Securing Order and Expanding the New Order Army in the Balkans***

The central government attempted to employ the services of various local notables throughout Selim III's reign to deal with banditry and establish its control over the Balkans. It also tried to expand the New Order army in the Balkans through such notables. Such efforts had at best minimal positive results and local notables' commitment to the New Order was often elusive. Tokadcıklı Süleyman Ağa, Tirsiniklioğlu, and Tepedelenli Ali Pasha were some of the major local notables the government struggled to establish alliances with and benefit from their local power and

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<sup>677</sup> BOA, HAT, 2193.H (22 April 1803).

<sup>678</sup> BOA, HAT, 2449 (9-19 June 1804).



influence in exerting and expanding its control. Analysis of these efforts will help us understand the limits of the center's ability to assert its will and ultimately the fate of the New Order army's expansion.

Tokadcıklı Süleyman Ağa is a stark example of a government official whose allegiance to the center was less than exemplary, as he was disillusioned by the central government's inability to pursue a realistic strategy against the bandits. The government relied on Tokadcıklı's efforts to deal with bandits but it eventually alienated him as a result of failure to implement the *settlement* policy successfully. Tokadcıklı's claim to local notable status started as early as the summer of 1798 and the government undertook measures to prevent this claim by sending forces against him. His entrance into Gümülcine, killing of several locals, and his looting of their property was enough for the government to declare him one of the bandits.<sup>679</sup> His claim to notable status and fight with local power-holders İ sazade and Mestanzade in Gümülcine resulted in the government's orders for Tayyar Pasha to march against Tokadcıklı.<sup>680</sup>

Within two years, however, we find Tokadcıklı fighting on the side of the government forces against other bandits.<sup>681</sup> While he fought against bandits such as Kara Feyzi, the government recognized that Tokadcıklı's fight might not be finished in the winter so the government tried to recruit additional forces from Trabzon and Amasya for the spring fighting season.<sup>682</sup> It was probably not only that Tokadcıklı's forces were insufficient but also that there were other reasons why this was necessary. Some reports

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<sup>679</sup> BOA, HAT, 2160 (31 August 1798).

<sup>680</sup> BOA, HAT, 2150 (21 November 1798); BOA, HAT, 2159 (21 November 1798).

<sup>681</sup> BOA, HAT, 3339 (23 May 1800).

<sup>682</sup> BOA, HAT, 2538 (26 May 1800).

mention that Tokadçıklı's forces had ties with the mountain bandits. Furthermore, such reports were strong enough that the people of Edirne strongly resisted Tokadçıklı's arrival in their city.<sup>683</sup> Tokadçıklı seems to have been hated by the locals of Edirne<sup>684</sup> and the government is urged by the local *qadi* not to appoint Tokadçıklı to Edirne.<sup>685</sup>

Eventually, it seems that local resistance to Tokadçıklı's appointment led the government to make him the *voyvoda* of Gümülcine instead.<sup>686</sup> This was clearly not the end of his vying for power at the expense of other local notables.<sup>687</sup> Power struggles among notables prevented collaboration among them in controlling the bandits. Thus, the government had to utilize newly trained forces from Levend and Üsküdar against internal disturbances such as banditry. Again, the New Order soldiers were not sufficient in number and neither were they trained to deal with dispersed and unruly forces such as bandits but the government continued to issue orders for new recruits from districts such as Sivas and Karaman.<sup>688</sup> Such use of the new recruits for domestic security needs points to the dual use of New Order forces, which could unavoidably entangle supposedly professional soldiers in internal power struggles among local notables. Dual use was required also because of the unreliability of and *bad behavior* exhibited by forces such as those of Tokadçıklı himself.<sup>689</sup>

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<sup>683</sup> BOA, HAT, 2221.J (8 September 1800).

<sup>684</sup> BOA, HAT, 2221.H (10 September 1800).

<sup>685</sup> BOA, HAT, 2221.B (10 September 1800).

<sup>686</sup> BOA, HAT, 2981.A (6 November 1800).

<sup>687</sup> BOA, HAT, 2380 (10 May 1801).

<sup>688</sup> BOA, HAT, 3154 (12 May 1801).

<sup>689</sup> BOA, HAT, 2221.A (12 May 1801).

Tokadcıklı had been given the full on task of dealing with the banditry in Edirne. When it was recommended that Serbestzade be appointed to Edirne as *bostancıbaşı*, Serbestzade wanted to leave some of his forces in Edirne and go back to his region, Canik to deal with the ongoing rebellion there. Tokadcıklı suggested that Serbestzade's forces not go into war but protect some critical passages. The government urged Tokadcıklı to finish off the bandits as soon as possible and the sultan ordered Serbestzade's appointment expressing a fear that the bandits in Edirne may be able to march all the way to the capital.<sup>690</sup> Disturbances in Edirne restarted in the spring of 1802 but it subsided once the government accepted to offer amnesty for the rebels.<sup>691</sup> The people of Edirne refused to provide foodstuffs for the army because of the local notable Dağdevirenoğlu's "provocation" according to the government officials.<sup>692</sup> Dağdevirenoğlu seems to have agitated the local people against the extension of the New Order army to Edirne in 1802 when the news of Abdurrahman Pasha's arrival reached the city.<sup>693</sup>

The government seems to have pursued a settlement policy toward the bandits by offering them certain regions to settle in an effort to create stability in regions west of Edirne. In order to facilitate the government settlement efforts, Tokadcıklı had pulled his soldiers out of Hasköy and left the region.<sup>694</sup> Tokadcıklı reported that bandits under the

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<sup>690</sup> BOA, HAT, 1551 (1801).

<sup>691</sup> BOA, HAT, 2234 (2 May 1802).

<sup>692</sup> BOA, HAT, 2345 (21 April 1803).

<sup>693</sup> Cemal Gökçe, "Edirne Ayanı Dağdevirenoğlu Mehmed Ağa," *Tarih Dergisi* 17, no. 22 (1967): 99.

<sup>694</sup> BOA, HAT, 3107 (2 November 1802).

leadership of Kara Feyzi had moved into Hasköy and he had not attacked them.<sup>695</sup>

However, when the bandit leaders resisted resettlement policies, the government ordered its local administrators and notables such as Tokadcıklı to use force.<sup>696</sup> The bandits seem to have been particularly unhappy with Tokadcıklı's presence. They demanded that Tokadcıklı also depart Gümülcine where he was stationed after he left Hasköy. The central government cited its previous *conciliatory* attitude in accommodating the demands of the bandits but now it threatened to use force against the bandits.<sup>697</sup>

In the spring of 1803, the government officials fighting the bandits reported that Tirsiniklioğlu was corresponding with the bandits and Tokadcıklı's soldiers were the *same kind (hemcins)* as the *relatives* of the bandits.<sup>698</sup> It is unclear how much of this kind of reporting was a struggle between these officials and notables such as Tokadcıklı. In a report a month later, Tokadcıklı along with Osman Efendi, who had been appointed to the region to oversee the government's resettlement efforts, appear to have been negotiating on behalf of the government with the bandit leaders such as Ali Molla, İsaoğlu, Zeynel of Gümülcine to calm down the situation.<sup>699</sup> By the summer, however, there were clashes between Tokadcıklı and rebel leaders such as Kara Feyzi,<sup>700</sup> Mahmud, and Ali Molla.<sup>701</sup>

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<sup>695</sup> BOA, HAT, 2164 (23 November 1802).

<sup>696</sup> BOA, HAT, 2976 (31 January 1803).

<sup>697</sup> BOA, HAT, 2518 (13 April 1803).

<sup>698</sup> BOA, HAT, 2664 (21 April 1803).

<sup>699</sup> BOA, HAT, 2370 (16 May 1803).

<sup>700</sup> BOA, HAT, 2926.J (20 July 1803).

<sup>701</sup> BOA, HAT, 4199 (25 July 1803).

Ali Molla burned some villages and sought refuge in the Edirne fortress.<sup>702</sup> In the meantime, the center debated providing Tokadçıklı with a thousand New Order army soldiers but the government hesitated out of fear that they too might cause trouble in the Balkans like the other soldiers.<sup>703</sup> Ali Molla and Kara Feyzi continued their banditry through the fall<sup>704</sup> and Tokadçıklı advocated a heavy-handed policy against them.<sup>705</sup>

Bandits demanded that necessary provisions be given to them along with the imperial orders of amnesty and resettlement. They also warned that they would provoke others to rise up against the government unless Tokadçıklı's *body was removed*.<sup>706</sup> The central government admitted that the resettlement efforts had been delayed and Tokadçıklı had to be convinced that there was no point for him to remain in Gümülcine, especially given that he was sick.<sup>707</sup> Ali Molla and his friends accepted to settle in Fire at first but they changed their minds. This drew Tokadçıklı's wrath, who sent his soldiers to Fire and burned down the town and had towers built.<sup>708</sup> Yet, it seems that he soon accepted to leave the town of Fire in order for Ali Molla and his associates to settle there.<sup>709</sup> Their continued activities in and around Baba-yı Atık, Malkara, and Tekfurdağı resulted in the government's orders to the effect that the local notable of Edirne would be

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<sup>702</sup> BOA, HAT, 2358 (7 August 1803).

<sup>703</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 88.

<sup>704</sup> BOA, HAT, 2208 (3 September 1803); BOA, HAT, 2498.C (15 October 1803); BOA, HAT, 2498 (15 October 1803).

<sup>705</sup> BOA, HAT, 2498.A (16 October 1803).

<sup>706</sup> BOA, HAT, 2469 (16 October 1803).

<sup>707</sup> BOA, HAT, 3354.B (19 October 1803).

<sup>708</sup> BOA, HAT, 3354 (19 October 1803); BOA, HAT, 11898 (20 October 1803).

<sup>709</sup> BOA, HAT, 11921 (23 October 1803).

aided by New Order forces from Levend barracks as well as from Anatolian barracks, such as those in Bolu, Kütahya, and others.<sup>710</sup> Tokadçıklı tried to keep channels of communication open with the rebels and refused to pursue them relentlessly as he must have recognized the futility of trying to deal with banditry through heavy-handed policies only.<sup>711</sup>

At this point, Tokadçıklı seems to have stopped listening to the orders from the center, which portrayed him as having provoked and agitated the rebellions in Fire and Edirne.<sup>712</sup> Now, the government would employ the services of Sirozlu Ismail Bey to calm down the rebellion in Edirne and fight Tokadçıklı himself who had been fighting the bandits.<sup>713</sup> The central government went further and secretly provided Ali Molla and his associates with ammunitions knowing that they would be used against Tokadçıklı.<sup>714</sup> There was yet another rapprochement and the government needed Tokadçıklı's assistance to make sure Ali Molla settled in Fire. The sultan was fearful of the possibility that bandits could join forces with other bandits (such as the Manav group) and cause further instability especially if Tokadçıklı continued his resistance against the settlement policy.

The sultan ordered that Ali Molla be offered a position as a local notable within six months' time and an appeal be made to Tokadçıklı to honor the settlement deal he had

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<sup>710</sup> BOA, HAT, 12046 (2 November 1803).

<sup>711</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 91–92.

<sup>712</sup> BOA, HAT, 11901 (12 November 1803).

<sup>713</sup> BOA, HAT, 12039 (16 November 1803); BOA, HAT, 11899 (21 November 1803).

<sup>714</sup> BOA, HAT, 3400 (31 January 1804).

previously accepted.<sup>715</sup> By now, Tokadçıklı seems to have joined forces with Kara Feyzi and agitated various bandit leaders to loot.<sup>716</sup> By August, the government had decided to execute Tokadçıklı<sup>717</sup> and sent forces against him.<sup>718</sup> Tokadçıklı had appealed to the people of Gümülcine to vouch for him by writing to the central government.<sup>719</sup> He was executed along with some of his relatives and comrades.<sup>720</sup> Tirsiniklioğlu, another powerful local notable who the center relied on to establish order in Rumelia, conducted Tokadçıklı's execution.<sup>721</sup> Tokadçıklı's case once again demonstrates the center's lack of a broad strategy to deal with disorder in the Balkans, as it repeatedly relied on local notables to fight its battles in an ad hoc fashion. Lack of strategy was combined with the failure to address the complex partnerships and alliances struck between various groups including the bandits and *yamaks* among others.

Tirsiniklioğlu was one of the notables who played a critical role in the eventual demise of Selim III's efforts to reform the army, as he was one of the powerful local notables who opposed the New Order. He was powerful enough to manipulate the local and international dynamics to his advantage. For instance, in the summer of 1792, there were tensions between the Ottomans and the Russians over the appointment of *voyvoda*

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<sup>715</sup> BOA, HAT, 2316 (9 April 1804); BOA, HAT, 2984 (9 April 1804); BOA, HAT, 2715.B (9 April 1804); BOA, HAT, 2715 (9 April 1804); BOA, HAT, 2634 (9 April 1804); BOA, HAT, 2198 (9 April 1804).

<sup>716</sup> BOA, HAT, 2438.A (13 April 1804).

<sup>717</sup> BOA, HAT, 3404 (14 August 1804); BOA, HAT, 2592 (23 August 1804)

<sup>718</sup> BOA, HAT, 1866.

<sup>719</sup> BOA, HAT, 2588 (29 August 1804).

<sup>720</sup> BOA, HAT, 2938 (2 October 1804); BOA, HAT, 2988 (6 October 1804); BOA, HAT, 3000 (10 October 1804).

<sup>721</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 95.

to Wallachia. The Russians demanded that the *voyvoda* should be from among the Boyars, which angered the Ottomans. The Ottomans responded that they should have punished the Serbians as well as Tirsiniklioğlu by executing them but they contended themselves with removing them from office out of respect for [the wishes of] the Russians. The Ottomans restrained themselves despite the recent Russian military build-up in Kemhal. They threatened that if the Russians continued to be unresponsive on this issue, it would not end well for either state.<sup>722</sup> Tirsiniklioğlu was acting against the Ottoman *voyvoda* through an alliance with the Serbians who enjoyed Russian support. The tone of the Ottoman threats suggests that they were helpless, as they had to appeal to the Russians *good will*.

Tirsiniklioğlu was involved in power struggles with other notables such as Tepedelenli Ali Pasha and Paspanoğlu in Rumelia provinces. He was one of the notables the center relied on from time to time to establish order. Like other notables, his obedience to the center was contingent on changing circumstances and he employed his influence in the service of the central government as he saw fit. Tirsiniklioğlu competed with his rival Yıllıkzade to control rebel leaders such as Ali Molla, Kışancalı Halil, and Manav Ibrahim. When he approached the government for funds to employ the services of such former bandits, the government expressed reservations about their reliability and refused to pay the requested sum.<sup>723</sup> It is difficult to know if Tirsiniklioğlu could have kept the situation calm if the center agreed to provide the funds but soon the bandit leaders rebelled again forcing Tirsiniklioğlu to pursue them on behalf of the

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<sup>722</sup> BOA, HAT, 1436 (18 August 1792).

<sup>723</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 85.



government.<sup>724</sup>

Tirsiniklioğlu's cooperation with the government was short-lived and he became yet another one of the notables disillusioned with the New Order. Tirsiniklioğlu gathered some 20,000 soldiers in Çorlu threatening to march against Istanbul through Çatalca.<sup>725</sup> The center tried to utilize the services of Kadı Abdurrahman Pasha against bandits. Tirsiniklioğlu figured that he would be next in line to be targeted after the bandits and he provoked the bandits to deepen their rebellious behavior. However, his own men soon killed him for reasons that are unclear and it may have been Abdurrahman Pasha who had arranged Tirsiniklioğlu's execution.<sup>726</sup> It was not uncommon that the central government used one of the competing notables against another in an effort to either subdue them or limit their regional influence. As Tirsiniklioğlu reversed his position on the New Order project, the center had all the incentives to neutralize him.

By March 1807, Tirsiniklioğlu had been killed but Harazgirad's notable Kapucubaşı Mustafa Ağa, who was one of Tirsiniklioğlu's men, asked that he be given the title of local notable of Rusçuk. The government accepted this demand at least temporarily to prevent him from causing trouble. But the government officials reported that he was rebellious and he had already gained the obedience of the notables in the districts of Silistre province. Eventually, the government executed him and Mustafa Bayraktar hoped to replace him. The recommendation of the governor was that Silistre should be given to Ahmed Aga of Ibrail and Rusçuk and Hezargrad should be given to

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<sup>724</sup> Ibid., 86–87.

<sup>725</sup> BOA, HAT, 1783 (7 September 1806).

<sup>726</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 97–99.

Mustafa Bayrakdar.<sup>727</sup>

Successive failures to reassert control over the Balkans resulted in the central government's subcontracting of the job to various local notables in addition to pashas appointed from the center. As it could not subdue Paspanoğlu, the government decided to appoint another powerful local notable, Tepedelenli Ali Pasha, as the governor of Anatolia commander-in-chief of forces sent against Paspanoğlu in April 1802.<sup>728</sup> However, he seems to have taken his time to assume his new position, as is clear from his lack of enthusiasm to counter the bandits. Tepedelenli seems to have negotiated with the bandits whereas the center expected him to be more forceful in subduing the rebels in the region.<sup>729</sup> While the bandits tried to negotiate with the center on their settlement in the region in return for ending their rebellion through Tepedelenli as the interlocutor, opposition of various other local notables combined with Paspanoğlu's influence on the ground forced the center to *forgive* Paspanoğlu for a third time and replace Tepedelenli with Vezir Hani Mehmed Pasha as the governor of Rumelia.<sup>730</sup>

To what extent Tepedelenli Ali Pasha was reliable from the government's point of view is somewhat ambiguous. Tepedelenli continued to have hostilities with Ibrahim Pasha of Avlonya despite the fact that a peace between the two had been brokered. Government officials interpreted his actions as vying for office and noted that Ibrahim Pasha was much more trustworthy than Tepedelenli and that he should have been favored. After all, they argued, he had followed the sultan's orders and watched out in the

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<sup>727</sup> BOA, HAT, 2189 (9 March 1807).

<sup>728</sup> Özkaya, *Dağlı İsyamları*, 80.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, 82–84.

past for the *interests of the people*.<sup>731</sup>

The central government appears to have pursued no comprehensive strategy to deal with the disorder in the Balkans and instead kept trying unsystematically and often impatiently to employ the services of local notables and various pashas, creating a sense of disillusionment. As the government rushed to switch local leaders, it constantly bet on different *horses* on the ground (often out of necessity rather than choice), the relevant actors found themselves at odds with the center and distanced themselves from various policies they deemed as doomed to failure. More often than not, various leaders the government banked on to subdue the bandits recognized the realities on the ground. The center kept employing the same strategy in a vicious circle without undertaking a thorough reexamination of its policy on the banditry phenomenon, thereby diminishing its own chances of tackling the regional insecurity. This pattern of *putting out fires* through traditional methods was at best inconclusive, at worst doomed to failure.

### ***The End of the New Order***

Selim III was confronted with enormous security, political, financial, and social problems as outlined above to push forward his New Order agenda. On his watch, the government not only failed to contain the domestic and international security challenges but also proved unsuccessful in preventing various rebellions against the expansion of the New Order army. The last one of these rebellions was the infamous Kabakçı Mustafa

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<sup>731</sup> BOA, HAT, 1554 (20 March 1806).

rebellion, which brought an end to Selim III's rule on 25 May 1807.<sup>732</sup> Some historians labeled this rebellion as an ideologically conservative and regressive (*irtica*) move against the reformist agenda of the New Order elite.<sup>733</sup> The rebellion was directed against the New Order elites and the sultan Selim III but it would be too simplistic to portray it as a regressive rebellion. After all, the course of the events demonstrates that the elites supporting the New Order failed to garner any meaningful support from the general public or the local powerbrokers throughout the empire. The New Order soldiers did not fight the Kabakçı rebellion either, which indicates the less than wholehearted support for the reformist enterprise.

The chain of events triggering the rebellion started when a total of eleven British ships were able to sail through the straits and anchored right across from the Ottoman palace on February 22, 1807.<sup>734</sup> According to Georg Oğulukyan's account, there was panic in the city, as it was interpreted as an impending British invasion of the capital. The palace tried to assemble soldiers for an attack on the ships but on the twelfth day the ships left without a major incident.<sup>735</sup> An investigation into how these ships were able to slip through the straits resulted in the finding that the *yamaks* charged with protecting the Straits had failed to confront the ships. As a result, the sultan set out to both replace the *yamaks* with New Order soldiers and to force the *yamaks* to wear the New Order uniforms, a decision that would trigger the infamous Kabakçı Mustafa rebellion and

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<sup>732</sup> Fahri Ç Derin, "Kabakçı Mustafa Ayaklanmasına Dair Bir Tarihçe," *Tarih Dergisi* 27 (1973): 99–110.

<sup>733</sup> Ali İhsan Gencer, "İstanbul Tersanesinde Açılan İlk Tıp Mektebi," *İ.Ü.E.F. Tarih Dergisi* 31 (1977): 307.

<sup>734</sup> Derin, "Yayla İmamı," 217.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

ultimately put an end to the New Order and Selim III's reign.<sup>736</sup>

The spark for the Kabakçı Mustafa rebellion seems to have occurred on May 13<sup>th</sup> when the *yamaks* and janissaries stationed in the Straits refused to adopt the New Order uniforms.<sup>737</sup> The janissaries reportedly said, “we have been janissaries for many generations, it is not imaginable or possible that we become soldiers all over again by wearing the New Order uniforms.”<sup>738</sup> Rebel soldiers reportedly agreed on a code of conduct to rally public support for their cause summarized in four articles: 1- no soldiers would be allowed to drink wine until after the business is taken care of, 2- no harm should be done against the poor and miserly, 3- raising of hands against the people (*reaya*) and foreigners would not be allowed, 4- those who go against these decisions would be punished severely, 5- they would march against the Meat Square (*Et Meydanı*) and make their case based on the Qur’anic principles (*Kur’an’a göre murafaa olmak*).<sup>739</sup> On May 15<sup>th</sup>, around 1,500 soldiers marched against the city providing guarantees to the public that they would not be harmed and calling on them to keep their shops open and continue business as usual.<sup>740</sup> The rebel leaders’ sensitivity to the public opinion as well as political and religious legitimacy should be noted here. They needed to demonstrate that their opposition to the New Order was based on legitimate grounds.

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<sup>736</sup> Georg Oğulukyan, *Georg Oğulukyan’ın Ruznamesi 1806 - 1810 İsyanları: III. Selim, IV. Mustafa, II. Mahmud Ve Alemdar Mustafa Paşa*, trans. Hrnad D. Andreasyan (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1972), 1–3.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>738</sup> “*biz eben an ceddin yeniçeriyüz Nizam-ı Cedid libasın giyüp yeni baştan asker olmak mümkün ve mutasavver değildir,*” Fahri Ç. Derin, “Tüfengçibaşı Arif Efendi Tarihçesi,” *Bellekten* 38, no. 151 (1974): 384.

<sup>739</sup> Oğulukyan, *Georg Oğulukyan’ın Ruznamesi*, 3.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.; Derin, “Tüfengçibaşı,” 395.

Rebels called on the şeyhülislam Ataulah Efendi and chief military judges of Rumelia and Anatolia among others to gather in the Meat Square.<sup>741</sup> Rebels gathered in the Meat Square and presented their case to the Sheikhuislam, as they claimed that they only sought justice but nothing else. The main argument they seem to have made was that it was unfair for them to live under such difficult conditions while the sultan lied and the poor public died as a result of the state officials' actions.<sup>742</sup> The rebels demanded that a long list of officials be punished within two hours. If the government responded to their ultimatum and punished these individuals, they would go back to their duties and their localities. Some of the individuals included in the list were the Commander of the Imperial Guards (*Bostancıbaşı*) Sıratibi İbrahim Kethüda,<sup>743</sup> the Court Chamberlain (*Mabeynci*) Ahmed Efendi, the Royal Doorkeeper (*Rikab Kethüdası*) Müsir Efendi, the New Order Treasurer (*İrad-ı Cedid Defterdarı*) Ahmed Bey, and the Master of the Mint (*Darbhane Emini*) Bekir Efendi.<sup>744</sup>

In the meantime, the sultan executed several officials, some of which were on the janissaries' list, to appease the rebels.<sup>745</sup> Yet, realizing that the rebellion could not be contained and it actually targeted his own rule, Selim III abdicated his throne for his

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<sup>741</sup> Oğulukyan, *Georg Oğulukyan'ın Ruznamesi*, 6.

<sup>742</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>743</sup> According to one source, janissaries chased İbrahim Kethüda, captured him in Langa Yenikapı neighborhood, dragged him to the Meat Square, and lynched him there. See Derin, "Yayla İmamı," 227–228.

<sup>744</sup> BOA, HAT, 7537 (1807).

<sup>745</sup> Fahri Ç. Derin, "Yayla İmamı Risâlesi," *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* 3, no. 8 (1973): 227–228.

nephew Mustafa II.<sup>746</sup> Following the sultan's dethronement, rebels went to the New Order barracks and released the soldiers of their duties, which meant the abolition of the New Order army.<sup>747</sup> According to another source, the sultan renounced the New Order, promised to abide by the ancient laws of the traditional [janissary] corps, and deliver the persons the rebels requested. The rebel leader, Kabakçı Mustafa, argued that the sultan had previously renounced the new army in the same way but acted against what he said, thus, Selim III could not be trusted. Moreover, he argued, the janissaries no longer wanted Selim III as the sultan. The rebels now demanded the sultan's nephew, Mustafa II, to succeed the sultan.<sup>748</sup>

According to another contemporary source, the janissaries responded to the sultan's offer to abolish the New Order army in the following words, "we do not trust these words, he will not abolish the New Order; a lot of trouble occurred in Edirne and Tekfurdağı as well as in Anatolia and Rumelia, many lives were wasted, the world has been filled with injustice, the country has been ruined, he still did not abolish the New Order and he will not."<sup>749</sup> It is clear that the rebellious soldiers framed their arguments around the theme of justice and ensured that their complaints reflected broader concerns of the society that was deeply disillusioned by the ruling elites. This must have resonated with the general public, as some fifty thousand people reportedly gathered in front of the

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<sup>746</sup> Ibid., 10–11.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>748</sup> Derin, "Yayla İmamı," 229.

<sup>749</sup> "Bu sözlere itimad etmeyüz; Nizam-ı Cedid'i ref' etmez, şimdiye kadar bu Nizam-ı Cedid için Edirne ve Tekfur dağı ve Rumeli ve Anadolu'da nice maddeler vuku' bulup bunca nüfus-ı kesire telef oldu, alem zulümle doldu, memalik harab oldu, yine Nizam-ı Cedid'i etmedi ve etmez," Derin, "Tüfengçibaşı," 390.

palace and demanded the dethronement of Selim III and succession of Mustafa II.<sup>750</sup>

It should be noted that neither the New Order soldiers nor the gunners of Tophane confronted or fought the rebels.<sup>751</sup> The New Order soldiers had in fact mobilized and were ready to march against the rebels but the Lieutenant Colonel Musa Pasha reportedly advised them that they should not “move from where they are and wait and see.”<sup>752</sup> The government officials debated whether to deploy the New Order army soldiers against the rebels but decided against such a move as it could result in “Muslims massacring other Muslims.”<sup>753</sup> Clearly, government officials including those involved in the New Order project hedged against the sultan and the New Order project.

In the aftermath of Selim III’s removal, elites affiliated with the New Order were either jailed or executed. For example, the religious judge of Siroz ordered that two former pashas who were ardent supporters of the New Order effort be executed. The runaway pashas would be arrested if they ever came to Siroz. The judge cites past successes of the janissary corps and loathes the New Order as an “invented” (*icad*) endeavor.<sup>754</sup> At the same time, the new sultan seems to have distributed significant sums to the rebellious soldiers and some of them were sent back to the Straits. Yet, their unruly behavior such as refusing to obey their commanders, to demand more handsome pay, and to cause insecurity in the capital<sup>755</sup> may have been one of the reasons that invited

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<sup>750</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>751</sup> Oğulukyan, *Georg Oğulukyan’ın Ruznamesi*, 12–13.

<sup>752</sup> Derin, “Yayla İmamı,” 224.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid., 224–225.

<sup>754</sup> BOA, C. AS, 14432 (23 December 1808).

<sup>755</sup> Derin, “Tüfengçibaşı,” 413–435.



Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's intervention. Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's assessment that the "[janissary] corps and Istanbul are in need of correction"<sup>756</sup> led to the rebel leader Kabakçı Mustafa's execution and a new rapprochement between the pasha and the newly enthroned sultan.<sup>757</sup>

The rebels were successful in abolishing the New Order and dethroning Selim III and they remained one of the major players in the post-New Order era. However, this did not prevent an outside powerbroker such as Alemdar Mustafa Pasha from shaping the parameters of the new political game. Positioning himself as such, he was instrumental in Mahmud II's efforts to recruit new soldiers under a new name (Sekban-ı Cedid), yet in the same spirit as the New Order army.<sup>758</sup> This effectively meant the reversal of the Kabakçı Mustafa rebellion's main objective (which was to put an end to the New Order) and ultimately paved the way for Mahmud II to abolish the janissary corps in 1826 in the long run. Nevertheless, this was not an immediate success for the reformers, as Mahmud II had to wait to command the support of the *ulema*<sup>759</sup> and weaken the local notables to revitalize the reform agenda while treading carefully until he gathered enough support against the janissaries. Even then, according to some of the sultan's contemporaries, reforms themselves were superficial<sup>760</sup> and success of military reform remained elusive throughout the nineteenth century.

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<sup>756</sup> Derin, "Yayla İmami," 240.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid., 240–242.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>759</sup> Uriel Heyd, "The Ottoman Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selim III and Mahmud II," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* IX (1961): 63–96.

<sup>760</sup> To an outsider and Mahmud II's contemporary such as the Austrian monarch Metternich, who was in fact interested in the victory of conservative order, Mahmud II's

To conclude, the redefined nature of the relationship between the local notables and the state throughout the eighteenth century proved crucial in the successes and failures of the New Order army in late eighteenth century. Both the central government and the local notables relied on one another for establishment of order and political recognition while at the same time competing for influence and power. The government's failure to provide security and order was combined with its inability to expand the New Order army to the Balkans and Anatolia. Notables took advantage of these failures by both navigating and manipulating local unruly forces at the central government's expense. None emerged victorious due to struggles against one another. At the same time, the center was not able to assert its authority in any decisive manner either.

Neither the central government nor the provincial notables were able to fully control the banditry phenomenon in the Balkans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The government's tactics of offering status and titles to notables seem to have worked only to a limited extent. The vacuum created by the wars and roaming bands of former soldiers and bandits could not easily be contained but notables and government officials took turns benefiting from the chaos by manipulating different groups for their own purposes. Most notables and administrators were either unable or unwilling to fight for the center to the end and often employed the bandits to bargain with the center.

The opposition to the New Order army's expansion to the Balkans seems to have been widespread and notables wasted no opportunity to exploit the general discontent

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reforms were more about form than substance. See Miroslav Šedivý, "Metternich and the Ottoman Reform Movement," *European Review of History: Revue Européenne D'histoire* 18, no. 4 (2011): 427–441.

against the center. Paspanoğlu was a clear example of this, as he successfully utilized the janissary discontent and the disorder created by the banditry phenomenon to his advantage. While he manipulated the local and regional dynamics to increase his influence, he constantly negotiated with the central government to ensure that he could manage the center's wrath, exemplified by the central government's several attempts to turn other notables against him. The imperial center failed to appreciate fully the local dynamics at play, which often resulted in the disillusionment of government officials loyal to the center and to the New Order project. As the center could not fully impose its will, it was increasingly delegitimized in the eyes of the bandits, janissaries, local populations, and even government officials tasked with securing order and peace.

Overlapping interests of the local socio-economic and military groups brought them closer to the notables than to the center. The imperial center could not secure order let alone impose new taxes and institute the New Order army in the Balkans. Resistance was not due to conservativeness of these groups but their real interests that the central government infringed upon. What was at stake for them was not an abstract idea of reform but how to cope with insecurity, extra taxes, and the center's recruitment demands among others. These were definitely consequential for the failure of the New Order army and it was only natural that the local notables, such as Paspanoğlu, would emerge as the voice of the general societal discontent.

However, the rationalizing and disciplining logic of the modern state would not easily recede and it could exist alongside the opposition. The idea of a professional army was not completely purged just because there was widespread societal opposition to it. Alemdar Mustafa Pasha's involvement in the immediate aftermath of the end of the New

Order was consequential. Alemdar Mustafa Pasha was not committed to the New Order project nor to Selim III himself but to establishing himself as the foremost notable on the Danubian front.<sup>761</sup> He took advantage of the power vacuum created by the dethronement of Selim III to be replaced by Mustafa IV. Alemdar Mustafa Pasha allied himself with the supporters of the New Order and may have even been involved in a scheme to reinstall Selim III.<sup>762</sup> His successful *coup* in July 1808 culminated in the “assassination of Selim, abdication of Mustafa IV and coronation of Mahmud II, and appointment of Alemdar as the grand vizier.”<sup>763</sup>

Alemdar Mustafa Pasha’s effective reversal of the Kabakçı Mustafa rebellion’s abolition of the New Order and *restoration* of the New Order<sup>764</sup> would prove crucial for the fate of the Ottoman military modernization. While the New Order was abolished as a result of the broad discontent among the general population, local notables, and the janissaries, the state elites had not abandoned the idea of a disciplined professional modern army at the disposal of the center. They would simply have to wait a little longer to achieve that objective despite the opposition by Ottoman society at large.

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<sup>761</sup> Yaycıoğlu, “Provincial Challenge,” 377.

<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*, 386–402.

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

## Conclusion

The main argument of this study has been that the New Order army and the opposition it generated need to be treated within the context of imperial state transformation instead of imperial decay. I argue that the fate of the empire's evolution was far from certain despite the enormous challenges the center had to cope with. I take issue with the traditional historiography that the New Order represented the progressive forces in an otherwise conservative society, as this perspective does not do justice to the complexities of how the *reformers* conceived of reform and to the motivations of societal resistance.

I contend that the main challenge for the Ottoman central government was to create an effective fighting force at its disposal to deal with domestic and international threats. Different segments of the society, in return, challenged these efforts, as the new logic of reforms infringed upon their autonomy. However, I also argue that prospects of success of the reform efforts as well as how the society would respond to them were far from certain. Societal challenge against the center ensured that its ability to project its power through a new army remained limited and contested. Resistance by societal groups was not ideological but based on interest. Furthermore, the question was not about whether or not the reforms would succeed but about how the state transformation would proceed and what kind of political, military, economic, and social costs would be incurred in the meantime.

The first chapter demonstrates that various historiographical traditions have failed with varying degrees to adequately account for the complexities of the New Order army's

implementation and the opposition to it. Much of the historiography on this period has prohibited the emergence of a robust debate on Ottoman state formation, as it has provided us with binary oppositions and theoretically restrictive reductionist and anachronistic approaches. It has often failed to distinguish the political agendas of the Tanzimat and Republican era elites and presented the New Order through their restrictive reformer versus conservative prism. This had a lot to do with the fact that the modernization theory's framework overlapped especially with that of the Turkish republican era, which conceived of the Ottoman imperial legacy as a liability to be overcome. As the republican historians experienced the trauma of imperial collapse, they sought to justify the new republican modern state project. In Selim III's New Order army, they saw honest but limited efforts to modernize the state, as the sultan had lacked the necessary resolve that the later republican era modernizers possessed. Opposition to the New Order was similar to the opposition to the new republic, which ultimately failed to understand the civilizing mission of the new enterprise because of their conservative ideological outlook.

In this way, until very recently, perception of the New Order has remained as a failed attempt at modernization thanks to the political concerns of much of the historiography. More recent historiography has disputed most of the claims of modernization theory, decline paradigm, and Turkish republican historiography but it has had little impact on the historiography on the New Order. Through a critical analysis of these historiographical traditions, this study contributes to a growing group of revisionist histories. It not only exposes many of the outdated yet deeply influential assumptions but also engages with a new literature that seeks to abandon the modernization theory and

decline paradigm as the explanatory frameworks for this era. Instead, it suggests that this period needs to be considered in the broader imperial transformations toward the adoption of the logic of the modern state.

The second chapter suggests that a closer examination of the state elites' opinions on the reform (*layihas*) present a much more complicated picture of how they understood the problems facing the empire. In a time of deep political crises, the state elites sought ways to restore the imperial center's ability to impose its will domestically and compete internationally through military reorganization and a new army. Military defeats at the hands of the Austrians and the Russians had a devastating impact in the minds of the Ottoman elites. However, they did not consider this challenge in civilizational terms, such as the West versus the East. For them, the problem had to do with the absence of an effective fighting machine at the disposal of the imperial center.

It was no coincidence that the majority of the *layihas* suggested ways to improve the finances of the army and to reorganize the various corps. Their suggestions revolved around reorganizing the existing corps, reforming the recruitment practices, and establishing fiscal discipline. Their rhetorical justification for these changes was to restore the imperial glory of the sixteenth century, which they perceived as the golden age of the empire. They argued that the janissaries were mainly responsible for failing to mobilize in times of war due to widespread corruption and inefficiency within the janissary corps.

Lacking a clear strategy as to how to go about creating a new army or how to address the socio-economic realities on the ground, the Ottoman elites narrowly defined the issue mainly as a janissary problem. What they failed to address was the fact that the

janissaries no longer represented purely a military force but a socio-economic group at the same time. This perspective prevented them from foreseeing the potential for resistance against the new army and ways to address it in advance. Their recommendations did not address ways to deal with a situation where elite and non-elite groups benefited from the lack of rationalized practices within the janissary corps. For example, the exchange of janissary pay tickets had become a commonly accepted practice benefiting janissary officers but also government officials. Recommendations focused on requiring each janissary to be allowed to hold only one ticket and receive payments accordingly. This recommendation missed the reality on the ground that the janissaries were not able to live off a single pay ticket without extra stipends. It also missed that availability of extra pay tickets allowed urban migrants to be integrated into the corps. Such financial and social ties would have been cut and this would clearly create societal discontent.

The second chapter also demonstrates that adoption of new military techniques including the disciplining practices such as drills was not a major issue for the Ottomans or for the ultimate success of the military reform despite the conservative frames of reference they employed. Both the proponents and the opponents of the new army developed discourses that tried to delegitimize the other party through accusations about violating the established order or the ancient laws. The Ottomans had no qualms about importing western techniques and methods as they saw fit. They employed western advisors and adopted western uniforms in the new army. When the janissaries charged that this amounted to betrayal and heresy, their opposition had more to do with trying to delegitimize their counterparts than their deep religious convictions against western



innovations. Both sides understood the new order army in different and often conflicting ways but neither was motivated primarily by cultural or religious hostility. Furthermore, these views were not static and evolved over time in such a way that a proponent of reforms could end up opposing it along the way. The reverse was also true in that the janissaries, for instance, did not immediately challenge the reorganization of the corps while they resisted implementation of regular drills.

The third chapter revisits the establishment of the new army and demonstrates that the establishment, funding, and manning of the new army encountered insurmountable challenges from the very start. The establishment of the army was underfunded and often mismanaged. The new budget, created to finance solely the new army, was not handled in the way it was intended. When the state needed it, it tapped into this resource instead of devoting it entirely to the creation of the new army. A major handicap for the new budget was that it relied on the rechanneling of existing sources and extra new taxes. The reallocation of existing sources meant that the new budget did not benefit from a new and independent revenue source. Furthermore, extra taxes placed an additional burden on commoners, whose contempt for the new order only increased because of the new budget. Overall, the financing of the new army suffered from the broader economic and financial problems of the Ottoman central government.

Manning the new army also proved extremely difficult, as the government failed to make it financially attractive to enroll in the new army. Recruitment for the new army suffered from lack of funds as well as the local populations' unwillingness to send their children to the new army. Tired of extra new taxes, villagers and townspeople sought ways to evade taxation as well as to acquire tax exemptions through claiming affiliation

with the state, including the janissary corps. These populations also opposed the expansion of the new army to their vicinity, as they would have to provide the new barracks with men and provisions. These challenges placed limits on the central government's ambitions to create a sizable army with barracks in Anatolia as well as in the Balkans.

State officials charged with enlargement of the new army, such as Tayyar Mahmud Pasha, were eventually disillusioned with the New Order cause and ended up opposing the center. Tayyar Mahmud Pasha's case shows that the political alignments around the New Order measures were far from fixed and in fact ever evolving. Furthermore, the New Order measures were themselves redefined and renegotiated thanks to the opposition from various societal groups as well as the disillusionment of such officials as Tayyar Mahmud Pasha. These challenges do not mean that the military reform was doomed to fail from the beginning but that there was a very dynamic process involved. In other words, as the state set out to implement its ambition to create a new army, it failed to make it financially viable and to prevent societal hostility. At the same time, resistance from the society forced the state to modify its approach as is clear in the way Tayyar Mahmud Pasha turned on the government.

In the fourth chapter, I argue that the government's approach to the janissaries was narrowly focused on their military effectiveness without addressing the broader socio-economic reality they represented. As the government attempted to re-order and discipline them, the janissaries resisted both as a military unit and as a socio-economic group. Their opposition to reorganization of the janissary corps emerged out of their sense of solidarity and established *order* within the corps. The government attempted to

restructure the janissaries by rationalizing the system of pay tickets (*esame*). The janissaries interpreted this as an intrusion into their existing *rights* and *autonomy*.

The janissaries understood the government's insistence on regular and oft-repeated drills in similar terms. At the same time, their opposition was neither wholesale nor uniform across time and space. For example, the janissaries in Aleppo would have a significantly different reaction to the new army than those in Vidin. This had to do with the differences in the social and economic structures within which the janissaries were embedded. When the new order army's establishment in the Balkans failed to account for the socio-economic conditions in place, the janissaries' opposition were more aligned with the broader societal response. In other words, the janissaries represented the interests of the local interests as much as they protected their own corporate interests and identity.

When the government's rationalizing and disciplining efforts infringed upon the interests of the janissaries and the commoners in various provinces, the problem was compounded for the central government. As such, the janissaries did not necessarily align themselves with the central government's wishes. On the contrary, more often than not, they protected the local interests against the imperial ones. Such a *symbiotic* relationship between the local populace and the janissaries was so strong that the locals claimed membership within the janissary corps, which was not always contested by the government officials. This indicates a certain level of recognition of the socio-economic reality on the ground on the part of the officials sent from the center. In fact, it was because of this reason that certain pashas charged with expanding the new army in the provinces would wind up opposing the new army.

Socio-economic realities in the provinces present a murky picture of instability as well as fluidity of alliances and networks. Different military, economic, and social groups had their diverse and sometimes conflicting reasons to oppose the New Order, which had little to do with ideology but more with what they interpreted as the central government's violation of their interests and autonomy. The contestation of the new order by a variety of groups created an increasingly complicated relationships and dynamic patronage networks. These networks drew their legitimacy from a variety of sources, including the *askeri* status of the janissaries. The central government's reform efforts were geared toward ironing out such a fuzzy picture in order to bring about *legibility*.

The fifth chapter argues that the already transformed relationship between the center and the provincial power holders throughout the eighteenth century had a fateful impact on the center's success in setting up and enlarging the new army. The Eighteenth century witnessed a reconfiguration and redistribution of power between the center and the provinces. Diffusion of power away from the center toward the provinces meant that the center had to rely on the tacit approval and cooperation of the local notables to succeed in any major enterprise. In this case, what the center wanted to achieve was not only to create an effective fighting force but also to monopolize violence, as the logic of the modern state dictated. This meant intrusion into and contestation of the power of the local notables. The creation of a centralized professional army could mean increased submission to the center for the notables. As such, they had a vested interest in opposing the new army if they were to preserve and increase their regional influence.

The case study of Paspanoğlu demonstrates that a local notable could cause major problems and challenges for the center when his interests were aligned with the interests

of local populace and other groups such as the janissaries and bandits. Paspanoğlu found it an opportune moment to challenge the central government in a time of great unrest and chaos caused by the banditry phenomenon. Banditry throughout the Balkans was largely a consequence of the Ottoman military failures suffered at the hands of the Austrians and Russians in the second half of the eighteenth century. As the imperial center failed to address either the widespread banditry or the socio-economic problems, it remained vulnerable to threats by notables such as Paspanoğlu who sought to increase their regional influence. In trying to address this issue, the center relied on traditional methods such as using one notable against another. Paspanoğlu was not necessarily ideologically motivated and he continued to negotiate with the central government while agitating against it at the same time. One possibility for the center could have been to reach a grand bargain with local notables instead of trying endlessly to use one against another.

The local populations and the janissaries understood the contest between the center and the provincial notables as genuinely related to their own discontent about the new army. The notables ensured that the local discontent was channeled through their networks and they did not hesitate to agitate various groups. There is no doubt the notables were interested in expanding their influence, however, they also had a better handle on the issues in the provinces as the patrons of their locality. In other words, the center was more removed from the daily needs and aspirations of the local populations as well as local janissaries among others. Notables offered what the center could not and they emerged as the voice of the discontent.

Opposition to the new order army was arguably successful at the end, as the army was abolished along with dethronement of Selim III in 1807. However, the idea of a

professional army at the full disposal of the central government remained a compelling one for the Ottoman elites. Societal opposition put an end to the New Order army but this did not mean the termination of the broader imperial transformation and the state's efforts to adopt modern forms of power. Clearly, the limits were placed upon how far the rationalizing and disciplining state power could infringe upon the autonomy of various socio-economic and military groups.

Mahmud II would have to address those limits and assert the center's willingness to move forward with a modernized army by abolishing the janissary corps in 1826. He would also have to untangle the various networks and neutralize the local notables opposed to the emerging new logic of the state. Prior to abolishing the janissary corps, Mahmud II ensured that he received the support of the ulema and the local notables could no longer threaten the interests of the center in the provinces. It is not entirely clear to what extent he was able to create an effective modern army by abolishing the janissary corps. Yet, this was perhaps not the main objective anyway. More consequentially, consolidation of the center's sovereignty over the resisting military, political, economic, and social groups through employing modern forms of power needed to proceed. It is not certain that military reform rendered the empire stronger in the long run. What is clear is that the centralized, rationalized, disciplined, and bureaucratic new logic of the modern state would govern the empire.

The complex set of relationships between the janissaries and various societal groups meant that the janissaries represented a *check on power* as projected from the imperial center. The janissaries represented and voiced the growing societal discontent. When the new army triggered opposition from the society, the janissaries acted as natural

allies of the society. In targeting the janissaries, the New Order was actually also targeting the society's ability to meaningfully and forcefully shape the outcome of the reform efforts and ultimately the transformation of the state.

When the state finally abolished the janissaries in 1826, project of modernity rendered the society more acquiescent to the encroachments of the central state. In terms of military efficiency, the state may have been correct in its diagnosis that it needed to eliminate the janissaries because they were no longer an effective fighting force. In trying to accomplish this, however, the emerging modern state's logic stripped the society of one of its formidable tools to contest and negotiate state power. In the absence of an alternative institution through which the societal discontent could be expressed, the state's assault on the crucial link between the janissaries and the broader society had fateful repercussions for the imperial state transformation, as it rendered societal input virtually irrelevant.

In the arguably *successful* version of this story, Mehmed Ali of Egypt was able to create an effective fighting force and a formidable army in a relatively short amount of time. Mehmed Ali had several advantages: 1- he was able to finance the new army adequately; 2- he eliminated (prior to the establishment of the new army) the potentially main opposition group with an independent military base, namely the Mamluks; 3- there was no significant armed group as profoundly tied to the society in the same way the janissaries were elsewhere in the empire. These factors contributed to the relative success of erecting a new professional army obedient to his rule. In fact, Mahmud II was able to create a similar army, *Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammediyye*, but it is difficult to argue that it was as successful as Mehmed Ali's new army. The long-term consequence of this

imperial transformation toward the modern state's logic was that societal discontent expressed by janissaries, notables, and local populations was no more. The modern state came with a price.



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