

MODERNIZATION PROCESSES
AND CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTIONS IN
THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND IRAN

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to analyze the early modernization processes in the Ottoman Empire and Iran up to the end of their eventual constitutional revolutions of the early twentieth century in a comparative manner. In looking at the countries' modernization processes, it emphasizes the importance of foreign influence – that of Western powers and Russia. It argues that these processes were a response to the rising socio-political and economic power of the West and Western intrusions into the territories of each state.

In the Turkish case, the modernization process was mainly led by the rising Ottoman - Turkish intelligentsia – despite the differences between the Young Ottomans, the Young Turks and the Committee of Union and Progress members. In the Iranian case, the modernization process was carried out mainly as a grassroots movement comprising reformist intellectuals, members of the ulema, the bazaaris (merchants), trade guilds people, workers and radical members of secret societies.

In view of these aspects of the modernization processes taken in the two states, this thesis reveals that both cases ended up replacing their traditional political system with a constitutional monarchy with the aim of saving and reforming the state. The study of the outcomes of the modernizing process in the two states highlights the dissimilarities which are listed as the engagement in alliance-making and wars with the Great Powers, the role of the military, state bureaucracy, the connection between the ulema and the state and nationalist movements.

Keywords: Modernization Processes, Ottoman Empire, Iran, Constitutional Revolutions

ÖZ

OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU VE İRAN'DAKİ MODERNLEŞME SÜREÇLERİ VE ANAYASAL DEVRİMLER

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Yüksek Lisans, Orta Doğu Çalışmaları Bölümü

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Bu tez Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve İran'daki erken dönem modernleşme süreçlerinden başlayarak, bu süreçlerin neticesinde yirminci yüzyıl başlarında gerçekleşen anayasal devrimlerin sonuna kadar olan dönemi karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ülkelerin modernleşme süreçlerine bakarken, Batı güçleri ve Rusya'dan oluşan yabancı güçlerin bu süreçteki önemini vurgulamaktadır. Tez, bu süreçlerin Batı'nın artmakta olan sosyo-politik ve ekonomik gücüne ve her iki devlete yapılan Batı müdahalelerine bir tepki olduklarını savunmaktadır.

Osmanlı'da modernleşme süreci, Genç Osmanlılar, Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti üyelerinin arasındaki ayrılıklara rağmen temel olarak yükselişte olan Osmanlı – Türk aydınları tarafından yönlendirilmiştir. İran'da ise modernleşme süreci reformcu entellektüeller, ulema üyeleri, bazaariler (tüccar sınıfı), esnaf loncaları, işçiler ve gizli toplulukların radikal üyelerinden oluşan bir taban hareketiyle yürütülmüştür.

Tez, iki devlette gelişen modernleşme süreçlerinin bu özelliklerini göz önünde bulundurarak, her iki örnek olayda da devleti kurtarmak ve yeniden yapılandırmak adına geleneksel siyasi sistemin anayasal monarşi ile değiştirildiğini göstermektedir. Bu süreçlerin sonuçlarının incelenmesi, söz konusu devletlerin çeşitli farklılıklar da içerdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu farklar, her iki devletin Batı devletleriyle yaptığı ittifak ve savaşlar, ordu, bürokrasi, ulema ve devlet arasındaki bağ ve milliyetçi hareketler olarak sıralanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Modernleşme Süreçleri, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, İran, Anayasal Devrimler

To my beloved mother and aunt

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A theoretical framework for European modernity has dominated the study of non-European societies such as Turkey and Iran for more than two hundred years; having a strong centralized state, in line with that of post-Napoleonic France is the model that is generally used to judge modernity. Although the example of Japan's 'catching up with the West' is sometimes used in the study of modernization, scholarship generally focuses on comparing societies to European states since the interactions and penetration of the new European system took many different forms and concerned various aspects of social life : the globalization of economic markets, military expansion and occupation, cultural attraction, the empowerment of local actors who were able to profit from the new techniques and the forms of ideas goods and services. This, however, creates problems as it forms only in an indistinct vision of the modernizing process. Recent historical and anthropological studies altogether tend to demonstrate that local actors and dynamics, under the influence of new external conditions, determine the specific conditions and forms taken by the social change occurring in their own environment.¹ Indigenous culture and action strategies, rather than general categories, are central in understanding the dynamic of any change, even if it is as global as the advent of modernity. In fact Cyril E. Black argues,

The only certainty is that no society among the later modernizers will produce a pattern of modern institutions quite like those of societies that modernized first. Some find it easy to develop centralized political institutions, whereas others do not; some adapt themselves rapidly to the industrial way of life, whereas others must overcome major obstacles presented by traditional beliefs and practices.²

¹ S.N. Eisenstadt, "A reappraisal of Theories of Social Change and Modernization", in *Social Change and Modernity*, edited by Hans Haferkamp and Neil J. Smelser (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 426.

² Cyril E. Black, *The Dynamics of Modernization* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1966), 57.

In this context, Persian and Ottoman intellectuals did not have one single interpretation of European modernization of reforms and differed in their views on how any such ideologies could be adapted in their own state.

Modernity changed Europe from a society on agriculture to one based on industry, but for the East the process was different. The key change as regards European modernity was that the structures of society became less based around traditional groups and communities and more centred on the individual who is dynamic and alert within the atmosphere of continuous change as compared to the individual of the traditional society.³ This individualization of society led in turn to a new face of citizens' relationship with their state or nation that was based around the principle that no longer should individuals be mere vassals of their kings, priests, sultans or shahs but were rather subject to the laws and constitutional and moral values of their state. These rights of the individual were set out in new legislation and juridical procedure and were linked to the rise of the commercial and industrial urban middle classes in European states.

Such middle classes, were however, not linked with the modernizing process in Ottoman Turkey or Iran, where such groups came to be marginalized as modernity took hold. In Middle Eastern states, their commercial and industrial bourgeoisie were comprised mainly of non-Muslim minorities that enjoyed foreign protection and as a result came to be seen as alien and a threat to the new nationalism that propelled the formation of the modern state forward. In the West, individual autonomy was an important aspect of modernization, but in the Middle East this process was largely controlled by elite groups of bureaucrats and military officers who adapted European modernity to mould their states along the lines of their own personal aspirations.⁴ As such, the rights of the individual can only be seen to have been of marginal significance to Middle Eastern modernizers, who were more concerned with protecting and maintaining their own status and influence. This difference between Occidental and Oriental modernization is perhaps due to the factors that determined its emergence: in Europe, modernization was based on an all-encompassing form of imperial colonialism, which very often led to wars with the East; Middle Eastern

³ See Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1968), Daniel Lerner, *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East* (New York: The Free Press, 1958), Walt W. Rostow, *The Stages of the Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960)

⁴ Ellen Kay Trimberger, "A Theory of Elite Revolutions", *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 7, No.3 (September 1972), 191-2.

modernization, as a consequence of this, was a reactionary measure taken by reformers in states such as Iran and Turkey to ensure their continuing existence and to avoid them becoming outposts of their would-be European conquerors.

Eastern reaction to the threat of foreign occupation can be traced back several centuries. For instance, Russia's defeat of the Ottomans in their war of 1768-74 forced them into agreeing to the terms of the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca, which as well as compelling the Ottomans to relinquish territory to the Russians, provided scope for the Tsarist Empire to become more heavily involved in domestic Ottoman affairs.⁵ A second humiliating defeat for the Ottomans in another war against the Russians from 1787-92 was compounded by a defeat in Egypt by Bonaparte's forces in 1798. Iran's fortunes at this time were little brighter, with the eventual defeat suffered in the war against Russia again imposing humiliating treaties – those of Gulistan and Turkmenchay – which allowed Russia a larger presence in Iranian society to the extent that they were involved in Iran's political reorganization.⁶ As a result of this kind of foreign subjugation and intervention, the reform movements in Ottoman Turkey and Iran began to gather pace; the career of Mehmed Ali Pasha, an Ottoman soldier of Albanian ethnicity who managed to raise an army and conquer most Arab lands of the Middle East, served as a shining example to the Middle East of what could be achieved by utilizing and adapting European ideologies.

The initial military-based reforms that were introduced in the Middle East had longer lasting effects than had perhaps been anticipated. For instance, newly-modernized armies required a more efficient and centralized central power base to keep them fully supplied with the resources that they needed, which also entailed things such as censuses and land registration. Extra scrutiny came to be placed upon the traditional political structures in Eastern states, and comparison were made between the East and West, with it becoming clear that European states' power was based largely on the efficient central government that allowed the emergence of greater military and economic power. As a result, a class of reform-minded intellectuals came to prominence in Iran and Ottoman Turkey, with their goal being the implementation and adaptation of successful European modern innovations, especially legal and political, structural innovations, that would secure the future of

⁵ Roderic H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 20.

⁶ Nikki R. Keddie, *Qajar Iran and The Rise of Reza Khan 1796-1925* (California, Mazda Publishers: 1999), 22.

these states in the face of the colonial threat posed by the West and their own ethnic diversity.⁷

The enduring efforts of Middle Eastern reformers is well-documented both in contemporary chronicles and more modern scholarship, but it is important to remember that such reformers had as their primary objective a cure for their states' problems that could be introduced quickly and effectively; a popular phrase during this reforming process and the debates that it entailed was, 'How can the state be saved?'.⁸ Parliamentary and constitutional reform were high on the agenda for Middle Eastern reformers from the 1860s onwards, although this was perhaps a consequence of their desire to save their states from collapse rather than any iron-clad belief in democratic and constitutional forms of government; constitutional change was seen as more of a method of amelioration rather than its end product.

Those in favour of modernizing reform viewed the formation of an enlightened intellectual class as the only way to instigate meaningful change; a top-down approach, with a powerful leader back up by equally influential state institutions, was necessary, rather than a grass-roots approach. Indeed, the majority of contemporary commentators on the issues of reform and modernization – be they in favour or in opposition – were agreed that attempting to coordinate changes from the bottom upwards served only to undermine the power of the government. This was itself a crucial issue, given the colonial and economic threats from Western imperial states; a strongly-led government was imperative to Ottoman Turkey and Iran if these states were to maintain their independent existence.

The modernization processes in the Ottoman Empire and Iran shared many characteristics, due to common ideological and cultural influences during the nineteenth century and similar socio-economic structures. European modern institutions and liberal ideas influenced various intellectuals and traditional groups in each country. Defeat in wars with the European states and Russia forced Ottomans and Iranians to implement administrative and military changes. These major changes, as a way of keeping the European encroachment at bay, were made to ensure the state's continuing existence. The army was considered the key to resisting the Western challenge and the first institution to be modernized. The next instance of

⁷ Erik J. Zürcher and Touraj Atabaki, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization in Turkey and Iran, 1918-1942* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 3.

⁸ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 212.

modernization occurred in the state bureaucracies since the strengthening of the state presupposed centralization and financial and judicial reforms. The reforms coincided with the expansion of military power and imperialistic intentions of the Western powers and Russia. In order to consolidate the continuation of reforms, the ever-increasing need for European expertise in trade and finance eventually led both countries to serious financial and economic difficulties.⁹ The Capitulations, the trade agreements made with European powers, had turned the Ottoman Empire and Iran into open markets and gave these powers a lasting influence on economic and ultimately political affairs of Ottomans and Iranians. Finally, the failure and the unwillingness of the state to democratize the political system resulted in the weakening of the bonds between the government and the indigenous groups in society, and thus allowed the rising revolutionary movements to pave the way for the establishment of constitutional regimes in both countries.

Despite their common features, there were differences in the modernization processes of the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Being militarily weaker than European states and fearing the threat of territorial encroachment into their lands as mentioned above, the first generation of Ottoman reformers with the Tanzimat era began to import European technology and adopt Western-style methods to train their armies for the re-establishment of a uniform and centralized administration. However, the expense incurred by doing this was too much for their economies to cope with, and they were forced into negotiating new financial settlements with their European neighbours; from this point onwards, bankruptcy was inevitable.¹⁰ For the Ottomans, this meant that the Empire's revenue distribution was controlled by Europeans, although its capital city was not occupied; as well facing internal resistance to such an occupation, no European power would let any other single power attempt such a manoeuvre lest it upset the equilibrium of power than existed between the European states at this time. Later, the Young Turks of the Ottoman Empire restored their 1876 constitution with the intention that a greater unity with the Empire would be seen in the face of the promised equality for all; it was hoped that this would provide a favourable public response to their reform programs. These hopes were to be dashed though, when it became apparent that the multiple ethnic groups and communities in

⁹ Nazih N. Ayubi, *Over-stating the Arab State: Politics and Society in the Middle East* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 87.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 87-8.

the Empire were wishing for greater autonomy and independence, rather than the unity of the Ottomanism that the Young Turks were promoting; the heavy-handed approach taken by the CUP in trying to introduce stricter central controls only served to alienate certain minority groups, although most Arab and Turkish members of the Empire remained loyal to the Ottoman state. The common interest in warding off the threat of European expansion seems to have been an important binding factor between the disparate communities within the Ottoman Empire at this time.¹¹

The case of Iran, in this instance, was different from the Ottomans in that Iran had become part of the market for the global exporting of raw materials, with the Qajar shahs making continual concessions to Britain and Russia, something which placed Iran's economy in the power of others. Modernizing reforms in Iran were delayed by the interference of Britain and Russia during the Qajar period, with the rivalry between the two Western powers, competing for political and economic dominance in Iran. Iran's situation and structure also had a role to play in the paucity of reforms, as well as the powerful individuals concerned. The transformations that took place in Ottoman Turkey came about in part due to Ottoman state having a greater exposure to European ways of thinking as a result of its extensive trade and commercial relationships; military reform, in particular, was effected in the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the nineteenth century by strong central rulers who had been influenced by what they had learned from the West. This can be contrasted with the case of nineteenth century Iran, which was far less centralized with a greater degree of power and influence being held by nomadic and provincial tribal groups.

The Shi'a religious establishment, being the most centralized authority in the empire, held a position of greater influence than the monarchy. In other words, the Shi'a *ulema* of Iran was generally receptive and responsive to public opinion, especially in urban areas, since their power rested in part on the size of their following, with many people choosing to trust the rulings of the *ulema* over that of their shah, who came to be seen as lacking the legitimacy necessary to rule.¹² The combination of this and the decentralized government led to the dissemination of European ideas into Iran take different paths from those of the Ottomans. As far as the Ottoman and Persian armies were concerned, they held different positions in each country. In the Ottoman Empire, the army had a central role keeping the Empire together and guaranteeing the

¹¹ William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2004), 138.

¹² Nikki R. Keddie, *Qajar Iran and The Rise of Reza Khan 1796-1925*, 91.

continuity of its power structure. The Young Turk movement of 1908 depended on a relatively strong army, while instituting a constitutional monarchy in the Empire. The Persian army, on the other hand, operated on the margins and was based on the tribal system on which the empire itself was based. The early success of civilian protest in the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11 was realized on account of non-existence of a regular army force, except the small Russian officered Cossack Brigade. In Iran, there were also crucial differences between the ideologies promoted by each reforming group. For the *ulema* (clergy) and the *bazaaris* (bazaar classes in Persian), the transformation should have brought with it a reduction in European interference in domestic trade whilst maintaining their own traditional high status. This conflicted with other European-inspired reformers though, who advocated a more intense program of reform that would establish a secular law-making body; these clashes only heightened in intensity upon the declaration of the constitution and made effective governance impossible.¹³

Within this framework, the thesis aims to provide a comparative analysis of the two main effective Middle East political entities, Ottoman Turkey and Iran, examining their modernization and the processes that culminated in their constitutional revolutions at the beginning of the twentieth century. Both the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran were the theatres of tremendous socio-political and cultural changes, their elites becoming increasingly influenced by the Western-originated modernity. This modernization of their political culture actually was demonstrated spectacularly, with almost simultaneous constitutional revolutions of 1906 in Iran and 1908 in the Ottoman Empire. Considering the wave of constitutional movements of the early twentieth century in other parts of the world, one question is also raised; namely, were the revolutionary movements in Turkey and Iran the consequences of a global political agenda, or were they coincidentally inspired by their local dynamics? To answer this question, a comparative study was conducted on these countries from an historical perspective.

Chapter 1 first looks at the pre-modernization period of the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran by discussing their administrative and military organizations and locating them in early modernity under the Western and Russian influence. It also explores the role of the merchants/the *bazaaris*, the *ulema* within both empires. Then, the awakening of modernization and reform movements, in turn the Ottoman Empire

¹³ Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906-1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 11.

in 1792-1876 and Iran in 1798-1890, will be discussed in order to draw attention to the gradual development of relativistic modernization processes.

Ottoman and Iranian interactions – either military or diplomatic – with the West in the nineteenth century facilitated a spreading of the democratic theories that would eventually come to alter the socio-economic make-up of the Middle East. Importantly, the states themselves were generally resistive to the democratization that was being demanded by various groups within their societies; this clash in ideologies was the basis upon which later revolts and protests were built and which will be evaluated in Chapter 2. The protest movements, the organizations and the individuals that took part in the Constitutional Revolutions of the Ottoman Empire and Iran will be closely examined.

The internal dynamics formed by the historical and cultural backgrounds of these two countries, and the experiences they had in the nineteenth century caused different constitutional revolutions. Chapter 3 thus focuses on different constitutional revolutionary processes of two countries and the aftermath of the revolutions together with intellectual ideas and discussions according to the changing socio-political and economical circumstances.

CHAPTER 2

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE UNDER THE OTTOMANS AND QAJARS

The relative stability enjoyed by European states from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards can be said to have been a contributing factor to the expansion of Western powers in their overseas colonies; the end of the Thirty Years War in 1648, the Restoration in England of 1660 and the French defeat of Spain in 1659 contributed to a widespread peace throughout the continent and allowed European states a firm base from which to begin the empire building that characterized the following centuries.

This outward expansion of Western powers brought a clash with the Ottoman and Persian empires; the states which were riddled, by contrast, with internal problems and struggled to cope with the growing socio-political and military threats posed by European states. This growth of European military power created an ominous-looking frontier for the Ottomans and Persians, which had to deal with aggressive campaigns against Napoleon in Egypt, the British in India and the Russian attempt to establish Southern naval bases on the Indian Ocean by cutting through Persia. Thus, the beginning of the eighteenth century marked a decline in the fortunes of the Ottoman and Persian empires. In order to better understand the decline of the Ottoman and Persian empires in this period, it is important to avoid simple conclusions, such as the suggestion that the war between the West and the Middle East was the major contributing factor in the fall from grace of the Eastern empires. There are clearly far more complicated social and historical transformations behind this shift in power that took place over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This chapter aims to analyze from this perspective the internal dynamics, such as the military and administrative systems and the role of the *ulema* and the merchants/*bazaaris*, of socio-political and ideological changes and the awakening of modernization movements in the 1800s with a focus on two main effectively independent Muslim states: the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Persia.

2.1. The Ottoman Empire, Russia and the Coming of the West

Up until the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire had enjoyed a general superiority over its European rivals in matters of war, technology, economy and administration, and as such was able to successfully defend its borders from the threat of Western expansion. The Ottoman defeat of Peter the Great in 1711 was one of the final acts of Ottoman dominance and although the Russian threat was subdued by the Treaty of Pruth of that same year, the Ottoman military was less successful against other European powers in the same period. A number of defeats in Austria in 1718, after a war with Venice in 1716, forced the Ottomans to sign the Treaty of Passarowitz, which signalled both the growing weakness of the Ottoman military and the emergence of Austria as a major European power.¹⁴

The Russo-Ottoman war (between 1736 and 1739) was stimulated in part by the Russian ambition of reaching the Black Sea; alarmed by Ottoman defeats against a Persia led by Nader Shah, the Russians took to the offensive, although the Ottomans were able to defeat Austrian and Russian armies in the Balkans and forced their opponents into agreeing to peace treaties. The Treaty of Belgrade and the Treaty of Nissa (both of 1739) compelled Austria to concede what she had gained from the Treaty of Passarowitz and Russia to surrender everything that she had achieved in Moldavia and the Crimea respectively.¹⁵ This peace was to end in 1762 though, with Catherine the Great's rise to power and the 1764 pact between Russia and Prussia about intervention in Poland and Catherine's attacks on the Ottoman frontier prompted the Ottomans to declare war on Russia in 1768.¹⁶ France, being traditional ally of the Ottomans, also entered the war; Britain, which felt obliged to continue the ongoing economic and military competition with France, became also engaged in the war.

Despite being able to defeat a Russian expedition in Greece in 1770, the Ottomans were not to enjoy success at sea; in the same year, a combination of Russian ships and English officers attacked and defeated the Ottoman fleet near the coast of

¹⁴ Roderic H. Davison, 20.

¹⁵ Yahya Armajani, *Middle East Past and Present* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1970), 194.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

Asia Minor. It seemed that the thirty years of peace had only served to weaken the strength of the Ottoman navy, which continued to suffer defeats in the conflict with Russia and was eventually subjugated by the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in July 1774.¹⁷ The humiliating terms of this treaty, coupled with Catherine the Great's continuing ambitions, meant that the Russo-Ottoman conflict would rumble on and the Ottomans found themselves increasingly isolated, with even her traditional ally France refusing to offer military help in the face of the strong alliance that had formed between Russia and Austria. To add insult to injury, the Ottomans could do little to stop Catherine from violating the terms of the treaty of Küçük Kaynarca when she seized control of Crimea, and another humiliating treaty – that of Jassy in 1792 – was forced upon the Ottomans.¹⁸

These wars enabled Russia to further assert its dominance and emerge as a major power, but this only meant disaster for the Ottomans. This series of defeats suffered in the eighteenth century and the subsequent loss of important territories was perhaps a contributing factor to the reappraisal of Ottoman military organization and technology; it might also have facilitated the dispersal of contemporary European intellectual ideas in the Ottoman Empire. Events such as the French Revolution had a great effect on the Ottomans; it was to French secularism that the Ottomans looked for technological and institutional development.¹⁹

The first period of new reforms, called *Nizam-ı Cedid* (the New Order)²⁰, were initiated by Sultan Selim III. The most important of these reforms were aimed at the military through the establishment of a new corps of long-service infantry and artillery based on European models. The first period of reforms was not long-lived; many conservative opponents succeeded in forcing back reformers. However, this was only a temporary win for the conservatives, and from 1807 to 1839 the reformers succeeded in restoring the programmes, as will be discussed later.

Despite initially causing trouble for the Ottomans with his invasion of Egypt in 1798, Napoleon came to be desirous of an Ottoman-French alliance in the early nineteenth century as he felt that this would help to further his ambitions of

¹⁷ Davison, 51-2.

¹⁸ Armajani, 197.

¹⁹ William Hale, *Turkish Politics and the Military* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 15.

²⁰ It was formed in 1797 and adopted a pattern of recruitment that was uncommon for the imperial forces; it was composed of Turkish peasant youths from Anatolia, a clear indication that the *devşirme* system was no longer functional. See William L. Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 62.

conquering territories in Central Europe and Russia. After defeating Austrian forces in 1805, Napoleon struck up a correspondence with Sultan Selim and requested he cancel the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca.

Feeling intimidated by this alliance, Russia sent an army into the Danube provinces which prompted Selim to declare war. Having already shown a provocative intent by closing off the Straits and reasserting his control of the Ionian Islands, Selim only served to ignite anti-Ottoman feeling and the British, who joined forces with the Russians; this led to a two-pronged attack on the Ottoman Empire's Northern and Southern frontiers and although Selim was able to fend off the threats by winning several key battles, the French turned the war on its head by signing the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807 and thus betraying her erstwhile Ottoman allies.²¹

Defeated by Napoleon at Friedland in 1807, the Russian Tsar Alexander moved to make peace with the French in order that the European continent could be divided between themselves. Although this initially isolated the British and the Ottomans, these two powers eventually came to be allied with one another with the Treaty of the Dardanelles of 1809 setting the deal in stone. Further Ottoman victories against Russia in the Danube region and the following Treaty of Bucharest in 1812 put a halt to Russian aggression against the Ottomans for the time being.²²

Despite this, the wars of the early nineteenth century had made it clear to the Ottoman rulers that their empire was declining in strength. Revolts in 1821 and 1827 in Serbia and Greece caused further trauma to the Empire and hindered the attempts that were being made to reform the military. The janissaries also became a problem, as they were as a group strongly resistive to proposed reforms of all kinds in order to try and maintain their own power. The Sultan was left with no option but to attempt to destroy the janissaries, which he was able to do with the help of the wider Ottoman society, not least the *ulema* group. With the janissary obstacle removed, the Sultan could then pursue his military reforms with greater ease.²³

The Ottomans, as well as the Persians, attempted to stop the decline of their empire by looking westwards to their powerful European neighbours for innovations and reforms that could be introduced. Before explaining the government reforms, the

²¹ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey, v. 1, Empire of the Gazis, The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire 1280-1808* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 275.

²² Armajani, 204.

²³ Hale, 18.

changes instituted in both empires can be compared and contrasted by using the following two categories: The administrative & military organization and also the *ulema* & the merchants/*bazaaris*.

2.1.1. The Administrative and Military Organization

The Ottoman State had existed since the thirteen century, up until the seventeenth century, evolving and constructing itself progressively, adapting to hold together an increasingly diversified heterogeneity of sub-components while it had held vast territories in West Asia, North Africa and South-east Europe. It thus developed a peculiar political culture, made of pragmatic tolerance for the existing social orders, combined with the idea of the supremacy of the *raison d'état* and respect for the symbolic apex of the system, the *devlet* (state) embodied in the *Osmanlı* (descendants of Osman) dynasty. This political culture had a strong social underpinning with a complex combination of bodies altogether constituting a civil administration, bound to the throne and devoted to preserve the whole system against external or internal threats. The local customs, often originating from pre-Ottoman Christian history, were given an official legal status, recorded and made imperial law in the official juridical compilations, the *Qanunnâme*.²⁴

Being an absolutist, bureaucratic, agriculture-oriented entity, the Ottoman state had different systems of administrations throughout its huge territory and its reign. So much so that, the long-lasting endurance of the Ottoman Empire is attributed to its manoeuvring capability in adopting new types of administrations which could respond to the demands of various regions and cultures in its territory. The ruler and administration occasionally initiated reforms or created new social bodies (especially new army divisions) when it was felt beneficiary to the sacred goal of preserving the Ottoman rule over the conquered territories.²⁵ To go further, the Ottoman system, as Berkes describes, constituted an example of eastern despotism in which there was a central authority and all the land was the property of the state, which was controlled

²⁴ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural, 100-103.

²⁵ For more details on the pre-modern Ottoman Empire, see Halil İncalcık, *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978); Uriel Heyd, *Studies in Old Ottoman Criminal Law*, edited by V. L. Menage (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973)

by the ruler.²⁶ The term despot here marks the absolute power of the ruler, which was formed due to eliminating all kinds of aristocracies in the conquered lands and selecting the state administrators among people in the status of *kul* (servants) and to the existence of strong standing armies.²⁷ İnalçık also states that the Ottoman governing attitudes was the division of society into two leading classes: The first, called *askeri*, literally "the military", included the people to whom the sultan delegated his executive power through an imperial diploma, namely, officers of the court²⁸ (divan) and the army, civil servants and *ulema* and the second included the *reaya* comprising all Muslim and non-Muslim subjects who paid taxes but had no part in the government.²⁹

The land order of the empire was named as *timar* or fief system, which was a continuation of the Islamic and Turco-Mongolian *ikta* (fief) system, and had a very important part in the whole structure of the empire.³⁰ According to this system, *timar* was the unit of land given to subjects of the military class by the ruler for cultivation against providing troops for the cavalry army of the empire in war times. The *timar* system constituted the backbone of the Ottoman army in the classical age as it provided troops without payment from the central treasury. This was important regarding the fact that an important part of the taxes could be levied in kind. On the other hand, the holder of the fief had only the right of using the land and the property belonged to the state. Controlling the production and distribution of the goods and appointing and dismissing the local administrators were among the rights of the sultan. This right

²⁶ The concept of "Asiatic mode of production" was also used in a similar way as "eastern type despotic empire". Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), 14.

²⁷ Halil İnalçık, *The Ottoman Empire: Conquest, Organization and Economy* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1978), 43.

²⁸ The ottoman state's shift to becoming a worldwide empire from a ghazi (ruling and expanding in the name of Islam) empire signalled a change in the mechanism of government. A divan, or imperial council, was established, the members of which were responsible for providing the sultan with information and advice in matters of the military, bureaucracy and law and came to be among the highest-ranking of the Empire's socio-political elite. The grand vizier - the sultan's closest adviser - oversaw the actions of the divan and often operated on his own but in the sultan's name, as was his privilege. See W.L.Cleveland, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, 46.

²⁹ Halil İnalçık, "The Nature of Traditional Society", in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, edited by Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 44.

³⁰ Cleveland, 47.

secured the absolute control of the central authority over the fief holders (*timarlı sipahi*).³¹

When it is considered how the Ottoman Empire was comprised of many ethnic and cultural groups (millets), the army – consisting three main pillars: a slave army, a territorial army (sipahis – state employees often chosen for their wartime valour/cavalries), and auxiliaries³² – was important in maintaining stability within its borders and subduing any conflicts that arose. Many scholars have come to the conclusion that, since the Ottoman government emerged as an armed force before it became a state then there must be no difference between the Ottoman army and state in following centuries. For instance, Weber and Lybyer believed that the Ottoman state was successful because of this – it was highly organized and effective both internally and militarily.³³ Moreover, Machiavelli in his famous work, *The Prince*, considered that the army was the only source of the sultan's power and that without the support of his army, he would be destroyed.³⁴

However, although the army was a very important institution in the empire, as Kamali argues, it is necessary to avoid the kind of Orientalist bias exhibited by Weber and Lybyer since other institutional arrangements, such as the millet system, have been at least as important as the army for the existence of the Empire over many centuries.³⁵ In other words, this view of the Ottoman Empire being primarily a military state is not reconcilable with its other cultural and economic institutions. The structural and institutional attributes, along with other indigenous forces of Ottoman urban society have largely been ignored by scholars looking at Ottoman modernization, with many believing that the merchants and the *ulema* were resistive to modernizing change in favour of maintaining a traditional way of life.³⁶ However, it is

³¹ Halil İnalcık, *The Ottoman Empire the Classical Age 1300-1600* (New York: Orpheus Publishing Inc., 1989), 113-116.

³² The discussions on the organization of the Ottoman army are mainly based on the work of Hale, 1994.

³³ See Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968) and Albert Howe Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleyman the Magnificent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1913), 90.

³⁴ Niccolo di Bernardo dei Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: Humanities Press, 1996), 66.

³⁵ Masoud Kamali, *Multiple Modernities, Civil Society and Islam: The Case of Iran and Turkey* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

important to examine these groups if we are to understand the process of modernization in the Ottoman Empire.

2.1.2. The Ulema and the Merchants

The governors of Ottoman cities, even if they often had little personal connection to their cities, maintained their power with the support of social groups, the merchants and the *ulema*. Contrary to Weber's claims that civic pride did not exist in Islamic cities, there survive legal documents from the *kadı* courts that demonstrate the connections between the groups of various religions and ethnicities that comprised an Ottoman city.³⁷ The economic power of Ottoman cities tended to be held by the wealthy merchants and those with religious endowments such as the *ulema*.³⁸ The merchants who operated in the bazaars had extensive trading networks throughout the Empire and beyond, into Europe, Asia and Africa. They held significant power due to the combination of their wealth from trading and their religious legitimacy. Their status thus helped to maintain stability within the urban population – the Ottoman definition of a town was indeed linked to the existence of a bazaar and most of the inhabitants of an Ottoman town had some connection with the bazaar, which operated on a hierarchical system of guilds and prestige.³⁹

This network was rigid in the face of foreign mercantile competition, and traders from abroad found it difficult to break into the markets due to the power of the merchants. Such was their power, they managed to fend off attempts by French merchants to gain a foothold in the information and distribution networks in the eighteenth century.⁴⁰ Ottoman cooperation with foreign merchants did however increase in the nineteenth century, and came to require the assistance of the state to be able to compete with European traders that were generally backed by their country's military. The reforms of 1839-76 were attempts on the part of the Ottomans to bring their mercantile networks more into line with the contemporary European model, which encompassed various military, administrative and judicial aspects. This

³⁷ Ethem Eldem et al., *The Ottoman City between East and West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

³⁸ Albert Hourani, *A History of The Arab People* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 111.

³⁹ Suraiya Faruqi, *Towns and Townsman of Ottoman Anatolia: Trade, Crafts and Food Production in an Urban Setting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 258.

⁴⁰ Ethem Eldem et al., *The Ottoman City between East and West*, 178.

stimulated in time the rise of a new reformist elite, comprised mainly of advocates of Western thought and merchants operating in Europe.⁴¹

Along with the merchants, the *ulema* were the other major group in Ottoman society. The *ulema* also enjoyed an elevated civic status and influence over town governors due to their importance as administrators and religious figures. They came to be one of the most powerful groups in Ottoman urban centres.⁴² The *ulema* controlled important institutions of Ottoman society such as the *ilmiyye* education system and the *vaqf* religious endowments through to the Tanzimat reforms of the nineteenth century and formed a base on which Ottoman society could function. Prior to the Tanzimat, practically every profession had its roots in the *ulema*; lawyers, scholars, doctors, priests, mathematicians, astrologists and librarians all began their training and education in the *ilmiyye*.⁴³ The *ulema* and the merchants enjoyed a strong degree of mutual support, based on their respective importance to society – the merchants provided economic support whilst the *ulema* gave the assent and blessings to wider society.

The *ulema* also held influence over the political and noble elite of the Ottoman state, who required their legitimizing powers as religious functionaries in the absence of a secular model. In the face of the growing division between the top and bottom of society, the *ulema* also came to act as mediators in disputes between members of the political elite and the society.⁴⁴ In the nineteenth century, the *ulema's* relationship with the merchants and the political elite came to affect its views and the *ulema* became an advocate of the reform movement, recognizing the need to support the Islamic state and their merchant allies. The *ulema* thus supported the reforms of Selim III and Mahmud II and led calls for the creation of an Ottoman constitution amid growing opposition to the Sultan's despotic power. Even dissatisfaction with the Sultan's arbitrary law-making imperialism was reflected in the advocacy of readopting traditional *Şeriat* practices during the Young Ottomans.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Hourani, 263.

⁴² Halil İnalçık, "Capital Formation in the Ottoman Empire", *The Journal of Economic History* XXIX (1969): 124, 137.

⁴³ Şerif Mardin, *Religion and Social Change in Modern Turkey: The Case of Bediuzzaman Said Nursi* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 105-6.

⁴⁴ Binnaz Toprak, *Islam and Political Development in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 27.

⁴⁵ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 105.

Ottoman modernization can be seen as a combination of various contributing factors that in turn brought about a need for reform that was acted upon in what Alkan calls 'the synthesis of voluntary actions'. The initial stimulus for the reform movement was the devastating military defeats that the Ottomans suffered from the eighteenth century onwards against their European rivals; it has been suggested that "the political and economic modernization which followed originated in the need for political unity and economic development, and led to social change".⁴⁶

2.2. Government Reforms in the Ottoman Empire, 1792-1876

The traditional ruling body of the Ottoman system was shown up as inadequate at the end of the 18th century, when the Ottoman Empire experienced a shift from one system of social thought to another. The prominent characteristics of Ottoman politics were formed by an attempt to counter-balance the growing domination of the Western powers by pursuing a policy of Westernization since this domination led the Ottoman Empire to military defeats and territorial contraction which is mentioned before with the coming of the West part in detail. As Zürcher points out this policy was initiated by two motives ultimately aiming at the same goal, the restoration of Ottoman power and the maintenance of the state.⁴⁷ The change from the notion of the non-national state to the modern nation-state, in other words the emergence of nationalist ideas in the region, marked a turning point in the history of the Middle East. These revolutionary ideas provided a threat to the Empire's unity as they spread, first in its Balkan territories, and later through the rest of the Empire. Moreover, the empire was losing its position as an intermediary and also the process of 'incorporating' the empire into the capitalist world economy started drastically.⁴⁸ All these developments

⁴⁶ Mehmet Ö. Alkan, "Modernization from Empire to Republic and Education in the Process of Nationalism", in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey* edited by Kemal Karpat (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 48.

⁴⁷ According to Zürcher, these motives were "A strong desire to increase the efficiency of the administration of the Empire by the adoption of Western methods & institutions and to please the European states by effecting reforms and so to reduce the constant pressure of Western countries." See E. J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 3.

⁴⁸ Immanuel Wallerstein et al., "The Incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the World Economy", in *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*, edited by Huri İslamoğlu-İnan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 88-100.

exacerbated the revenue crisis and created a sense of urgency in the central administration to initiate reform movements.

In this vein, Selim III (1789-1807) launched a program of reforms, *Nizam-ı Cedid* aimed at reinforcing the central government both on the international scene in terms of creation of a new military corps trained and organized according to the latest European standards, and the regulation of war training institutions and on the internal one, by reaffirming the government's authority over the other semi-or quasi-independent institutions: namely janissaries, *ayan* (local notables) and *ulema*. His reign was accompanied by a decisive break in the Ottoman "iron curtain" in other words, by a large-scale new awareness of what had gone on in Europe since the sixteenth century.⁴⁹ His decision to establish permanent Ottoman embassies in the European capitals, namely Paris, Berlin and Vienna, had the effect of opening new channels for the transmission of knowledge about the West into educated Ottoman circles and also played an important role in introduction of the French Revolution ideas to the empire.⁵⁰

The formation and expansion of the *Nizam-ı Cedid* aroused active opposition from the elements of Ottoman society that had benefited from the decline of central authority. A reactionary coalition of janissaries, *ayan* and *ulema* was eventually successful in deposing the Sultan, and imposed themselves as important negative political forces. The *ayan* were generally supporting the Sultan for the replacement of the janissaries by a new professional army corps since the janissaries viewed Selim III's entire program of military reform as a threat to their independence. Thus, their conflicting interests did not allow them to formulate a coherent policy or even a strategy for the conservation of power. During these troubled times, the dynastic institution and the absence of any other male successor available after the assassination of both Selim III and his cousin Mustafa IV (1807-1808), brought Mahmud II to the throne.

Mahmud II (1808-1839) was in practice much more efficient in increasing the power of the central government over the institutional community. In 1808 he signed a

⁴⁹ Selim III reform movements bear multiple significances as they represent a transition point between the retrospective military reformation ideas prevalent beforehand (18th century) and societal reformation ideas that would follow later (19th century). Stanford Jay Shaw, "Some Aspects of the Aims and Achievements of the Nineteenth Century Ottoman Reformers," in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, The Nineteenth Century*, edited by William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 31.

⁵⁰ Lewis, 60-61.

Document of Agreement (Sened-i İttifak) with the powerful local notables of Anatolia and Rumelia to consolidate his rule, despite being contrary to his centralization efforts.⁵¹ This document limited not only the rules and the rights of the notables of the provinces but also the Sultan's absolute power. Thus albeit the fact that the agreement brought a guarantee for the rights of the notables like Magna Carta of 1215 with its historical meaning, it was not a document based on democratic division of rights and responsibilities. As Halil İnalcık points, "...like Magna Carta, it was a limitation upon the King's power imposed by local magnates; it was not like Magna Carta of popular conception, a preparation for liberal-democratic development."⁵²

In this context, Sultan Mahmud II saw the need to act decisively against the centrifugal political forces that continued to paralyze royal authority. The first years of his reign were occupied by a campaign to re-establish central authority within the provinces. Using the janissaries, Mahmut II moved against the *derebeys* (small dynasts) and succeeded in breaking their power. All these attempts of Mahmud II were regarded as an important contribution to the Ottoman political centralization. Still internal as well as external pressures remained high on the Porte, more and more intertwined as the Western diplomats became local actors within the boundaries of the empire, and all while the importation of new intellectual constructions such as nationalism brought new harming consequences to what had been minor, local problems, especially regarding minority communities. By the 1820's with the Greeks in revolt and Mehmet Ali of Egypt demonstrating the superiority of his reformed military, Mahmut II ordered the creation of a new European – style army corps to which he intended to attach various janissary units. The janissaries mounted a demonstration against the proposed reforms, but Mahmut II had prepared for the rebellion and used his new troops to crush it. In 1826, another major step was taken with the subjugation and the dissolution of the janissaries (called *Vaka-i Hayriye*, "the Beneficent Event" in Ottoman historiography). The reform endeavour of Mahmud II in the 1820's created a bureaucracy which showed the class characteristics in the Ottoman state functionaries. By organizing such bureaucratic and military followers, Mahmut II aimed to place them in key positions in the administration of the state and to dissolve his internal ties that gave the ruling institutions their traditional authority, as

⁵¹ See Kemal Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3 (1972): 253.

⁵² Halil İnalcık, "The Nature of Traditional Society", in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, 53.

Peter Sugar states, "In technical terms, he had to replace oligarchic constitutionalism with absolutism."⁵³

During this period, two fundamentals of the early reforms undertaken in order to reinstate the state were to take the Western states as superior powers, and to blame these outside powers' gaining strength, as opposed to the central authority for the decline of the Ottoman Empire. In the reformists' eyes, the first point would enable the Ottomans to borrow the Western style institutions and thus, train its people and eventually construct an economy that would be based on holiness of private property. In the end, the Ottoman Empire would be able attain the Western level of development. The second point asserted that the increasing power of the periphery relative to the power of the centre caused the decline of the empire, by which reforms aimed more at centralization.⁵⁴

During the reigns of Abdülmecid (1839-1861) and Abdülaziz (1861-1876), an era known as the period of *Tanzimat-i Hayriye* (beneficial reforms – from the word "codification", simply referred as the *Tanzimat*, literally reorganization) started by leading civilian reformers who had received a higher education abroad or in the schools that were recently founded in the empire. These statesmen entered in the Ottoman officialdom through the diplomatic carrier, who controlled the effective power during these years: Rashid Pasha (1800-1858), and his former protégés, Ali Pasha (1815-1871) and Fuat Pasha (1815-1869). Just like the former sultans who supported reforms, these bureaucrats believed that the state could be saved and revived only by the reinstalling a government that was uniform and centralized. For this end, most importantly, the relationships within the empire, between the centre and its periphery had to be re-determined. Moreover, the army had to be modernized, the bureaucracy to be arranged, new laws to be taken over, the educational system to be reformed, as well as the economy to be strengthened as part of the preliminary stage of reforms that needed to be undertaken. In all these reforms, the utmost intention was to appease internal struggles and handle external pressure through the reformation of the state.

⁵³ Peter Sugar, "Economic and Political Modernization", in *Political Modernization in Japan and Turkey*, edited by Robert E. Ward and Dankwart A. Rustow (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 151.

⁵⁴ Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, *Turkey Challenges of Continuity and Change* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 3.

Foreign politics were integrated in the internal political competition. Preservation of the empire was a powerful rationale which the bureaucracy could use to present general justifications for selfish group or individual strategies. The dismemberment of the empire, its internal implosion under the pressures of nationalism, constituted a threat that became increasingly conceivable. Because the need to save the empire through reforms was a consensus, actors challenging the old system, could now identify their own interest for reform as a necessary sacrifice for the whole system. Therefore the promulgation of important decrees during major international crises, like *Hatt-ı Gülhâne*⁵⁵ (in 1839, during the war with Egypt), *Hatt-ı Islahat* (in 1856, during the negotiations in the aftermath of the Crimean War) or of the Constitution (in 1876, during negotiations related to the Balkan crisis), were impacts of international politics but also moves directed towards internal political opponents, conservatives or potentially authoritarian sultans.

During these occasions, the necessity of reform legitimized the bureaucrats and liberal intelligentsia reaching a compromise with the Western powers in order to consolidate internally the continuation of reforms and their own leading role. Furthermore, the Ottoman economy was weakening fast, which further complicated the application of the above-mentioned reforms. The reason why the Ottoman economy was losing its resources was the fact that the Capitulations, the trade agreements made with European powers, had turned the Ottoman Empire an open market for the Europeans, and thus government's finances were being wasted away, as Owen argues,

The major effect of the reforms was entirely the opposite of what was originally intended. Instead of making these states more independent of Britain, France and Russia, they made them more dependent, instead of allowing them to control the process of European economic penetration it made the whole process of penetration a great deal more easy.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ In the decree, the Ottoman ruler promised certain administrative reforms, such as the abolition of tax farming, the standardization of military conscription, and the elimination of corruption. These sentiments had been expressed previously but what made it so remarkable was the sultan's pledge to extend the reforms to all Ottoman subjects regardless of their religion although it introduced revolutionary ideas and institutions into Ottoman society. This aspect was further underlined by the nationality law of 1869, which defined citizenship 'purely on a territorial basis, unconnected with religion'. Roderic H. Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 118.

⁵⁶ Roger Owen, *The Middle East in the World Economy, 1800-1914* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), 57-8

As a resort to providing for the increasing financial needs of the empire, the government taxes that the people had to pay were raised sharply. This raise ruined the ideological unity that the empire relied on. Another resort that the empire had to go for was getting external aid in the form of loans. In the end, in 1876, these loans brought about the Ottoman state's bankruptcy.⁵⁷ Yet another problem that the empire was threatened by was the external pressure to take apart the Ottoman state, which was creating hostile feelings towards change and forcing the authorities to protect the political wholeness. Lastly, the greatest challenge that the reformers were faced with was a sense of duality. The elite class was now governing the state but they were not capable of finding a medium between their own interests and those of the other classes of the empire. The reforms also led to the withdrawal of certain social groups, such as, the *ulema* and the *sipahi* and institutions. As a result, a cultural segmentation within the society occurred. Meanwhile, attempts to deal with foreign intervention, and to establish reforms accordingly, advanced questions concerning legitimacy, creating a dilemma that the empire had to be faced with in the implementation of the reforms. The reformists wanted to fortify the existent state by constructing a modern army and catching up with the latest technological and economic developments. In contrast, the changes that were undertaken in government, education and law in the Western style, could undermine the traditional basis of the state.⁵⁸ One of the affirmative results of this modernization period, conciliating between the two aspects of reforms, was the emergence of a small group of bureaucrats, the so-called Young Ottomans (New Ottomans), which organized against both the interventionist policies of the West and the absolutist monarchy of the Sultan. This new period will be explained in detail in the next chapter.

2.3. Iran, Russia and Coming of the West

The Safavid dynasty that reigned from 1501-1722 can be credited with restoring the Persian Empire to its former glories. To begin with, the Safavids focused on forming a powerful, centralized independent state that was free from Arab occupation and on peaceful terms with its Ottoman neighbours; the state was named *daulat*, a word with peaceful connotations and it was ruled by a system based on an

⁵⁷ Ibid., 110-121.

⁵⁸ Meliha Benli Altunışık and Özlem Tür, 4.

efficient bureaucracy.⁵⁹ The Shah was at the top of the system and relied on the support of the *ulema*, and enjoyed both political and religious supremacy.

The creation of this state did, however, necessitate the fighting of wars against opponents both within and without its boundaries, in order to provide a smoother, more peaceful base on which the state could be set. For instance, the Safavids fought against the Ottomans to achieve equilibrium on their frontiers. The rise of the Safavid dynasty and their Shi'ism was bad news for the Ottomans, who until the sixteenth had enjoyed a period of sustained dominance in the Asia Minor region, and they retaliated to the threat by embarking on a policy of military hostility towards their neighbours. In 1514 Sultan Selim I led a force into Persia and forced the first Safavid Shah, Isma'il (1501-24) into retreat. Selim I was able to win a decisive victory at the Battle of Caldiran in 1514 and followed it up by capturing the administrative centre of Tabriz, although he ended his occupation of the city shortly after.⁶⁰ The ensuing conflicts that took place over the rest of the sixteenth century were largely successful for the Ottomans, who were able to take control of the majority of Eastern Anatolia and subjugated the Safavids into a peace agreement that divide up Anatolia between the Ottomans and Persia.⁶¹ The instability of the Persian hierarchy was exploited in 1578 by another Ottoman force, which was able to seize most of Transcaucasia and again occupy Tabriz.

Abbas the Great, who came to power in 1587, was able to reinvigorate the Persian army from its weakened state after initially agreeing a peace pact with the Ottomans.⁶² Faced with the threat of a military far in advance in terms of technology and organization of his own, Abbas recognized the need to keep the Ottomans on peaceful terms to avoid losing more territory and successfully used the peace time to make gradual improvements to his own forces, largely by introducing European techniques and technology. By 1603, Shah Abbas considered his army to be strong enough to again challenge the Ottomans on the battle field and he moved to break the peace he had made in 1590 by attempting to regain control of Azerbaijan and remove the Ottomans from their Transcaucasian occupation. Meanwhile, Abbas managed to

⁵⁹ For a story of *daulat* and *mellat*, issues of state and people see Joanna de Groot, *Religion, Culture and Politics in Iran, From the Qajars to Khomeini* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2007), 127.

⁶⁰ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural, 81-83.

⁶¹ Kamali, 82.

⁶² Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 12.

score an important victory over the Portuguese forces that had occupied the Southern Persian port of Jorun (or Gombron).⁶³

The wars that the Safavids fought against the Ottomans, Russians and Portuguese were important that their forces could benefit from introducing different military tactics and equipment, and also bureaucratic methods and the organization of the state facilitated the reform movement in modern Iran. The Safavids succeeded in securing the military victories necessary to form a stable Persian state and were able to modernize their empire in line with the other important powers of the day – the Ottoman Empire and the burgeoning European states.

Perhaps the most important legacy that the Safavids left to their successors was the military reforms that they introduced; in the sixteenth century, the new Persian state was able to rid itself of its Arab occupiers and establish itself as an entity distinct from the Arab Empire. Although the Safavid dynasty ended with a military defeat against the Afghans in 1722, the Persian military was nevertheless strong for the two hundred years previous to this setback.⁶⁴

Tribal leaders were encouraged by the defeats of the Persian army to raise their own forces to challenge both the imperial regime and outside forces in military combat, which is how Nader Shah Afshar came to prominence in the wake of the Afghan victory of Persia in 1722. Nader Shah managed to create a massive army in the 1730s, which not only forced the Russians to withdraw from Persian lands but also defeated the Ottomans and the Indian Mughal army.⁶⁵ After these victories, Nader Shah re-established a strong Persian state which lasted until his death; after this, Shah's successors could only watch as the empire again disintegrated in the midst of internecine disagreements over the next fifty years.

In the final decade of the eighteenth century though the leader of the Qajar tribe, Aqa Mohammad Khan, managed to defeat all of his opponents in battle with a formidable military force and was able to complete his plans to gain control of the former Safavid territories by seeing off the Russian threat. This prosperity was short lived however, as after the death of Aqa Muhammad Khan a similar disintegration as

⁶³ Kamali, 83.

⁶⁴ Donald N. Wilber, *Iran Past and Present* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University of Press, 1976), 64-5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 65-7.

happened after the death of Nader Shah Afshar occurred after two damagingly unsuccessful wars against Russia.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *ulema* became a more assertive force in Persian life and began to stimulate anti-Russian sentiment, in the face of Russian attempts to expand her empire into Persian territory, and the first Perso-Russian war of 1810-13 was considered to be in part due to the polemical attempts of the *ulema*; this war was based largely on the difference in faiths between the Russian and Persian states, with Sheikh Ja'far (a prominent scholar of Islamic law) declaring war against the Russian infidels and helped to bolster Islamic unity within Persia.

The *ulema* were also called upon by the leader of the Persian military, Abbas Mirza, to issue a fatwa and declare the conflict with Russia a *jihad* (holy war); as a result of this, the first Perso-Russian war was seen as a consequence of the involvement of the *ulema* and the subsequent growth of anti-Russian feeling in Persian society. The war was to be unsuccessful for the Persians though – after military defeat they were compelled by the Treaty of Gulistan of 1813 to relinquish the majority of the Caucasus to Russia, which was damaging to the resources of the empire and weakened the previous unity; several uprisings, most notably as a result of Afghan pressure in Khorasan in 1813 broke out and the Turkish frontier was also particularly trouble-stricken.⁶⁶

The *ulema*, however, continuing to reinforce their position in Persian society, influenced Iranian politics and began to vigorously push for another holy war against Russia. In 1825, the Russian military occupation of some disputed districts presented prominent *ulema* such as Aqa Seyyed Muhammad Tabatabai, Ahmad Naraqı and Muhammad Taqi Baraghani with the opportunity to demand that Fath Ali Shah should declare war on Russia. Even if Fath Ali Shah refused to declare a holy war, he was left with no option but to surrender to the pressure from the *ulema*, and war broke out in 1826.⁶⁷

Iran was initially successful, recovering most of the territories ceded by the Treaty of Gulistan but the Russians, strengthened by new forces and backed up with the latest weapons, inflicted a series of severe defeats on the Persian army and succeeded in crossing the border and occupying the important city of Tabriz. The

⁶⁶ Nikki R. Keddie, *Qajar Iran and The Rise of Reza Khan 1796-1925* (California, Mazda Publishers: 1999), 22.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-24.

second Perso-Russian War ended in the Treaty of Turkmenchay in February 1828, a treaty which played and still plays an important role in reminding Persians of the consequences of military weakness.⁶⁸ These two disastrous wars against the Russians thus had the effect of alerting the Persian political elites to the need for reforms, especially military ones.

2.3.1. The Administrative and Military Organization

The Qajar state lacked an established tradition of supremacy of the state and long-standing central administration. There was informality, great indistinctness, and a blurring of the lines of authority since relations were deeply personal as the socio-political system was built on institutionalized personalism.⁶⁹ From this perspective, it is interesting to note the predominance of military institutions and functions over the civil administrative ones in pre-modern Iran. The central government remained a weak centre with few autonomous institutions that could exercise controls over or have ties with the other political and social centres in the country. The central administration was an even extension of the Shah's household, and did not constitute a highly specialized, sacred, autonomous social body like in the Ottoman Empire. This weakness of the civil administration is paralleled with the absence of legal system. There was no law in the sense of basic rules setting a boundary to the exercise of state power, which, in words of Homa Katouzian, "made the arbitrary exercise of power possible in Iran".⁷⁰

Reza Sheikholeslami reappraises the Weberian model of patrimonial authority⁷¹ to characterize the pre-modern Qajar distribution of authority by developing the idea of a duality in the authority patterns. While the Shah held intense, far-reaching authority and patriarchal responsibility within his household, his relationships with social elements outside his direct household were tight, and his

⁶⁸ Wilber, 66-7.

⁶⁹ James A. Bill, "Modernization and Reform from Above: The Case of Iran", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 32, No 1 (February 1970): 21.

⁷⁰ Homa Katouzian, "Arbitrary Rule: A Comparative Theory of State, Politics and Society in Iran", *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 24, No.1 (May 1997): 56.

⁷¹ Weber defines patrimonial domination as "a special case of patriarchal domination – domestic authority decentralized through assignment of land and sometimes of equipment to sons of the house or other dependents." Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* III, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff et al. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 1011-12.

authority over them, relative.⁷² Deriving from tribal politics, the Qajar political system did not encompass the technological and social knowledge necessary for the ruler to exercise his authority as patrimonial ruler of such a vast and differentiated realm as Persia, in the same way that he could firmly claim the title of patriarchal leader of his family and direct clientage surrounding. The patrimonial state was thus not an enlargement of a patriarchy as Weber described it, but rather a “combination of patriarchies under one suzerainty.”⁷³

The administrative structure that controlled the land order seemingly resembled that of the Ottoman Empire. In Iran, there were systems called *ikta* (Arabic word, literally the money of feeding) and *tüyul*, which looked like the Ottoman fief system, meaning the government gave land to cultivate and took taxes and cavalry in return.⁷⁴ The *ikta* system was established in Iran after the religion of Islam was accepted by the Iranians and continued its existence until the Mongol invasion.⁷⁵ Later the name of the system was changed to *tüyul* (Turkish word, literally part) with the establishment of the Seljuk Empire. This system in Iran continued during the periods of the Safavids and the Qajars, until it was abolished when the constitutional monarchy was established.⁷⁶ The *tüyul*, like the fief system, was given to some privileged people called *tüyuldar* (the holder of the *tüyul*) to cultivate. The *tüyuldar* in return had to give taxes and soldiers to the central authority.⁷⁷

The Persian army proved its capabilities in confrontations with the powerful Ottoman army, and reached its zenith during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great. Although it was reorganized as a national army during the Safavid Dynasty and carried out many successful campaigns, the Persian army had tribal roots and was not as disciplined as the Ottoman army. At its core was a relatively small group of

⁷² A. Reza Sheikholeslami, *The Structure of Central Authority in Qajar Iran* (Los Angeles: G.E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies, University of California, 1997), 1-19.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁴ Ann K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia: A Study of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration* (Norwich: Oxford University Press, 1969), 101-2.

⁷⁵ Clifford E. Bosworth, "The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World (A.D. 1000-1217)" in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 5: The Saljuq and Mongol Periods*, edited by J. A. Boyle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 83-85.

⁷⁶ Charles Philip Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 48-9.

⁷⁷ Hossein Bashiriye, *The State and Revolution in Iran 1962-1982* (London: Groom Helm, 1984), 7. Ann K. S. Lambton, *The Persian Land Reform, 1962-1966* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 20-21

ghezelbash (permanent soldiers and officers), loyal to the shah.⁷⁸ The importance of tribal groups in relation to the power of the Persian state should not be underestimated; the majority of dynasties before the Pahlavis (1924-79) were based on networks of tribal military strength that came to form the larger part of pre-modern Persian armies and it was thus important for Persian rulers to be on peaceful terms with the more powerful tribes. These tribes were not the sole group that shahs required the support of, though, as the *ulema* were needed to provide the legislative legitimization that the tribes could not. The *ulema's* close relationship with the *bazaaris*, including both the bazaar elite of merchants engaged in long distance and international trade and the larger group of bazaar artisan-shopkeepers, also enabled them to garner popular support in urban areas as well as levying financial contributions to the costs of war. Such was the power of the *ulema* in this regard, that they made attempts to influence the state into making war against foreign powers; the shift to the Shia branch of Islam enabled the *ulema* to cement their high status in Persian society.

2.3.2. The *Ulema* and the *Bazaaris*

The study of the modernization of the Persian Empire has been blighted, as has that of the Ottoman Empire, by a pre-occupation with Orientalism that has prevented historians from viewing the more complicated contextual aspects of the process; similarly, an approach centred on Western theoretical practice has led scholars to understate the importance of the indigenous groups in society, the *ulema* and the *bazaaris*, to the process of modernization.⁷⁹

Persian society had at its epicentre the close relationship between the *bazaaris* and the *ulema*, a tradition that long pre-dates the Islamic Persian Empire itself. The *ulema* of the later Shia Persia came to take on a different role to that of their earlier Sunni counterparts, in that they were more closely associated with public society rather than the powerful political elites with which they had been engaged to pre-1501.⁸⁰ In Islamic Persia, religious institutions such as *Atashkadehs* (Zoroastrian religious sites) metamorphosed into simpler congregational mosques as industry and commerce became more distinct from one another as they had been in medieval Persia when the largely Sunni *ulema* maintained close relationships with both the state and

⁷⁸ Kamali, 93.

⁷⁹ Kamali, 100-1.

⁸⁰ Ann K. S. Lambton, *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), 328.

the bazaar.⁸¹ As such, in the final years of the Safavid dynasty there was to be seen a merchant class that had become dislocated from the politics of the general populace with which it had previously been actively involved in.

Also in the pre-Shia period, there arose two separate relationship groups as far as the *ulema* and the bazaar were concerned, namely one group consisting of traditional family ties between high-ranking *ulema* and opulent merchants, with close ties to the state, and another that comprised less well-off artisans and craftsmen who were connected to lower-ranking *ulema*. The overall decline in the fortunes of Persia's merchants in the immediate pre-Shia period caused the mercantile group to become less important socio-economically, but they were not the only group to undergo and change in character; the Safavids attempted to assert more control over the Shia *ulema* by incorporating them into state bureaucracy with the establishment of new offices such as *sadr* and *seyhulislam*, although the *ulema* managed to resist this somewhat by maintaining their strong connections with the bazaar and other metropolitan groups.⁸²

The traditional family ties between *bazaaris* and the *ulema* helped to ensure their mutually beneficial relationship would continue – it was common for high ranking *ulema* to have come from *bazari* families – with intermarriage between the two groups being particularly popular to meet this end and the ensuing stable relationship caused a shift in the relationship between the *ulema*, the *bazaaris* and the state: the *bazaaris'* relationship with the state became weaker as the strength of their ties to the *ulema* grew, which had the consequence of the *ulema* acting as intermediaries between the state and the *bazaaris*. This alliance between the *bazaaris* and the *ulema* was to endure for several centuries more, and provided stability between the Constitutional and Islamic Revolutions of 1905-09 and 1977-79 respectively.

2.4. Government Reforms in Iran, 1798-1890

Despite the obvious need for political and administrative reform in eighteenth century Persia, Nader Shah's attempts to secularize his state and to make it was separate from the *ulema* were doomed to failure; the Qajar dynasty that was

⁸¹ Masoud Kheirabadi, *Iranian Cities, Formation and Development* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991), 63-4.

⁸² Keddie, 15.

established in 1795 removed the majority of Nader Shah's reforms and the *ulema* came to resume and extend its former influence within the state.

Under the rule of the Qajars, the Shia *ulema* came to be embraced as they had been before and were particularly popular under the second Qajar ruler, Fath Ali Shah (1797-1834) who requested that they take up residence near to his own domicile in Tehran. Fath Ali Shah wanted to maintain a modicum of religious legitimacy within his state and as such he involved the *ulema* heavily in state affairs and catered for their needs by embarking on a building project that created new places of religious worship.⁸³ Such was Fath Ali Shah's eagerness to involve the *ulema* within his innermost circle, he decided to construct a new religious centre – the Madraasah-ye Faydiya – which would form the base of the *ulema's* legitimizing impact; also on the ruler's religious policy was to exempt another holy city – Qum – from taxes and as a result of these changes, the *avqaf* endowments allowed the *ulema* to rise in status to become the state's second most powerful group, as they had been in previous regimes.⁸⁴ Keen to utilize their newfound power, senior *ulema* such as Mirza Abu'l-Qasim Qumi moved to impose themselves on the shah by declaring that he was there by the grace of God and had as his main duty to maintain peace within his state; similarly, the *ulema* were placed on earth by God as defenders of the Islamic faith. Fath Ali Shah had not intended to cede so much power to the *ulema* and had unwittingly left himself in a position where he could not act independently of them; he was compelled to consider their views in affairs of state and accepted their leadership in religious matters.⁸⁵

The *ulema* had thus strengthened their position within the state by pouncing on the opportunity created by Fath Ali Shah's favourable reforms; the economic and political support that they enjoyed was such that they could act contrary to the Shah's will and even stimulate ill-feeling amongst the urban populace against the Shah's governors. The Shah, having been backed into a corner by his own institutional changes, could only move to back the *ulema* against his governors.

⁸³ Hamid Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969), 44.

⁸⁴ Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 49.

⁸⁵ Abbas Amanat, "In Between the Madrasa and the Marketplace: The Designation of Clerical Leadership in Modern Shi'ism", in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism* edited by Said Amir Arjomand (New York: State University of New York Press, 1988), 105.

In addition to this, the *ulema* were able to further cement their status and update their functions due to having freed themselves from the constriction of state control and took it upon themselves to introduce to Persia certain Western reforms to the state apparatus, although with only limited success. The traditional state mechanisms remained largely intact throughout the Qajar dynasty, such as its patrimonial bureaucracy, despite the attempts of the *ulema* and other grand viziers to bring the Persian state dynamic more in line with her European and Ottoman neighbours.

One of the attempts to create a strong state came from Abbas Mirza, crown prince and governor of Azerbaijan until his death in 1833. Mirza was one of the few individuals who perceived the domestic and international challenges threatening Persia in the early nineteenth century, and developed a consistent modernizing strategy. Mirza attributed the reasons for the defeats to the superiority of the Russian firearms, their up-to-date use of knowledge in engineering at war and their superior knowledge of medicine in the treatment of wounded soldiers. This situation directed him towards the idea of modernizing the Iranian army. A program of defensive military reform, the *Nezam-e Jadid* (the New Order) was initiated by him, much like the ones underway in the Ottoman Empire (under Sultan Mahmud II) and Egypt (under Mehmed Ali Pasha). The *Nezam-e Jadid* reforms consisted of the introduction of European military technology and modern methods of training troops which he was aiming to be an example for the Iranian army.⁸⁶ The reforms also served as a catalyst for the introduction of a number of other measures, such as the translation of European books, the establishment of a modern printing press in Tabriz in 1812, the publication of a newspaper, and the dispatch of students abroad to Europe.⁸⁷ These innovations were directly connected to attempts at furthering centralization of

⁸⁶ Kamali, 67.

⁸⁷ Sir Harford Jones the British Ambassador in Iran, took the first group of two Iranian students with him to Britain for education in 1811. One of these students, Mirza Hacı Baba-yi Efsar, came back to his country after receiving medical training in Britain and became an important figure in the state's policy. The second group of five for engineering, artillery and the English language was sent in 1815. The decision of sending these students is clear indications that those in charge of affairs of state in Iran addressed the need to gain access to the modern education and science of Western powers since on their return to Iran, these students, through their translations and writings, naturally became the conveyers of modern culture of Europe. Later the enlightened persons, among these students like Mirza Saleh Shirazi and Mirza Cafer Han, would become the pioneers of the reformations undertaken in the history of Iran's modernization. See for the details, Mongol Bayat, *Iran's first Revolution, Shiism and Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 35.

authority and control, and also included attempts to regularize the tax system, which was believed to be a necessary prerequisite for the formation of a modern, standing army. Reform therefore entailed centralization and to some extent modernization.

Among the students sent to Europe for education, only Mirza Mohammad Saleh Shirazi was sent for language education, and all the other students received military and technical education to provide service in the military field. Mirza Mohammad Saleh Shirazi, who studied French, Latin, philosophy, history and printing in England, wrote his memoirs during the years 1815-1819. As early as the second decade of the nineteenth century Shirazi brought home the idea of constitutionalism with his admiration about the political regime and the parliamentary institutions of England. His detailed accounts of freedom of speech, freedom of election, sovereignty of Parliament, and other aspects of the British constitutional system, were unparalleled in Iran at that time. Shirazi attributed great importance to the fact that the members of Parliament, who could also suspend the orders of the king or the House of Lords, had the full right to express their opinions without any superior authority over them. He called England *Vilayat-i Azadi*, the "country of freedom", the House of Commons as *Majlas-e Am*, or *Khane-ye Vakil-e Ro'aya*, the House of Lords as *Khane-ye Khavānin* and finally the parliament as a whole *Mashvarat Khane*, the "House of Consultation" which were the terms encountered for the first time in Persian literature.⁸⁸

In 1819, he set up a new press in Tabriz and eventually published the country's first newspaper in Tehran in 1837 named *Kaghaz-e Akhbar*, the literal translation of the English word, 'newspaper'⁸⁹ which provided an important accumulation of experience for the following development of the Persian print media. In the announcement for the newspaper, Mirza Saleh Shirazi emphasized the importance of Iranians to become aware of world events, and to import new technology from Europe.⁹⁰ With this structure of mind favouring Westernization formed in Europe, he frequently compared the development of the West to the conditions of his country, and also considered the *Nizam-i Cedid* process of Sultan Selim III he observed in the

⁸⁸ Hafez Farman Farmayan, "The Forces of Modernization in Nineteenth Century Iran: An Historical Survey," in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East, The Nineteenth Century*, edited by William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 123.

⁸⁹ Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran: A Study of the Role Played by the Persian Residents of Iraq in Iranian Politics* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1977), 11.

⁹⁰ Monica M. Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers Inc. 2001), 37.

Ottoman State within the context of religion - state and attempted to establish the practices that ought to be used for Iran. Shirazi mentioned the quarters of the city, population and socio-economical levels of the people in his notes he had kept during the period he stayed in Istanbul while he and his group were returning to Iran through Turkey. In the account of his journey, he emphasized the importance of Istanbul for Iran since it is one of the most important trading centres that European goods are transported through to Iran, and the military and political situation of the Ottoman State.⁹¹ Giving figures about the army, he attempted to analyze the janissary system in the Ottoman State and the religion factor denouncing the actions of Muslim clergymen in obstructing reforms and modernization of government.

It was necessary for the Persian state to progress as a political entity and to adapt itself to the changing nature of the socio-political world in the face of the expanding European states and the already-modernizing Ottoman Empire and although foreign powers had a destructive influence on the reforms and development of a Persian model of modernity, the political and administrative reforms taken up by the larger Western powers were noticed by the Persians and sometimes implemented or adapted for their own use. For example, Mirza Taqi Khan (better known as Amir Kabir) created the influential *Dar ul-Fanun* (House of Sciences), the Polytechnic College of Tehran – the first modern educational institution – sent more students to Russia and Turkey, and realized important though limited improvements in the military, taxation, and juridical fields.⁹² Another example, Naser al-Din Shah issued a decree in 1856 establishing a *maslahat khaneh* (consultative assembly) and in 1880 established *Dar-al shura-ye kobra* (The Supreme Consultative Council), in which four representatives of the royal family, viziers, military leaders, chiefs of provincial governments and the Persian ambassadors in London and Paris were invited to participate. Attempts such as this were however difficult to properly integrate into the Persian state apparatus and failed to take into account the growing insistence of wider Persian society that a more democratic and consultative form of government should be adopted; ultimate political power was still left in the hands of elite groups.

Further attempts by Naser al-Din Shah to implement some Western ideas into Persia came in the form of his journeys to Europe, which were based around making various concessions (often mercantile) to European states. For example, in 1889 Naser

⁹¹ Hairi, 12.

⁹² Reza Arasteh, *Education and Social Awakening in Iran 1850-1968* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1969), 28.

al-Din Shah negotiated such a concession with the British that guaranteed to the British the sole right to trade and sell Persian tobacco in return for a yearly payment. Despite this payment being useful in that it funded further foreign trips for al-Din Shah, it was unpopular amongst his *bazaaris* as the success of their own business dropped as a result of the British monopoly and the merchants of the bazaars were moved to react in 1891 when the bazaars of Shiraz were closed in protest. This marked the beginning of a notable movement that became known as the Tobacco Movement and can be seen as an important event in the years leading up to the Constitutional Revolution of the early twentieth century.⁹³

The *ulema* also became involved in the Tobacco Movement after being persuaded by the *bazaaris* to stimulate popular support for it, most notably in Shiraz where the bazaars were closed but also in other important cities such as Tehran and Tabriz. Mirza Hasan Shirazi, a prominent *ulema* of the 1890s, added his weight to the cause by issuing a fatwa in December 1891, which stated that any kind of tobacco usage would be seen as a declaration of war against the Hidden Imam and the citizens of Persian cities were thus forced to abandon their tobacco habits.

Faced with this mutiny against the tobacco concession, the Shah was forced to withdraw the tobacco concession and set the stage for a battle over foreign concessions that would go on for much of the 20th century. This tobacco rebellion did not end the concessions that gave Iranian resources to foreign companies, and the hostility among the Iranian people to them continued to grow.

2.5. Conclusion

As the Ottoman Empire and Iran became more acquainted with the expanding and ambitious European and Russian states, then the modernization process became more widespread. Rather than being merely a result of Western ideas being forced upon Eastern societies, this process should be seen as being initiated by the Ottomans and Iranians themselves in the name of progression and remaining politically and militarily even with their rivals. For the Ottoman's part, they tended to be more cooperative with the West – due in part to the geographical proximity of its Empire and the European continent – which posed regular threats on the Ottoman frontiers. Consisting of a broad mixture of ethnic and religious groups, the Ottoman army in

⁹³ Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran*, 61-63.

particular was quick to adapt to the changing world and adopt innovations brought from Europe; Ottoman military strength formed the stable base upon which its wider society could be placed and caused concern to Western states that were often reluctant to engage the Ottomans in battle. Being highly mobile and consisting in large part of slaves and conscripts, the Ottoman army was successful in winning new territories for its rulers and at its peak the Empire stretched across three continents. The more rational organization of the Ottoman military force is a crucial difference between it and the Persian army, which was less successful over the same time period.

In both the Ottoman Empire and Iran, the *ulema* and the merchants/*bazaaris* formed two influential groups around which wider society was based, with both groups being a continuous presence throughout the pre-modern and modern period. The Ottoman *ulema*, being Sunni (as opposed to the Persian Shia group) was arguably more influential in matters of the state than its Persian counterpart, which is perhaps a reflection of the larger diversity in religious and ethnic groups that was to be found in the Ottoman state; the constant concern caused by Western empire builders also meant that the Ottomans had to be on constant guard against invasion and the *ulema* was important in aiding the state in taking measure to prevent this. Conversely, the Persian *ulema*, being a well-respected class in the society, was less influential in matters of central government but nevertheless came to become more closely tied with the lower echelons of society and with the *bazaaris*. The Persian *ulema* was also opposed to the Western penetration and secularization of traditional institutions and thus was a critic of the nationalists who supported the separation of religious and affairs.

It must be said that the traditional structures of the Ottoman Empire and Iran were changed dramatically over the course of the nineteenth century, something which can be attributed to similar changes in the socio-economic landscape of Europe. The wars fought against, and the diplomatic discourse conducted with, Western states at this time doubtless led to a cross pollination of new social and political ideas which gradually became commonplace in the East. The reluctance of the political elites in the Eastern states to accept democracy as their form of government provided an obstacle to the modernization process and led to a number of social and political uprisings within the states which culminated in the Constitutional Revolutions of the early twentieth century.

CHAPTER 3

REFORM AND THE RISE OF OPPOSITION

The socio-economic changes that occurred in the nineteenth century caused a similar shift in the institutional make-up of the Ottoman Empire and Iran, which coupled with the increasing military and diplomatic interactions with Western states. These changes resulted in a variety of responses and an opening to dispute the popularization of democratic theories which clashed with the state's reluctance to involve their wider societies in the mechanisms of government. This laid the groundwork for coming revolts and protests. This chapter aims to discuss these revolutionary protest movements, organizations and also the actors that take part in the emergence of the reform programs, which actually formed the eventual Constitutional Revolutions in the Ottoman and Persian Empires.

3.1. Ottoman Society on the Eve of the Constitutional Revolution

Despite often being ignored by Western historians as a major player in European diplomacy before the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire came over time to be a crucial component in this theatre and the rise of the Ottoman state can be seen as running parallel to that of other Western empires, such as Britain, Italy and Russia.⁹⁴ Indeed, the Ottomans were inextricably linked to the political life of these European states from the sixteenth century onwards, being involved in numerous treaties and negotiations; as a result, the Ottoman Empire came to be heavily influenced by Western political and military thinking which in turn led to a number of reforms within the Ottoman state.

The Tanzimat period (1839-76), as it is discussed in the first chapter, was characterized by a growing belief in the responsibility of the state as a central body to

⁹⁴ Halil İnalcık, *From Empire to Republic: Essays on Ottoman and Turkish Social History* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1995), 17.

protect its citizens' wellbeing, and the reforms undertaken in this period by the ruling elite reflected this. Political and social life was reorganized along the lines of the Ottomans' European neighbours, such as a centralization of political power and the weakening of previously powerful institutions, which enabled the Ottoman Empire to better defend itself in the face of territorial threats from Russian, Austrian and Egyptian rulers' intent on extending their own states.⁹⁵ Bureaucratically speaking, a more efficient and streamlined form of central government was needed to lessen the increasing economic stress that the Ottomans faced and enable Ottoman diplomats to maintain a firmer foothold in negotiations with European powers. Reforms pushed through in the Tanzimat period enabled Ottoman bureaucrats to decrease the hefty privileges of economic groups as well as the imperial power of the Sultans, whose legitimacy grounded in religion, came under close scrutiny at this time.

However, the Tanzimat reformers did face strong opposition from conservative groups who were suspicious of innovation and change, and as a result most reforms were described in ways which promoted an ideal of peace and justice for Ottoman citizens. Some groups, such as the *ulema*, were left facing the erosion of their traditional privilege and along with other military and noble groups that experienced similar repression, attempted to block Tanzimat reforms in order to maintain their power.⁹⁶ The Tanzimat's hopes of unifying Ottoman citizens into a more homogenous group than had existed before were thus hampered by a diverse population's intent on maintaining the status quo, an intent that was exercised particularly vigorously by traditionally conservative groups such as the *ulema*; the Tanzimat failed to generate enough popular support for its reforms despite attempts to include a wider section of society into central politics. Most reforms were aimed at increasing revenue and benefited traders, entrepreneurs and other educated groups, but this was actually at the expense of religious groups who became increasingly marginalized by Tanzimat

⁹⁵ For the external pressures over Ottoman economy and foreign politics, see Matthew S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966) and M. E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East, 1792-1923* (London and New York: Longman, 1987), 59-96; and for the new Ottoman social forces emerged with new interests, Kemal H. Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (July 1972), 243-281.

⁹⁶ Halil İnalçık, "Application of Tanzimat and Its Social Effects", *Archivum Ottomanicum*, Vol. 5 (1973), 115-127.

reforms and also the European intervention on behalf of the non-Muslims into the Empire's affairs.⁹⁷

3.1.1. Young Ottomans

The most important response to the rights and privileges of non-Muslim groups and European penetration into the Empire came from a diverse group of the Ottoman Muslim middle class intellectuals, the so-called Young Ottomans (or New Ottomans), such as Namık Kemal, Ibrahim Şinasi, Ali Suavi and Ziya Pasha, who were fervent advocates of a reformed Empire, "formulating their ideological challenge for the liberation of the Ottoman Empire around Islamic political terms and restructuring of central political institutions".⁹⁸ The Young Ottomans Society can be considered as the first modern systematic opposition movement in the Empire since the head of the state was the sultan who was the shadow of God on earth, so any challenge against him also meant the opposition against the religion. With the Tanzimat period and the increasing influence of bureaucracy, the administration was transferred from the Palace to the Sublime Porte which paved the way for controlling of the administration of the state by the bureaucrats. They formed a large part of the Ottoman intelligentsia and generally held positions in the government after coming through the state school system, and came to support reforms that would include a constitutionalization of the Empire designed to maintain its existence in the face of the threat from its Western neighbours. Namık Kemal, for his part, contributed to the burgeoning sense of Ottoman nationalism by adding such terms as fatherland (vatan), freedom (hürriyet) and constitutional rule (meşrutiyet) to the Turkish lexicon as well as promoting economic and political principles that questioned the expansion of the West, in line with the writings of the Pan-Islamic ideas of Jamal Al-Din Afghani and Muhammad Abduh.⁹⁹

The key, as far as the Young Ottomans were concerned, was to selectively adopt whichever European modes could be used to reform Ottoman politics and society without diluting the Empire's traditional Islamic heritage. As Mardin argues, in order to preserve the Empire they proposed that the governmental, administrative

⁹⁷ Recep Boztemur, "Nationalism and Religion in the Formation of Modern State in Turkey and Egypt until World War I", *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, No.12 (Winter 2005), 29.

⁹⁸ Boztemur, 29.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

and financial techniques of the West be applied to the Empire.¹⁰⁰ However, they realized the incompatibility of the traditional order of the Empire with the modern world. Thus they tried to reconcile the thesis of modernity with the Islamic doctrines and traditional understanding, searching the equivalent of the Western concepts in Islamic and traditional teachings. Therefore, the Young Ottoman intellectuals must be considered to have been in favour of reform, but opposed to the sweeping changes proposed by the Tanzimat reformers since the Young Ottomans dissented from the Tanzimat view of being too pre-occupied with Western life at the expense of popular Ottoman traditions and that would sometimes actively suppress the Muslim faith. They also came to the view that the Tanzimat reformers' policy of granting privileges such as tax exemption to Christian traders which caused an excessive foreign intervention in domestic matters of the empire was a superficial means to modernize.¹⁰¹ Although they did not have a unified or commonly accepted program among themselves and the Society did not show the characteristics of a political party in the sense of the word¹⁰², it was political in nature since there were critical points common to their arguments. For example, they favoured a monarchy that was based on consultation and involvement – *meşveret* and the solutions they proposed were mainly establishing the sense of freedom in the country. Coupled with the notion of fatherland, with which Ottoman citizens could identify themselves as belonging to a specific geographical space, the Young Ottomans hoped to popularize their calls for constitutionalization with a parliament; with the idea of no discrimination on the grounds of religion among the subjects of the Empire – the Young Ottomans wanted to create a unified and harmonious state in which people from differing ethnic backgrounds could identify themselves as one group under the concept of Ottoman patriotism.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the constitutional reforms that the Young Ottomans had been advocating began to gain support from important members of the bureaucracy when the Palace began to re-assert its absolute control of the state. The Sultan had behind him a large group of conservatives who were resistant to reform, but still he could not stop the Ottoman's first constitution (1876), which was

¹⁰⁰ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 404.

¹⁰¹ Altunışık and Tür, 4.

¹⁰² Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire 1856-1876* (Princeton: N.J., 1963), 175.

the culmination of the attempts of the Tanzimat period and Parliament (1877), from coming into being.

The draft of the Constitution prepared by Mithad Pasha, the head of the Council of State was based on the Western constitutional models.¹⁰³ The Constitution was announced on 23 December 1876 by Sultan Abdul Hamid II, who had promised to abide by the Constitution to ascend the throne. The time of announcement was consciously selected to affect the opinion of the European powers which were met at the Istanbul Peace Conference to decide the peace agreement between Turkey and Serbia. So, it was aimed to show that Ottoman State had a document like those seen in Europe and that the Constitution would ensure the security of life and property of minorities and foreigners in the Empire.

As a constitutional document, the Constitution of 1876 was unlike many of its contemporaries. Though it provided some basic rights and liberties to the subject of the Empire, the use of them always remained ineffective. It determined that sovereignty belonged to God and to its representative on the earth, the Sultan. For the first time, the unification of the state and religion was legalized and formalized in this document. The Sultan had the power to appoint directly the Upper House and the Council of Ministers and to review and reject legislation passed by the Lower House (Assembly) on the grounds that a particular piece of legislation might be against the rules of order or religion or the rights of the Sultan.¹⁰⁴

The Constitution also declared that the Lower House did never use any authority against the members of the Cabinet who were appointed by the Sultan. The Council of Ministers was formed by Grand Vezir, Grand Müftü and the Ministers. The separation of power and the control system among them did not take place in this Fundamental Law. The legislative power was concentrated only on the Sultan. Therefore, Parliament more resembled a function of control on the administration – a consultation organ – rather than being an independent legislative body. Parliament was also unbalanced in its early format due to its membership being restricted to those of a certain affluence, with the traditional nobility and wealthy others being admitted to Parliament rather than membership being spread equally among aspiring

¹⁰³ According to the writings of Namık Kemal who was a member of a sub-commission in the preparation of the Constitution, it was modeled by the French Constitutions of 1831 and 1852 and the French laws, by the German Code of Reich and Armenian, Romanian, Egyptian, Tunisian and Greek Laws. See Berkes, 529.

¹⁰⁴ Şeref Gözübüyük and Suna Kili, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri 1839-1980*, (Ankara: A.Ü. SBF Yayınları, 1982), 27-8.

politicians regardless of wealth.¹⁰⁵ This indicates that though the Young Ottomans recognized the written constitution as the first step towards an Ottoman democracy, the Sultan retained ultimate power with the backing of his favourites.

Nevertheless, the social freedom that the Young Ottomans were yearning for began to take shape in the form of the printed word, with newspapers, articles, poems, novels and other publications coming to reflect the growing sense of Ottoman nationalism as well as the evolving political situation in the Empire. Their use of literary skills as an instrument to express ideologies and visions has left an abundance of materials for contemporary studies. Among them were Sinasi who first wrote in Agah Efendi's weekly journal *Tercüman-ı Ahval* (1862) and later in the same year published his own newspaper, *Tasvir-i Efkâr* (The description of the Thoughts), Namık Kemal, who first established *Mirat* (1863) and later took over *Tasvir-i Efkâr* and Ali Suavi, publishing *Muhbir* (Informer, Advertiser) in 1867. In 1868 Namık Kemal and Ziya Pasha together began to publish another paper, *Hürriyet* (Freedom) in London and Namık Kemal published on his own *İbret* (Example) after the death of Ali Pasha in 1871.¹⁰⁶ Such newspapers represented a wide spectrum of Ottoman society and it seemed that the Young Ottoman notion of a common citizenship felt by all Ottomans whatever their background was gaining in popularity. 'Blocs not tied to religious and ethnic lines'¹⁰⁷ sprang out of this new-found freedom of expression throughout the Ottoman Empire from top to bottom and, importantly, members from the furthest reaches of the Empire came to be involved in the discussion of nationalism and Ottoman citizenship.

In the mean time, the problem of the unpaid Ottoman debts loomed. After the beginning of the Crimean War, in 1854, the Empire received its first loan and in the next twenty years even more were received. Since state expenditure was directed highly towards servicing these domestic debts, the Ottomans wanted to solve the bankruptcy problem by making an agreement of consolidation with new terms of payment so that they could find new loans from the European financial markets. An organization under foreign control, responsible for the repayment of the debts and organize future loans, was seen as the most suitable solution at that time. In 1881 *Muharrem Kararnamesi* (Decree of Muharrem) or the act of *Duyun-u Umumiye* (Ottoman

¹⁰⁵ See Karpat, *The transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789-1908*, 132-165 for the first Ottoman Parliament.

¹⁰⁶ Mardin, 25-43.

¹⁰⁷ Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 25.

Public Debt Administration - PDA) was founded.¹⁰⁸ This was an institution for collecting taxes in the empire essentially acting as the Ottoman treasury and paying the foreign debts from these resources. In the last decades of the Empire, this institution began to organize the Ottoman fiscal system controlling all the expenses and revenues, and was generally accepted as the official perception of Ottoman economic dependency since it was protecting rights of foreign creditors and ensuring full back payment.¹⁰⁹

The era of relative freedom ended when the crippling defeat that the Ottomans suffered at the hands of the Russians in 1878 was used by Abdul Hamid II (1876-1909) as an excuse to put a stop to both the constitution and Parliament, dissolving the Lower House, a move which was generally symptomatic of Hamid's 30 year absolutist reign. With the help of his police force, he suppressed the opposition inside the country and no major effort for a constitutional movement arose till 1889 except two attempts (Ali Suavi and Kleanti Skalyeri-Aziz Bey committee). He gradually wrested ultimate power back from the Sublime Porte and was inclined to use the idea of the traditional dependence on Islam as a means of justifying sovereignty. Abdul Hamid's Islamism had the sole aim of unifying Muslims across the world, which was hoped would in turn satisfy domestic and foreign objectives, namely the prevention of further dislocation within the Empire and to provide a greater defensive shield against the expansionist policies of Western empire builders.¹¹⁰

Yet this was not to say that the reforming process did not continue unabated in areas other than the Ottoman government. Indeed, education in particular continued to enjoy the benefits of a still-popular reform movement, and technology was also not far behind in terms of innovation. Despite the conservative absolutism favoured by the Hamidian era the Ottoman economy continued to grow and the revenue generated could be used to develop better communication networks such as telegraphs, railways and steamships.

He believed that such changes could strengthen the Empire without weakening his own position within it. Through reform of the tax system, the State's finances were greatly improved. Railways and telegraph lines were

¹⁰⁸ Owen, 100-121.

¹⁰⁹ Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1882-1908: Reactions to European Economic Penetration* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 20-1.

¹¹⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 308.

constructed and trade increased. In education the number of state primary schools more than doubled during Abdulhamid's reign, while that of the *Rusdiye* schools quadrupled. There were growing numbers of students in the Civil Service College, besides the other higher educational establishments for law, medicine, veterinary science, agriculture and commerce. Finally, the Ottoman University (*Dar ul-Funun-i Osmaniye*) opened in Istanbul in 1900 with four faculties, of religious studies, mathematics, natural sciences and literature.¹¹¹

With these more efficient forms of communication the Sultan was able to increase his power, which may have dismayed the Young Ottomans, but by the time of Abdul Hamid's death there existed a more unified Empire; his policies had succeeded in preventing the break-up of Ottoman society and 'permitted the various internal processes of change to mature'.¹¹²

Recent scholarship has tended to revise the traditional consensus that Abdul Hamid II's reign was one of conservative anti-reformist policies, with the view that this reign can actually be seen as the next stage of modernization and reform. It has generally been accepted that, rather than merely seeking to seize the absolute power enjoyed by some of his predecessors, Abdul Hamid II actually contributed to the growing sense of nationalism in his empire by promoting a scheme of Islamism which bound his people together in their new-found Ottoman identity. Facing a legitimacy crisis, Abdul Hamid attempted to reconcile traditional social norms with the progressive reform movement in order to maintain his empire, rather than do away with all Ottoman traditions and create an entirely new state.¹¹³ Islam was used as the bedrock of his legitimizing process, although the Sultan enjoyed only mixed results, one of which counter-productively undermined the traditional values he sought to maintain. His personal support for Ottoman traditions only lent weight to the argument that a central government based on religion was outdated and ended up facilitating the secularization process.

¹¹¹ Hale, 28.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 166.

3.1.2. Young Turks

Abdul Hamid's strict disciplinarian approach to rule was in stark contrast to the softer, more inclusive methods favoured by the Young Ottoman reformers and served to contribute to their stance becoming more rigid and opposed to the will of the Sultan. Out of this sprang the 'Young Turk' movement.¹¹⁴ The Young Turks were individuals who had benefited from the earlier reforms of the education system, and held beliefs similar to the Young Ottomans. Yet what distinguished them was that they were more actively involved in the day to day struggle to have their voice heard, compared to the generally bureaucratic *modus operandi* of the Young Ottomans.¹¹⁵

Coming from diverse social backgrounds¹¹⁶ and being highly educated and skilled employees of the state, amongst the Young Turks were lawyers, teachers, scholars, bureaucrats, writers and journalists. Many were familiar with the methods of modern warfare, having especially served in the military, and the group as a whole came to display obvious desires of rising to positions of power within the state.¹¹⁷ E. E. Ramsaur highlights the factor of the Ottoman University (*Dar ül-Fünun-i Osmaniye*) not being established until 1900 as a key reason for why these students of military backgrounds were the first to begin the movement. Attempts dated back to 1846, 1869, as well as those in 1873 to create a Dar ül-Fünun failed for various reasons, including the lack of financial support and teaching staff. This left the military schools as the only places where the new ideas could be developed, although they were strictly controlled by the Hamidian regime (ironically, the Sultan even introduced to the

¹¹⁴ Kayalı, 39.

¹¹⁵ Background for the Young Turk movement leading to the revolution could be followed from a vast number of well documented sources both in English and in Turkish. Most notably see: Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihad Terakki*, Istanbul, 1987; Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics: 1908-1914*, Oxford, 1969; Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, Jr., *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908*, Princeton, 1957; M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902)*, Istanbul, 1985; Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926*, Leiden, 1984; Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Leiden, 1997.

¹¹⁶ Feroz Ahmad, "The Young Turk Revolution" *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (July 1968): 20. Also Akşin claims that the Society of the Ottoman Union (*İttihad-ı Osmani Cemiyeti*) committee accepted progress as they shared the same ideas although they did not accept order due to the reason that they believed in revolution instead of evolution. See Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihad Terakki*, 24.

¹¹⁷ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics: 1908-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 16-17.

schools German military officers with their new ideas for their modernization).¹¹⁸ Their ideas were easily disseminated throughout Ottoman society through their contacts with newspapers and publishers, and they often clashed with the traditional sections of society in their ideology and lifestyle.

Interestingly, the Young Turks faced a struggle to reconcile two opposite situations that their embrace of constitutionalism created. As Şükrü Hanioglu's research demonstrates, supporting constitutionalism conflicted with their traditional elitism which was based on their roots in positivism – a distinctly undemocratic system which was characterized by a mistrust of the masses.¹¹⁹ As such, they saw themselves as educators of the people, with constitutional change being perhaps a convenient coincidence that came as a consequence of their pursuit of other goals.¹²⁰

Ahmed Rıza, who led the movement intermittently from 1895 to 1908, became a student of Pierre Lafitte (titular head of the positivism movement at that time) in Paris and later the leader in the positivist movement, deeply affected by the positivist ideas and principles. In this way, Paris became the second centre of the Young Turks and later Bahattin Şakir, Sami Paşazade Sezai, Dr. Nazımî Prince Mehmet Ali Pasha joined this group supporting the idea of established goal of a strong government in order to maintain order and regulate every aspect of private life in the society.

The French Revolution was a popular movement for the Young Turks, carrying as it did the weight of a new nineteenth century rationale for the state as an entity. It should not come as surprise to learn that the Young Turks propagated an ideal of Ottomanism and strong national sentiment given the diverse social make-up of the group. Consequently Ottoman nationalism came to be felt throughout the Empire, regardless of ethnic or religious identity. The constitutional monarchies that had been established in the nearby empires of Iran and Russia, and further afield in Japan, at the start of the twentieth century had a great influence on the Young Turks, who were keen to press forward their policy of constitutionalizing the Ottoman Empire and also looked to their Western neighbours for inspiration and legitimization.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Ernest Edmondson Ramsaur, Jr., *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 18.

¹¹⁹ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 200-207.

¹²⁰ Erik Jan Zürcher, "Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908-1938", in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, edited by Kemal H. Karpat (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2000), 151.

¹²¹ Altunışık and Tür, 7.

The protests formed by those in opposition to Sultan Abdul Hamid's rule were manifested to re-institute the 1876 Constitution, with the secretly-founded the Society of the Ottoman Union (İttihad-ı Osmani Cemiyeti) organization at the Military Medical Academy in Istanbul (1889) – namely under the leadership of İbrahim Temo (1865-1939), Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932), İshak Sükuti (1868-1903), Mehmet Reşit (1872-1919) and Hüseyinzade Ali (1864-1942), which later itself merged with other groups of exiles to form the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti) that came to represent anti-Hamid sentiment.¹²² This group and its antecedents helped to bring together members of the Young Turk movement from different backgrounds, who as highlighted above, were bound by a common notion of Ottomanism and worked together in their opposition to their sultan, also aiming to stop the intervention coming from both the nationalist separatists and the European imperialists in the internal affairs of the empire.

In actual fact, the Armenian question was the most important problem of the 1890's. In 1887 and 1890, the Armenian revolutionary liberation organizations, Hunchak (the Bell organization of Armenian students in France and Switzerland) and Dashnakzoutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation in Russia)¹²³ were established with the demand for autonomy or separation from the empire as an independent Armenian state in the eastern Anatolia even if they did not form a significant majority in the region. They organized rebellions such as the Erzurum event, the Kumkapı demonstration in 1890 and the Merzifon, Kayseri, Yozgat events of 1892-93 in order to provoke a bloody reprisal against the Ottomans which they could use as a pretext to gain the support of the Western powers for Armenian autonomy.¹²⁴ They cooperated with other nationalist groups, particularly from Albania, Crete and Macedonia, which served to agitate the Empire. In 1894 after a major coup at Sason, in Batman province, the strongest area of Armenian population, Britain was particularly determined in pressuring for a reform program to grant the Armenians autonomy. Abdul Hamid did not accept the program at first due to his desires for retaining authority in his empire, yet events led to an Armenian demonstration in Istanbul. Even if he was obliged to accept the program with the intervention of European powers, the program was still not exercised thoroughly after it was accepted. Armenian nationalist feeling was

¹²² Hanioglu, 174.

¹²³ Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural, v.2, 203.

¹²⁴ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 105-114.

stirred up and the activities of the Hunchaks and Dashnaks organizations in Istanbul had a stimulating effect on the Young Turks to act to prevent the further disintegration of the empire. Increasing their propaganda, as vocal critics of the Hamidian regime, Ahmed Rıza and Halil Ganem began to publish the biweekly journal the *Meşveret* (Consultation) in French and English, using the calendar of the positivists in its first issue in 1895 and questioning “the wisdom of requesting foreign intervention to settle internal problems such as the re-establishment of a constitutional government”¹²⁵ to put an end to the Ottoman disintegration process:

We have assured ourselves of the collaboration of certain personalities whose ardent desire is to see the former bonds of harmony and good friendship with the Ottomans taken up and renewed.

We wish to work not to overthrow the reigning dynasty, which we consider necessary to the maintenance of good order, but to propagate the notion of progress of which we desire the peaceful triumph. Our motto being "Order and Progress," we have a horror of concessions obtained by violence.

We demand reforms, not especially for this or that province, but for the entire Empire; not in favour of a single nationality, but in favour of all Ottomans, be they Jew, Christian or Moslem.

We wish to advance in the path of civilization, but we declare resolutely we do not wish to advance other than in fortifying the Ottoman element and in respecting its own conditions of existence.

We are determined to guard to the originality of our oriental civilization and, for this reason, to borrow from the Occident only the general results of their scientific evolution, only the things truly assimilable and necessary to guide a people in its march towards liberty.

We are opposed to the substitution of direct intervention by the foreign powers for Ottoman authority.¹²⁶

The authority of Ahmed Rıza was challenged by Mizancı Murat, well known for his literary and journalistic activities, particularly the *Mizan* (Balance or Scales) newspaper. In Geneva he became more popular because of his personality and his pan-Islamic thoughts, which contrasted with Rıza’s positivism.¹²⁷ As it had been for their predecessors at the forefront of the reform movement, the main issue for the Young Turks was how the state itself should be reformed. Unable to form a unified consensus, two rival factions emerged that proposed different solutions. One, led by

¹²⁵ Şerif Mardin, *Religion, Society, and Modernity in Turkey: Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 167.

¹²⁶ Ramsaur, 25. See also Hanioglu, 78.

¹²⁷ Erik J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor*, 15-6.

Ahmed Rıza, advocated an administration that was centralized and controlled by an elite group under the name of *Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Progress and Union Society), whereas the second, led by Prince Sabahaddin, who was generally affected by the philosophy of Edmond Demolin, proposed the opposite; namely, an administration that was not centralized but instead based on entrepreneurship, individualism and economic liberalism – the *Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Cemiyeti* (The League of Private Initiative and Decentralization) with a journal named *Terakki*.¹²⁸ The differences between the two factions was highlighted at the First Young Turk Congress of 1902 in Paris, particularly regarding the issue of the dependence on Western assistance to deal with upraised groups. Nevertheless on the last article of the resolution, one saw both groups aligning themselves in their opposition to Sultan Abdul Hamid and their desire of a constitutional Empire:

We reject all solidarity between the Ottoman people and the regime under which we have lived for twenty-five years, a regime of oppression, and the sole source of the misdeeds which are committed in the Empire and which inspire the indignation of the whole of humanity.

We intend to establish between the different people and races of the Empire an entente which will assure to all, without distinction, the full enjoyment of their rights recognized by the imperial Hatts and consecrated by the international treaties, will procure for them the means of satisfying in a complete fashion their legitimate aspirations to take part in local administration, will put them on an equal footing from the point of view of the rights as well as the duties incumbent upon all citizens, will inspire in them the sentiment of fidelity and of loyalty towards the throne and the dynasty of Osman, which alone can maintain their union.

We shall apply ourselves in all circumstances to coordinate the desires of all Ottoman people and efforts of all the patriots towards this triple goal: a) maintenance of the integrity and of the indissolubility of the Ottoman Empire; b) re-establishment of the order and peace in the interior, an essential condition of progress; c) respect for the fundamental laws of the Empire, notably of the Constitution promulgated in 1876, which is incontestably the most important part and which offers the surest and most precious guarantee of general reforms, the rights and the political liberties of the Ottoman people against the arbitrary.

We proclaim our firm resolution to respect the international treaties and particularly the treaty of Berlin, of which the dispositions, insofar as they concern the internal order of Turkey, will be extended to all provinces of the Empire.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908*, 93.

¹²⁹ Ramsaur, 67-8. Ahmed Rıza and Halil Ganem were totally opposed to the idea of intervention as they also stated in their newspaper *Meşveret* even if it is done with good will. However, Prince

After the Congress, deeply influenced by nationalist ideas, and influenced by the power struggle between Austria-Hungary and Russia, Bulgaria sought to annex the lands it had controlled between the Treaties of San Stefano (Ayastefanos) and Berlin signed after the Russian war of 1877-78. They began an uprising on 21 September 1902 and attempted for it to spread through the region in hope to draw in Western involvement in the reform process. Although the government managed to overcome the uprising in the end, Great Powers pressured the Ottomans for reform in Crete. The whole region had been continuously instable since then and problems were not limited to issues regarding the Bulgarians.¹³⁰ Russian and Austria-Hungarian interests were continuing in these regions along with the conflicting interests of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania and Wlachs. All countries, in accordance with their interests, were requesting either to gain new territories or to preserve the *status quo*, and thus did not hesitate to organize paramilitary rebellion groups. This environment paved the way for the young Ottoman officers to learn about nationalist ideas on the one side and imperialist intervention of the West on the other.

After 1905, the Young Turk ideology began to be dispersed to a wider demographic, such as the Balkans where military officers' secret revolutionary organization, the Ottoman Freedom Society (*Osmanlı Hürriyet Cemiyeti*), was informed by the Young Turks. Many military officers at this time had become increasingly dissatisfied with Abdul Hamid and his policy of restricting funding to his armies, which led to the deterioration in the quality of resources at their disposal; this policy was considered to have had the consequence of 'undermining [the military's] strength and reducing its abilities to defend Ottoman territories in Europe'¹³¹. As such, army officers began to align themselves with the Young Turk movement and its pressure groups. The CUP was attractive to the disaffected portions of the Ottoman military as it provided a link to the domestic reform movement that they were supporters of, and in the light of the merger and formation of the CUP, the Second Young Turk Congress held in Paris in 1907 demonstrated the increasing influence that such groups wielded. Opponents to the Sultan were united in their disdain for his absolutist sovereignty and

Sabahaddin was on the side of the Armenians and the call for intervention was finally inserted in the last paragraph of the resolution.

¹³⁰ George G. Arkanis and Wayne S. Vucinich, *The Near East in Modern Times: Forty Crucial Years 1900-1940* (New York: Jenkins Publishing Co, 1972), 3-5. See also Shaw, 209 and Akşin, *Jön Türkler*, 49.

¹³¹ Cleveland, 127.

the period 1906-1908 was characterized by social revolts and uprisings aimed at weakening his grip on power.

In summer 1908, an army revolt was organized in Thessaloniki, where it was demanded that the Sultan re-establish the constitution and Parliament that he had previously dismantled. In the face of such mounting pressure, Abdul Hamid was left with no option but to cede to his opponents' wishes and subsequently the Parliamentary elections brought the Young Turks the power they had been bargaining for.

3.2. Iran on the Eve of the Constitutional Revolution

As for many other Middle Eastern countries, the 19th century marked the beginnings of drastic socio-political and economic transformation for Iran. The expanding European penetration weakened the state and the local economy. Iran was brought into closer contact with the increasing capitalist system. Confronting Western imperialism, Iranian rulers recognized the need for the adaptation of modern technologies and attempted to initiate a series of reforms gradually. As was outlined out in the previous chapter, starting with military reforms especially after the Russian defeats of 1813 and 1826, Qajar Shahs, first by the Crown Prince Abbas Mirza (1810s and 1820s) and later by Prime Ministers Mirza Abulqasim Qa'em Maqam (1835) and Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir (1848-51), tried to implement administrative changes in order to respond to the threatening Western interventions and the parallel export of new Western technologies and ideas. These reform initiatives, however, proved to be unsuccessful, as in words of Sohrabi, "European forms of administration (and military) were introduced they failed to fundamentally transform the state's decentralized structure."¹³² Farhi attributes the following reasons for this failure: "Iranian geography and its criss-crossing mountains ranges made central control difficult. And although Iranian society was saved from direct control, it nevertheless became an arena of conflict between two Great Powers: Britain and Czarist Russia."¹³³ Those within the framework of government, state officials and political elites/intellectuals, were generally the first to embrace a reforming and

¹³² Nader Sohrabi, "Historicizing Revolutions: Constitutional Revolutions in the Ottoman Empire, Iran and Russia, 1905-1908", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.100, No. 6 (1995): 1393.

¹³³ Farideh Farhi, "Class Struggles, the State and Revolution in Iran", in *Power and Stability in the Middle East*, edited by Berch Berberoglu (London, UK: Zed Books, 1989), 90.

constitutionalizing ideology, although that is not to say that the wider Persian society as well as the *bazaaris* and *ulema* were not interested in these ideas.

European literature and history books were important in dispersing modernist thought in Persia in the second half of the nineteenth century –the 1870s to 1880s–, with French works being particularly popular. The lives of Napoleon and Peter the Great were translated into Persian, as was Fenelon's *Les Aventures de Telemaque* (*The Adventures of Telemachus* - 1699); books such as these helped to create a wave of secularism and a reform movement that called for the dislocation of religion and public life.¹³⁴ Mirza Ali khan-e Nazem al-muluk, who translated *Les Aventures de Telemaque*, seems to have been trying to influence the shah with its criticisms of the French Church and state and advocated a reformed imperial regime that ruled by logic and rationalism. There were two important reasons why French literature was particularly appropriate for translation into Persian. First, because the French had no direct involvement in Persian affairs in the same way that the British did, and second because France had become synonymous with revolutionary ideas, while the British were only associated with overseas empire building due to their interventions in the Persian wars.

Regarding these foreign influences on Persian constitutional thought, Russia also must be mentioned here. Since there were long-standing economic ties between Iran and Russia, many Iranian businessmen and workers had migrated to Russia, working in the oil fields of Baku and formulating business activities between the two countries. This was very important, as the number of Iranian workers in Russia reached 200,000 by 1910. There is no doubt that such a number had a decisive impact on Iran, importantly because these people had directly experienced the Russian Revolution of 1905. In the words of Ivar Spector:

In 1905 an organization of Iranian revolutionaries was created in Tbilisi. When these Iranian migrant labourers returned to their homeland, they took with them revolutionary ideas, printed propaganda and weapons to incite strikers and disturbances there. It should occasion no surprise therefore that the revolution of 1905 in Iran followed on the heels of that of Russia.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ Kamali, 121.

¹³⁵ Ivar Spector, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia* (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs, 1962), 149.

3.2.1. Iranian Intellectuals (Munavvar al-Fikran)

In addition to foreign influences, there were also several important Persian writers who lodged their own criticisms and proposed their own reforms for the Persian state, providing an intellectual basis for constitutional ideas. While many of the modern educated intellectuals became initiators of reform in Iran, many others provided the groundwork for a revolution. Mirza Habib-e Esfahani's *The Lessons of Other Nations* (Qra'eb-e avaed-e melal) and *Journeys of Ebrahim Beyk* (Siyahatname-ye Ebrahim Beyk) by Hajji Zeyn al-Abedin-e Maraghei were especially influential amongst reformist intellectuals in the second half of the nineteenth century, and remained popular right up until the Constitutional Revolution.¹³⁶ The latter compared Persia to Asia and Europe and was severely critical of the Persian socio-economic system.

Mohammad Hashem Asef, also known as Rostam al-Hokama, was an important Persian intellectual and writer who came down on the side of reform. Criticizing the role of the king and the *ulema*, Asef insisted that politics should be exclusive from religion as the two were incompatible and stressed how the earlier institutions of the Safavids, the Zands and the Afshars were far more efficient ways of running Persia than the Qajar period, which was characterized by financial and bureaucratic disruptions. Asef also advocated imposing limits to the king's power, stressing the need to separate the role of the king from that of government officials such as the prime minister and citing examples from Persia's prosperous past to legitimize his opinions.¹³⁷

Another reformist intellectual was Yusof Khan Mostashar al-Dawla who contributed to the development of constitutional theory in Iran. He worked in Paris as a diplomat and visited London several times and thus had the opportunity to compare these countries with Iran. He published a short tract in 1871 called *Yak Kalama* (One Word) about the legal system, offering that the rule of law could be a solution to Iran's problems.¹³⁸ This became the manifesto of Constitutionalists in Iran, like the Young

¹³⁶ Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran (1866-1951)* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex Publishers, 2003), 143-153.

¹³⁷ Nikki R. Keddie and Rudi Matthee, *Iran and the Surrounding World 1501-2001: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 135-6.

¹³⁸ Said Amir Arjomand, "Islamic Constitutionalism", *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, Vol. 3, (December 2007): 116.

Ottoman Mustafa Fazıl's letter to Abdül Aziz which became the manifesto of liberals in the Ottoman Empire.¹³⁹ His book commented on the French constitution, comparing it with Islamic rule of law by quoting the *Hadith* (sayings and deeds of Prophet Mohammad) and Quranic verses. Al-Dawla advocated the separation of power into executive and legislative bodies, arguing that the establishment of a government based on *Qanun* was the only solution to Iran's backwardness. Understanding the meaning of democracy and government in the Western sense; he indicated that representative, constitutional government captured the spirit of Islam, as he knew his people would be both more receptive and responsive to ideas with Islamic colourings. Al-Dawla's book became very popular though was eventually banned by the government. He was arrested during the constitutional revolution but *Yak Kalama* was later used as the book of principles of the Secret Society (Anjuman-i Makhfi) which was founded in February 1905 proposing social and political reforms. These included the spread of education, limiting the despotic power of the Qajar government and establishing a code of law.¹⁴⁰

Hailed as the father of constitutionalism in Iran, both before and after the Constitutional Revolution,¹⁴¹ Mirza Malkum Khan (1833-1908) was educated in Paris, and returned to Iran to teach at the influential *Dar ul-Fanun*, the Polytechnic College of Tehran – the first modern educational institution, which had been created by Amir Kabir. Mirza wrote *Dafter-i Tanzimat* (Book of reforms) to Ja'far Khan Moshir al-Dawlah, who had established the cabinet system and also founded the famous *Faramuskhanah* (House of oblivion) in 1858, which was a Masonic lodge.¹⁴²

A decade later, he was exiled for organizing secret societies devoted to equality and freedom, though was then hired in the Iranian diplomatic service, rising to the post of ambassador in London until 1888. When he was fired a year later, he published *Qanun* (The Law) journal, which campaigned on the behalf of constitutionalism.¹⁴³ The journal played a vital role in the process of modernization of social and political thoughts in the contemporary history of Iran due to its vivid prose, clear and frank language and its handling of modern and Western ideologies that directed the minds

¹³⁹ Berkes, 208-9.

¹⁴⁰ Mangol Bayat, *Mysticism and Dissent: Socio-religious Thought in Qajar Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982), 186.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 162-167.

¹⁴² Afary, 26.

¹⁴³ Charles Kurzman, *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Sourcebook* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 111.

of the Iranian people toward the new meanings of these thoughts. The demand for the establishment of a government was presented in *Qanun* and thus the journal became itself as a populist slogan unifying a diverse ensemble of social forces and classes.

The journal inspired the makers of the revolution of 1906, yet Malkum played no direct role in it, as he ceased his oppositional activities upon re-appointment to diplomatic service, as ambassador to Italy in 1899.¹⁴⁴ Malkum Khan, being a strong advocate of the application of Western values, wrote nearly two hundred articles in which he examined European progress and reforms, discussing political, social issues such as taxation, monarchy, republicanism, the separation of powers, the cabinet system, and secular education. In the early twentieth century, Persian writers became even more critical of the Persian government and the shah than their nineteenth century predecessors, especially during the years surrounding the Constitutional Revolution.

3.2.2. The *Ulema* and the *Bazaaris*

The *bazaaris*, being an educated class that could read and write, became a major vessel for the transmission of modern ideas into Persian society, with their far-reaching business interests carrying waves of modernist thought throughout the state. Being vulnerable within Persia to foreign competitors that were often backed by armies, the *bazaaris'* commercial interests lay at the heart of their dissatisfaction. Given that the Persian government was unwilling to protect its merchants, instead favouring lucrative concessions to Western companies, they became increasingly attracted to a democratic form of the government, and demanded more representation and reforms along these lines.¹⁴⁵ Various discussion *anjumans*, an old Persian word meaning council or gathering, were formed in which the future of Persia was debated, with the *Majlis-e tojjar* (The Council of Merchants) being one of the most important.

Mirza Abdol Nasiroldowleh, the leader of the Ministry of Commerce, became a target for the dissatisfaction of the *bazaaris* who, under the guidance of Hajji Amin al-Zarb (a prominent Tehran merchant) called for his removal from power. Further, the *bazaaris* successfully demanded the formation of a new council comprised of

¹⁴⁴ For a detailed study on Malkum Khan, see Hamid Algar, *Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) and Edward G. Browne, *The press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914)

¹⁴⁵ Afary, 23.

merchants which would protect native Persian guilds from overseas competitors; work to reduce political corruption; and maintain the high quality of exports. The Shah came down on the side of his *bazaaris* and agreed to the establishment of the Council of Merchants in Tehran in 1893, as well as similar groups in other important cities.¹⁴⁶ The Council was to be short lived however, as the Persian government did not alter its policy of affording business concessions to foreign companies and the Ministry of Commerce jealously audited its operations. Provincial governors were also opponents to such councils as they had a negative impact on the lucrative taxes they could reap from their regions, and in the face of such stiff opposition, the Council of Merchants simply disappeared.

The failure of these attempted councils, whilst disappointing, did not in the end damage the *bazaris'* ability to maintain communication between themselves, with the pre-existing networks of commerce preserving their contacts throughout Persia and also aiding the opposition movement against the shah. Making the most of their strong links to the *ulema*, the *bazaaris* were also able to formulate their stance in relation to the shah and his government by maintaining such streams of communication; needless to say, the traditionally cordial relationship that existed between the *bazaaris* and the *ulema* continued.¹⁴⁷

Despite research indicating that the Persian Shia *ulema* were generally ignorant of a constitutionalist ideology¹⁴⁸, it must be stressed that as a group they nevertheless were involved in discourse about *Hekmat-e aghli* (reason and reasonable logic) that was perhaps in part a consequence of Shia clerics being part of a minority in other Sunni-dominated areas, an experience which seems to have affected their Persian Shia counterparts. As such, the Shia *ulema* were used to re-evaluating and altering their doctrines to match other circumstances of the state; for example, the modernizing process demanded re-jigging of traditional religious values to make room for new Western ideas. The wide ranging contact networks between the *ulema* and the *bazaaris* and other politicians also lent the *ulema* the experience of discourse surrounding constitutionalism and regime change. After the 1908 re-establishment of absolute

¹⁴⁶ Mongol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1909* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 47.

¹⁴⁷ Masoud Kamali, *Revolutionary Iran: Civil Society and the State in the Modernization Process* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 17.

¹⁴⁸ See for instance Hairi, 1977 and Abdol Karim Lahidji, "Constitutionalism and Clerical Authority," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, edited by Said Amir Arjomand (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1988), 133-158.

control by Muhammad Ali Shah's government, the role of the *ulema* in relation to constitutionalism came into discussion. Kamali argues that the main reasons for the participation of the *ulema* in the Constitutional Revolution were "to reinforce their traditional prominent position in civil society and to limit the absolute power of the state."¹⁴⁹

Prior to the Constitutional Movement, it seems that the *ulema* were eager to hang on to their supremacy in matters of law and education and were thus non-committal in terms of constitutionalism and the inevitable changes it would bring to such systems. The *ulema* had previously fallen out with the government of Amin al-Daula (1895-98), which attempted to separate the state from its religion amongst other modern reforms, with al-Daula wanting to end the *ulema's* right to intervene in matters of state.¹⁵⁰ Al-Daula was also keen to introduce a modern schooling system and considered the *ulema* to be a stumbling block in the way of educational progress, a move unpopular with his *ulema*, demonstrated when the newly-founded Tabriz *Rushdiye School* had its modern facilities vandalized. The *ulema* also organized protests against the judicial reforms introduced by al-Daula, which were aimed at weakening the *ulema's* grasp on the law. Ultimately the pressure on al-Daula became so great that he was forced to resign in 1898.¹⁵¹

Sayyed Jamal al-Din Afghani (1838-97) was in a minority of members of the *ulema* who were in favour of constitutional reform; before the 1906 Revolution, most of the *ulema* were more interested in maintaining their influential positions and lobbied against reform. Sayyed Jamal's stance did though make his colleagues more amenable to constitutional change as time went by, and the scholarly consensus is that Jamal helped to unify the *ulema* in their stance against the absolutist power of the Shah. In particular Malek al-Mutakallemin who played an important role in the eventual move for a constitutional state was highly influenced by Sayyed Jamal.¹⁵² The Tobacco Movement's leader, Hajji Mirza Hasan Shirazi, was also considered to have taken up views along the lines of Sayyed Jamal. Although later Persian reformers cited him as an important figure in the formation of their ideology, Afghani apparently distanced himself from a regime change, instead believing that constitutional government was

¹⁴⁹ Kamali, 2006, 125.

¹⁵⁰ Algar, 224.

¹⁵¹ Vanessa Martin, *Islam and Modernism: The Iranian Revolution of 1906* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1989), 45-58.

¹⁵² Hairi, 17.

not something to be embraced by the East. Jamal's main area of interest was in unifying the often disparate Muslim populations of the world against the threat of the West¹⁵³ and although this often also encompassed embracing aspects of constitutional ideology, this was merely a coincidental correlation with his religious ideals which, more importantly, were grounded in a wish to reduce the despotic power of the shah and his government. Sayyed Jamal's influence on later thinkers is nevertheless marked with the paradigm adopted by the Persian *ulema* and their views on political doctrines. Jamal's attempts to reconcile modernity with the traditional religious doctrine also helped to stimulate Muslim opposition to dictatorships in countries such as Persia, Turkey and Egypt.¹⁵⁴

3.2.2.1. *The Babi-Baha'i Movement*

As mentioned above, in this period there were ideological differences among the men of religion about constitutionalism and regime change issues. Thus it is worth mentioning here the Babi movement who played an important role in stimulating modern social reforms in Iran with particular reference to the advocacy of constitutional democracy. Many Iranian Muslims came to support the Babi movement, which held as its core belief the expectation that the Promised One (Mahdi) was to return imminently. The movement's founder, Sayyid Ali Muhammad, known also as the Bab (the gateway to the true Shiah-i Kamil), was initially suppressed by the Iranian government and the *ulema* from its inception in 1844, and as a result the movement struggled to become widely-supported. Furthermore, the extremism displayed by many Babis also dented its popularity.¹⁵⁵ The movement was to experience a reinvigoration in the 1860s though, when Mirza Husayn-Ali, Baha'u'llah, convinced

¹⁵³ Ibid, 54.

¹⁵⁴ See Nikki R. Keddie, *An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal al-Din 'al-Afghani'* (Berkeley & LA, University of California Press, 1968). According to Nikki Keddie, he rejected both traditionalism and uncritical replication of the Christian West and began to follow the trend among Muslim modernists emphasizing pragmatic values needed for life in the modern world. Political activism, free use of human reason, and efforts to build up the political and military power of Islamic states could be listed among these values. He was able to gain an influence among religious Muslims as he sought these values within the Islamic tradition instead of openly borrowing them from the hostile West. Being the first "neo-traditionalist" whose influence spread beyond the borders of a single Muslim country, Afghani could be regarded as an ancestor of various later trends in the Islamic world, which reject both pure traditionalism and pure westernism.

¹⁵⁵ Juan R. I. Cole and Moojan Momen, *introduction to From Iran East & West: Studies in the Babi and Baha'i History, volume 2* (Los Angeles: Kalimát Press, 1984), ix-xiii.

his supporters that he was the spiritual return of the Bab. Many people from different religious backgrounds converted to become Baha'is, having been attracted by Baha'u'llah's charisma and the promises that he made since the movement represented a reformist solution to the pressures, as Amanat points out:

The Babi phenomenon sprang up at a time when Persian society was on the verge of a crucial transition. Tormented by its age-old dilemmas, the Persian mind was beginning to be exposed to a materially superior civilization. The emergence of the Babi doctrine thus was perhaps the last chance for an indigenous reform movement before that society became truly affected by the consequences of the Western predominance, first in material and then in ideological spheres. Notwithstanding its weaknesses, the Babi doctrine attempted to address, rather than ignore, the issues that lay at the foundation of the Persian consciousness. The Babi solution was the product of an esoteric legacy, one that sought redemptive regeneration in a break with the past without being essentially alien to the spirit of that past.¹⁵⁶

Baha'u'llah himself was exiled from Iran, but this did not stop the spread of his ideas about the unity of mankind and religions, and his advocacy of peaceful protest and diplomacy as a means of resolving disputes. His preaching was taken to be part of a specifically religious program, despite the fact that he promoted constitutionalism, parliamentary government and an egalitarian distribution of wealth. In reaction to the hostility of the Babis, the clerical authorities began to persecutions and in the end, Bab was imprisoned and killed in 1850. This divided his believers into two sects, most of whom followed Mirza Hussein Ali Nuri Baha'u'llah who transformed Babism into a new faith. This new group continued its existence in a peaceful way due to their apolitical attitude towards the Persian government. The rest of the Babis followed Baha'u'llah's half brother Mirza Yahya Nuri Sobh-e Azal, who continued the militant characteristic of the original Babism. In the meantime, travelling throughout North America and Europe, Baha'u'llah's eldest son and successor Abdu'l-Baha Abbas continued to extol the virtues of peace, love and democratic forms of government.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844-1850* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 413.

¹⁵⁷ Afary, 25.

3.2.3. The Tobacco Concession 1891 and Other Concessions to the West

The strong ties that existed between the *ulema* and Persian merchants can be said to have had a major bearing on the eventual Constitutional Revolution, in that the Tobacco Movement of the 1890s was based upon such ties. This helped the *ulema* to maintain their influence in society which in turn allowed their calls for constitutional reform to be better heard. Although the most visible events that led to the Constitutional Revolution came at the beginning of the twentieth century, an in-depth analysis reveals the final decades of the nineteenth century to also be important for the development of a movement advocating constitutional change. Persian society at the end of the nineteenth century had undoubtedly undergone distinct changes in its make-up, one of which being a gradual decreasing of the *ulema's* power and influence within society in favour of diplomatic ties with other states such as Britain and Russia. Needless to say, the *ulema* were eager to regain some of the ground they had lost at this time. Economic conditions, such as those that led to the Tobacco Movement, led also to a strengthening of the constitutional movement with many Persian merchants feeling let down by their government who were again keen to foster links with overseas traders at the expense of the power of the bazaars. The Tobacco Movement is the clearest example of an uprising of indigenous Persians against the policies of its government.

The idea of giving a concession for establishing a monopoly for the collection and distribution of entire tobacco crop in Iran came to the agenda during the Shah's trip to Europe in 1889. After the preparations, in 1890 the concession was granted to an English company, which in actuality gave full control over the production and exportation of all tobacco for a period of fifty years to one individual, G.F.Talbot, under the title of monopoly.¹⁵⁸ A representative body of Persian merchants appealed to Naser al-Din Shah against the monopoly of foreigners over their rights and announced their intention of defending these rights by force. For instance, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani wrote against the granting of the Tobacco Concession stating that: "This criminal [the Shah] has offered Persia to auction among the powers, and is selling the realm of Islam and the abode of Muhammad (on whom be greeting and

¹⁵⁸ Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* (London: Frank Cass &CO. Ltd., 1966), 33-51.

salutation) to the heathen."¹⁵⁹ Although the crisis began in Shiraz, the main tobacco region, the concession attracted a unified response from the whole country and a series of demonstrations culminated in a boycott of tobacco by Iranians in December 1891. People stopped smoking when the *mujtahid*¹⁶⁰ of Sammara, Mirza Muhammad Hasan Shirazi, issued a *fatwa* enjoining the Persian people to abandon the complete consumption of tobacco until the concession should be repealed.¹⁶¹ The protests continued especially in Tabriz. As Browne argued:

All the tobacco merchants have closed their shops, all the *qatyans* (water-pipes) have been put aside and no one smokes any longer, either in the city, or in the shah's entourage, or even in the women's apartments. What discipline, what obedience, when it is a question of submission to the counsels -or rather the orders- of an influential mullah, or of a *mujtahid* of some celebrity!The mullahs are really the masters of the situation.¹⁶²

Even if the Shah left Tehran to a tour the countryside, he could no longer evade the tobacco question due to mass demonstrations throughout the country. Consequently, he withdrew the concession, promulgating a decree to end both the internal and external monopolies in 1892. Since the government's attempts to embrace Western powers affected the bazaars and the *ulema* in similar ways, as the Tobacco Movement demonstrated, it is of no surprise that both of these groups became more closely aligned with one another and came to form similar stances in opposition to the structural changes in society that had deprived them of their traditional status and influence. In particular, the *ulema* became keen to cut their ties to the state in favour of engendering closer relationships with the bazaars and other civic groups. Also under this movement, Britain lost much prestige in Persia relative to the prestige of the Russians, further deepening the rivalry between the two powers. This provided a psychological basis for future revolts, with anti-imperialistic and xenophobic feelings gaining ground in the country. This later became one of the main rhetorical aspects of the constitutional revolution. As Abrahamian aptly put:

¹⁵⁹ Sheikh Djemal ed-Din, "The Reign of Terror in Persia," *Contemporary Review* 60 (February 1892): 243. Also see, Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 65.

¹⁶⁰ The *mujtahids* owed their eminence to their knowledge of the roots of law, and it is this which entitles them to exercise *ijtihad* (the searching for a correct opinion especially in the deducing of the specific provisions of religious law from principles and ordinances. Algar, *Religion and State*, 6.

¹⁶¹ Avery, 104.

¹⁶² Browne, 52.

The upheaval revealed the fundamental changes that had taken place in nineteenth century Iran. It demonstrated that local strikes could now spread into national rebellions, that the intelligentsia and the propertied middle class were capable of working together, and that the Shah, despite his exalted claims, possessed no large scale instruments of coercion... The tobacco protest, in fact, was a dress rehearsal for the forthcoming constitutional revolution.¹⁶³

Despite this re-alignment of the *ulema* and the bazaars, the state continued with its policy of attempting to reinforce its own power with modernist reforms that often weakened traditionally-influential indigenous urban groups; the aim was to adopt a series of Western economic and bureaucratic 'blueprints'. As a result the state, the *ulema* and the *bazaaris* came to hold differing views on society and the economy. The demands that the *bazaaris* made came particularly out of the concessions that the state had made to overseas traders.

As Issawi and Foran have suggested, we can look at nineteenth century Persia as a colonialist state whose government often ceded to the demands of foreign traders before its own, with the rise in popularity of goods such as sugar and tea suggesting an increase in the use of 'colonial goods' similar to that of neighbouring Middle Eastern societies.¹⁶⁴ The need to cater for the demand for such goods prompted Naser al-Din Shah (1848-96) and his successor Mozaffar al-Din Shah (1896-1907) to form their financial policies around making concessions to overseas traders which had a damaging effect on native Persian merchants and shopkeepers,¹⁶⁵ who felt angry and isolated by the lack of protection being afforded them by their government. To rub salt into the wound, significant sums of money were borrowed from foreign states to fund Mozaffar al-Din Shah's trips abroad, which only contributed to the growing national debt and financial dependency on Persia's neighbours.

This trend of taking trips abroad by borrowing money from foreign states continued into the twentieth century, with Amin al-Sultan (the Prime Minister) arranging in 1900 a 22.5 million rouble loan from Russia in return for a trade monopoly in Northern Persia; in 1903, al-Sultan took another 10 million roubles from Russia with the proviso that the Russians could construct a road from the border of

¹⁶³ Ervand Abrahamian, "The Causes of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 10 (1979): 399.

¹⁶⁴ John Foran, "The Concept of Dependent Development as a Key to the Political Economy of Qajar Iran (1800-1925)", *Iranian Studies* 22: 5-56. Issawi, *The Economic History of Iran: 1800-1914*, 29.

¹⁶⁵ Afary, 23.

Julia to Tabriz.¹⁶⁶ On both occasions, the money was used to fund a journey to Europe for the Shah and the Prime Minister, an activity which provoked an immediate and negative response from the *ulema* with Hajji Muhammad Rafi' Shari'atmadar, the chief *mujtahid* of Gilan, travelling to Tehran to organize opposition to such loans; the Tabriz *ulema* were also concerned about the practice.¹⁶⁷ The general resistance against taking foreign loans displayed by the *ulema* was based on two concerns: firstly, they were wary of the Persian state becoming prostrate at the feet of foreign, non-Muslim empires and secondly, such loans gave the Russians greater influence within Persian territory. Coupled with the economic complaints of the *bazaaris*, who continued to struggle in the face of the favourable economic conditions granted to foreign merchants, the resistance to the practices of the Persian state at this time was strong and widespread.

A further concession was made by Persia to Russia and Britain as a condition attached to the loans, which allowed the Persian customs system to be modified by Europeans. As a result, the administration of Persian customs was handed over to three Belgians, a move that was seen as unacceptable by Persian merchants who were worried that their needs would be ignored in favour of Christian traders.¹⁶⁸ Indeed, the leader of the Belgians, Nauz, created a tariff that actively suppressed Persian merchants whilst favouring their Russian counterparts who had previously had difficulty competing with them. But despite the protests of the *bazaaris* and the *ulema* in Bushihr, Yazd, Shiraz and Isfahan, Amin al-Sultan was unmoved in his stance.

As well as these displays of rebellion to al-Sultan's rule, others occurred in different areas of Persia. For instance, the *ulema* were able to whip up sufficient public support to demonstrate their opposition to the state in Tabriz in 1903 after a *mullah*, Mirza Ali Akbar, had been insulted by a drunken man in the street.¹⁶⁹ Mirza took his story to his *madrrasah* and the *tullab* (theological students) who were moved to complain to the house of the *mujtahid* and subsequently went to the mosque, the Masjid e Shah. This event caused uproar in other cities as well as Tabriz and the anger of Persian citizens was compounded by the abuse suffered by a Persian merchant at the hands of a Belgian customs official called Priem; their fears were acute enough for

¹⁶⁶ Kamali, 90.

¹⁶⁷ Algar, 230-1.

¹⁶⁸ Browne, 99.

¹⁶⁹ Kamali, 128.

them to close the bazaar and gather in the Masjid e Shah. In the face of such protests the governor of Tabriz – Muhammad Ali Mirza – was compelled to accept the demands of the protestors. Upon hearing this news, the *tullab* took it upon them to rampage through the city, destroying the wine merchant's house where Mirza had originally been insulted, as well as hotels and new schools in the process. As a result Priem was forced into exile.

The continuing interdependence of the *ulema* and the *bazaaris* was evident in this incident. It helped to illustrate their alliance and the mutual goals that they shared. Their traditional powers were at work, with the *bazaaris* providing the economic thrust to back up the *ulema's* role as organizers of the people. The *ulema's* attempts were seen to reinforce the Islamic flavour of Persian society in the places that were attacked – the wine merchant's house, the hotels and the new *rushdiye* schools. The *ulema* hoped that by removing such representations of al-Sultan's reforms then they could strengthen their own position that had been undermined by the Persian state.

As a result of this insurgency, Amin al-Sultan found it increasingly difficult to cling onto his power and in 1903 he resigned, to be replaced by 'Ayn al-Daula.¹⁷⁰ The *ulema* celebrated this as a victory for their efforts in opposition to him and as a significant milestone in terms of how the power of the people could have such weighty consequences. Whilst not necessarily indicative of a move for constitutional change, the events leading up to al-Sultan's demise represented the beginning of a movement for change. It is important to remember in this regard that the *ulema* were not participants in the Constitutional Revolution as a coherent group in the beginning; they were advocates of progressive change but the Revolution was not founded upon any of their aims. Rather, the *ulema* had three other aims: to limit the power of the state; to cut the state's bonds with 'the West'; and to reinforce their own position in the community.¹⁷¹ Despite this initial stance, subsequent events caused the *ulema* to rethink their goals and they eventually came to abandon their traditional justification for power in favour of a more modern rationale, which included constitutionalism.

¹⁷⁰ Martin, 71.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 129.

3.3. Conclusion

Before discussing the idea of Constitutionalism and its transformation from a political imaginary to a social movement, it is important to discuss the discursive conditions making possible the emergence of a populist political movement which unified an ensemble of forces with diverse demands and aspirations. Having come under pressure from the external European economic and military expansion and the internal discord within their societies, the Ottoman and Iranian elite attempted to reform their mechanisms of government. For instance, the Young Turks of the Ottoman Empire restored their 1876 constitution with the intention that a greater unity with the Empire would be seen in the face of the promised equality for all; it was hoped that this would provide a favourable public response to their reform programs. These hopes were to be dashed though, when it became apparent that the multiple ethnic groups and communities in the Empire were pursued greater autonomy and independence, which ran contrary to the Ottoman unity that the Young Turks were promoting. The heavy-handed approach taken by the CUP in trying to introduce stricter central controls only served to alienate certain minority groups, although most Arab and Turkish members of the Empire remained loyal to the Ottoman state. The common interest in warding off the threat of European expansion seemed to have been an important binding factor between the disparate communities within the Ottoman Empire at this time.

Iran's transformation, whilst not being as vigorous as that of the Ottoman Empire's, was similar to the Ottomans' in that the ultimate goal was one and the same: to ensure the state's continued existence in the face of internal disunity and external aggression. In Iran's case though, there were crucial differences between the ideologies promoted by each reforming group. For the *ulema* and the *bazaaris*, the transformation should have brought with it a reduction in European interference in domestic trade, whilst maintaining their own traditionally high status. However, this conflicted with other European-inspired reformers who advocated a more intense program of reform that would establish a secular law-making body. These clashes only heightened in intensity upon the declaration of the constitution and made effective governance impossible. This problem was compounded by the lack of any suitable institution that could exert any true authority: the central state and the army were too weak, the treasury too depleted and the battle between royalists and constitutionalists could not

be resolved. The intervention of Russia and Britain, who carved up swathes of Iranian territory for their own control, had the effect of increasing resentment towards such European states within Iranian society. In both empires, the failure and the unwillingness of the state to democratize the political system resulted in the weakening of the bonds between the government and the indigenous groups in the society, and thus allowed the rising revolutionary movements to pave the way for the establishment of constitutional regimes.

CHAPTER 4

CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTIONS

The constitutional revolutions in the Ottoman Empire in 1908, and in Iran in 1906 brought considerable restrictions to monarchical power, as did the first constitutional arrangements in the governing of the polity. In both states, the first phase of reform started with modernization projects traceable to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that were initiated by reformist bureaucrats in response to Western and Russian military victories and territorial gains. However, depending upon the changing socio-political and economical circumstances, there have been shifts in the way constitutionalism was formulated, approached and applied by both states. The different constitutional revolutionary processes of the two countries and the aftermath of the revolutions will be evaluated according to these circumstances that affected the reform policies. This will be done through analyzing intellectual ideas and discussions.

4.1. The Constitutional Revolutionary Process in the Ottoman Empire

The tyrannical period of Abdul Hamid II and his autocratic rule continued until the re-proclamation of the Constitution and liberty on July 23 1908, as a result of pressures exerted on him by the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) which was referred to as an opposition against the Sultan's despotism. This organization was strongly influenced by Western liberal ideas since during the Hamidian period many leaders of the movement were forced to live in exile in European capitals. Therefore, they perceived constitutionalism and freedom as the only solution to prevent the decline of the Empire. As Kongar emphasized, "The Young Turk movement was not a social trend and not a social action. Rather they tended to nationalist and liberal aims, they were organized to resist against the repression of the Sultan like the Young

Ottomans movement".¹⁷² The basic aim of the Revolution of 1908 had clearly showed that the Committee aimed to be free from absolutism and to restore the constitutional order again. There were no other political or social programs for the economically underdeveloped Empire at that time.

4.1.1. The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)

The CUP period, which lasted from 1908 to the end of the First World War, can be split into two sections. Firstly, between 1908 and 1913, the CUP did not enjoy total political power, although it did heavily influence the government. Secondly, from 1913 to 1918, the CUP had moved to take supreme power.¹⁷³

At this time, it was important for the Ottoman state to re-assert its own identity in the face of the growing debts to foreign creditors that the Public Debt Administration was struggling to pay off. The success of the Young Turk movement and the separatist organizations that were becoming increasingly popular led to the CUP's victory in 1908 and with this came a wave of optimism from the Ottoman people who were revitalized by democracy. Freedom of expression was particularly important at this time, with many new publications and organizations springing up that promoted the new notions of Ottoman identity. The CUP proposed the creation of a modern, Ottomanist, citizenship model through a reformed and centralized educational and administrative institutions. This was explicitly declared in its program published on October 6 1908 in the newspaper *Şura-yı Ümmet* (Assembly of the People).¹⁷⁴ The official policy of the CUP would encompass an emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities, whilst simultaneously attempting to rein in the internal freedoms enjoyed by the various communities of the millet system.¹⁷⁵ In this context,

¹⁷² Emre Kongar, *İmparatorluktan Günümüze Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Yapısı* (Istanbul: Remzi Kitapevi, 1980), 67.

¹⁷³ Altunışık and Tür, 8.

¹⁷⁴ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler Vol. I* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Yayınları, 1984), 98-100. According to the program published in the first issue, the CUP members wanted: to establish the political freedom and territorial integrity of the empire against all kinds of foreign intervention; establish the constitutional regime; make reforms; enlighten the administrators about the contemporary developments and invite and force them to do their job; try to prove that Ottomans had the ability to reach the level of most highly developed states; and rescue the Ottoman dynasty from the slavery of the imperial court and make them learn about science. See Akşin, *Jön Türkler*, 55.

¹⁷⁵ Nesim Şeker, "Identity Formation and the Political Power in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic", *Actual-Historia Online*, No. 8 (Autumn 2005), 62.

the CUP banned the establishment of political associations with an ethnic or national resonance, implemented Turkish language compulsory in elementary schools – with secondary and higher education, adopting firm guidelines on the basis of Turkish – and decided for the conscription of non-Muslim groups to the military service by the end of 1909.¹⁷⁶ The CUP itself attempted to reform the mechanisms of the state by producing a more efficient bureaucracy designed to free up funds that could be ploughed into other initiatives, such as the expansion of primary education that was governmental policy at the time and the continuation of the nineteenth century reformers' plans to fully centralize the state. Thus this initial phase of the CUP period saw, in general, an expansion of parliamentary and governmental powers and a similar decline in the Sultans' influence, who rather than holding any real power, became mere figureheads at this time.

However, the newly established of the CUP regime did encounter its problems, most notably in the form of the bureaucrats whose institution had undergone cuts and changes and members of the traditional nobility whose provincial countryside lives had been adversely affected by the centralizing policies of the new government. Both of these groups were eager to confront the CUP and regain what they had lost. Similarly, religious and ethnic minorities attempted to make their calls for greater autonomy heard by the government. Furthermore, a new opposition group comprised of religious conservatives and liberals was formed in the wake of the disagreements that the CUP regime had caused. The secularizing outlook of the CUP offended the religious sections of society, whilst the liberals were angered by the prominence of their centralization-favouring rivals and the relatively weak attempts made to promote political liberalism. As such, the liberals formed their own break-away party in 1908 called the *Ahrar Fırkası* (the Liberal Union) and continued to lobby against the government. Finally, the opposition created an insurrection by the Istanbul garrison in April 1909 which was fronted by the conservative army officers, the *ulema* and the students of religious institutions, and religious groups who wanted to see 'the restoration of the *şeriat*' and used religion as a pretext for their actions.¹⁷⁷ Islam lost its

¹⁷⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics: 1908-1914*, 61-2.

¹⁷⁷ Religious extremists, who were already active around the newspaper *Volkan* of the Nakşibendi Sheikh Derviş Vahdeti since 15 December 1908, organized themselves as the *İttihad-i Muhammedi* (Muhammadan Union) on April 3 1909. After the armed insurrection broke out on April 12 1909, all religious groups marched to the parliament to present their demands: dismissal of the grand vizier and the ministers of war and of the navy, replacement of a number of Unionist officers, replacement

previous significance in the ideological structure of the CUP which was not able to extinguish the reactionary influences over the political system.¹⁷⁸ The rebels were eventually dispersed by the army commanded by Mahmut Sevket Pasha (later Minister of War and Prime Minister of the CUP), and the repercussions for the sultan were severe: Abdul Hamid was compelled to give his throne to his younger brother whilst he himself was sentenced to exile in Greece by parliament, who accused the sultan of 'organizing the counter-revolution'. Although in this instance the government managed to maintain its grip on power and dispose of its opponents, to establish the modern parliamentary state by limiting the Sultan's rights, and recognize the rights and liberties of the general public, other rebels existed and there were continual challenges to the CUP administration, stemming to function it properly.

Not long after the CUP had come into power, two blows to the regime came in the shape of the Bulgarian declaration of independence in 1908 and Austria's announcement that she was annexing Bosnia-Herzegovina. Shortly after this, a third problem arose when Crete flouted the conditions of the 1878 Treaty of Berlin by uniting with Greece; the Ottomans did not have sufficient strength to oppose this move and were forced to accept it. Yet the problems continued to arrive: there were uprisings in Yemen, Macedonia and Albania; Italy invaded and successfully seized control of Libya in 1911-1912; and a union of Balkan states attacked the Ottomans in 1912, the defeat to whom was seen as distinct evidence that the Ottoman Empire in its traditional form could not function in the twentieth century.¹⁷⁹ She had been humiliated by her former colonies and had lost the vast majority of her European territories in a series of humbling military defeats.

Given the circumstances, the CUP felt moved to invoke ruthless means to maintain its control of central government, with the radical section of the administration who became known as the Unionists rising to seize power during the 1913 Balkan conflict. Increasingly isolated from her Western neighbours, the Empire became only further alienated when members of the Ottoman political elite defected to the side of the Central Powers in the First World War, which in turn had catastrophic

of the Unionist president of the Chamber of Deputies (Ahmed Rıza), banishing of a number of Unionist deputies from Istanbul, restoration of the *şeriat* and an amnesty for the rebellious troops. See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B.Tauris, 3rd Ed. 2004), 96 and Sina Akşin, *Jön Türkler ve İttihad Terakki*, 116-120.

¹⁷⁸ Boztemur, 30.

¹⁷⁹ Aykut Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey: 1908-1913* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 257-263. Also Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 39-48.

domestic effects. Before addressing how the Ottoman government was severely weakened by this defection one should first examine the events of the reformist period and their relation to the emergence of a modern state.

4.1.2. The Identity Debate

The reformist period of the nineteenth century can be said to have stimulated great socio-economic, educational and ideological upheaval in the Empire. Indeed, during this period there came a 'fundamental recasting of Ottoman identity'¹⁸⁰ which led to the dissolution of traditional institutions and the replacement of the governmental policy of attempting to maintain the *status quo* with the building of a new order.

The reform debate raged throughout the nineteenth century, with the most important issues being to what extent should the Ottomans model themselves on their European neighbours and following on from this, how then should any resulting policy be implemented in a state as ethnically and religiously diverse as the Ottoman Empire. There were various schools of thought and competing factions within the Empire, with the most popular notion being 'Ottomanism', which was 'an uneasy mix of the old ideology (Ottoman culture and Islam) and modern nationalism'¹⁸¹; the theory was that Ottoman citizens could retain their traditional values of loyalty to the Sultan and Empire whilst adding modern nationalism to the mix. The ideology behind Ottomanism was suitably ambiguous so as to allow some room for manoeuvre in its implementation, permitting the reformers to adapt to the changing conditions in the Empire.

Despite early Ottomanism promoting an ideal of equal rights for all religious groups – where non-Muslims comprised roughly 40 *per cent* of the Ottoman state at the beginning of the nineteenth century – there were nevertheless frequent uprisings in non-Muslim regions.¹⁸² Muslims were also aggrieved that their traditional supremacy and influence was being eroded in the name of progress and were critical of the reform movement, and thus tended to place their political faith. Among this group appeared

¹⁸⁰ Deringil, 171.

¹⁸¹ Rifat Ali Abou-el-Hajj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 60-9.

¹⁸² Altunışık and Tür, 9.

the Young Ottomans who had been arguing against government policies that they viewed as too Europe-centric and favourable to non-Muslims.

Whilst all this was happening within the Empire there were also significant events abroad that were largely disastrous for the Ottomans. The Berlin Agreement of 1878 after the Balkan Wars robbed the Empire of its Christian provinces in the region – two-fifths of its land and one-fifth of its population – and many Muslims moved to other Ottoman territories.¹⁸³

Consequently, with the proportion of non-Muslims in the Empire being significantly lower than before, the notion of Ottomanism had to be re-thought; Ottomanism now had to be aimed to focus on the integration of the Muslim peripheries of society rather than guaranteeing equality for the large swathes of non-Muslims that inhabited former Ottoman territories. In order to assuage the fears of Muslim groups that had been disaffected by previous efforts to promote an egalitarian Ottomanism, the project during the Hamidian regime was based on an emphasis on the Islamic aspects of Ottoman society which, it was hoped, would also reach out to Muslims outside of the Empire. The Sultan embraced this Pan-Islamic approach which was developed by Ottoman intellectuals like Namık Kemal and more importantly by Sayyed Jamal al-Din Afghani, and proceeded to prioritize his Muslim citizens over all others. This could be seen as a pragmatic move aimed at dealing with the various internal and external threats that continued to hang over the Ottoman Empire. As Kayalı argues:

Abdül Hamid placed a new emphasis on Islam and his personal religious role as caliph. Yet his Islamism neither negated nor superseded Ottomanism. In Hamidian Islamism as well as Ottomanism, as it emerged and underwent transformation since the Tanzimat, the focus of loyalty was the Ottoman sultan. Both ideologies stressed the notion of a 'fatherland', the geographic expression of which was the territories under the sultan's jurisdiction.¹⁸⁴

Now obtaining a larger proportion of the population, Ottoman Muslims were cited in the Hamidian period by the Sultan and his government as being crucial to maintaining a societal loyalty to the state, with the Arab provinces in particular being targeted to engender such sentiments. This policy was, however, unsuccessful as Arab

¹⁸³ David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

¹⁸⁴ Kayalı, 31.

nationalism came to be stronger than Ottoman nationalism. The nineteenth century also witnessed further dislocations in the Ottoman Empire with a popularization of minority ethnic identities aided by the modernization that swept the CUP to power.¹⁸⁵

It has been presented that during the CUP's rule the non-Turkish aspects of society were discarded in favour of Pan-Turkism, or rather its political variation, Turkish nationalism. However, recently it has also been demonstrated that the CUP continued on its path of Ottomanism, despite the damaging Balkan Wars of 1911-1913. Still, Turkish nationalism and Pan-Turkism were generally the preserve of intellectuals such as Yusuf Akcura, Ahmet Agaoglu and Huseyinzade Ali¹⁸⁶ that were mostly migrants from Russia who were eager to stress the importance of unifying all Turkish speakers with their nationalist feelings.¹⁸⁷ The CUP still retained to stress both secularization and Ottoman nationalism based on a loyalty to the fatherland, whilst at the same time promoting the Islamic sides of Ottoman identity.

4.1.3. The Aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution in the Ottoman Empire

The Constitutional Revolution put the reconstruction of the Empire on the political agenda of many of the groups which participated in the Revolution, with various plans and ideas being put forward for the future of the Empire. Despite the view that the 1908 revolution and subsequent democratization of the Ottoman Empire was conducted along strictly Western lines of democratic ideology propagated by Western scholars, it is clear so see that these early twentieth century events were in fact characterized by distinctly Ottoman features that differed from Western electoral practices; Ottoman democracy was established according to traditional Islamic and Turkish cultural markers, with the CUP making the pledge that the majority of

¹⁸⁵ Fieldhouse, 20-5.

¹⁸⁶ Pan-Turkist writers founded their Turkish Society in the libertarian atmosphere of the 1908 Revolution, and published their ideas in journals like Turkish Homeland (*Türk Yurdu*). The CUP's Turkish nationalism gained pace with the establishment in 1912 of the Turkish Heart (*Türk Ocağı*) in the same Military Medical College where the seeds for the CUP were laid. See Boztemur, 31. Also David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977); Uriel Heyd, *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The life and teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London: The Harville Press, 1950), François Georgeon, *Türk Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Yusuf Akçura (1876-1935)*, translated by Alev Er (Ankara: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2005)

¹⁸⁷ See Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 188; Kayalı, 209-210; and Karpat, 327.

Unionist candidates would be of Turkish Muslim stock, albeit with a sprinkling of non-Muslims such as the Jews that were CUP's candidates in Thessaloniki and Izmir.¹⁸⁸

The political victory of 1908 sent shockwaves throughout the Empire and caused various disputes between members of the former elite groups. Such disputes fell into two main categories: the revolutionary and constitutional groups, and the counter-revolutionary forces, whose interests were endangered by the establishment of the democratic regime. This sudden polarization of the elite groups caused each one – be it political, economic, bureaucratic or religious – to break apart, as each group was unable to form a stance on the revolution that was agreeable to a majority of its members. There were even divisions visible inside the groups taking opposite sides of the conflict. Murad Bey, a key player in the establishment of the constitutional regime, came to alter his stance on the matter and ended up cooperating with the anti-constitutional members of the *ancien regime*. Similarly the majority of *ulema* members revolted against the new regime which they saw as a threat to the status and influence that they had hitherto enjoyed, as Kansu argues:

During his sermon at the Fatih Mosque, Kor Ali, a hodja, urged his congregation to reject the Constitution and the parliamentary regime. He spoke against liberty and equality, belittling the importance of such concepts, and organized an armed march through the streets of the capital. Crossing over the Galata Bridge, the crowd walked to Besiktas and the Yıldız Palace, where it demanded the abolition of the constitutional regime and pledged its support for Sultan Abdulhamid. The crowd then withdrew, shouting epithets against Kamil Pasha, the Grand Vezier, and Camaleddin Efendi, the Sheikh-ul-Islam.¹⁸⁹

However, several Muslim religious leaders such as Sheikh Rashid Rida took the constitutionalist side and actively participated in CUP affairs. Thus the *ulema* class, along with other religious groups, was also severely polarized on the issue, something which was reflected in electoral results: two Muslims, three Christians (two Greek and one Armenian) and one Jew were elected for the province of Izmir.¹⁹⁰

The Constitutional Revolution can thus be seen to have had a negative impact as far as integration within the Empire was concerned; there were too many divisions in too many sections of society that would need to be mended before the Empire could

¹⁸⁸ Kamali, 139.

¹⁸⁹ Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 199-200.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 264.

even begin to consider itself to be a single unified state. These internal conflicts, along with Western blueprints¹⁹¹, influential political parties and the intervention of foreign powers can be counted as major factors in the unstable period that followed the Revolution; the future of the regime would not be decided until these forces could be made to pull in the same direction, and for this a strong central government was needed.

As mentioned earlier, the two opposing political polities were busy assembling their programs for the democratization of the Empire. Ahmad reduces the numerous factions in the constitutionalist camp into two groups: Liberals and Unionists¹⁹², with the Liberals being of a well-educated and Westernized upper class stock and with the Unionists being drawn from the lower middle classes (in western terms), that is to say the classes that had suffered the consequences of progressive integration into the world market due to the erosion of the indigenous economy.¹⁹³ Decentralization and other private initiatives were the basis of the Liberals' manifesto, who with Prince Sabahaddin as their leader gained the support of the non-Turkish and non-Muslim communities. These communities had previously been supportive of the constitutional movement in the hope that it would assist in increasing their own power and spheres of influence. A decentralized government, they hoped, would enable them to gain a representative voice in the cabinet to propagate the terms of their needs and ambitions. The CUP contained the Unionists and argued that the government and the Porte should be altered, and claimed to be the true guardians of the democracy and constitutionalization that would lead to the continuance of the Empire.¹⁹⁴

The research of some scholars has argued that the process of modernization of the Ottoman Empire can be seen as a struggle between Westernizers and Islamists. However, this viewpoint is erroneous in that it fails to take into account the so-called fundamentalist Islamists' shifting interpretations of civilization since the inception of Islamic states.¹⁹⁵ For instance, Bernard Lewis misrepresents the views of Musa Kazım

¹⁹¹ Liberal Western ideas that made their way into the Ottoman Empire were not of a similar, homogeneous nature; indeed, there were various differing ideas and models that shaped the development of the Empire that were adopted and modified according to the needs of different societal groups.

¹⁹² Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 33.

¹⁹³ Kansu, 34.

¹⁹⁴ Ahmad, 32-3.

¹⁹⁵ Kamali, 141.

Efendi (1858-1919) by failing to understand that his religio-political stance was based more on his position as *seyhulislam*, to which he was appointed by the Sultan; Efendi's views were based around his high status in society and the threats to this that he encountered.¹⁹⁶ Indeed, many other *seyhulislams* participated in anti-Sultan protests to protect their authority as we mentioned before; this in itself can be seen in the context of the changing structures of indigenous Ottoman society, and taken as the evidence of the substantial social and cultural transformation that occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Such transformations can be seen in the ways in which the indigenous Ottoman population attempted to reconcile their traditional socio-economic and cultural institutions with Western innovations and ideologies. Writing about this aspect of the early twentieth century Ottoman Empire, Celal Nuri (1877-1939) discussed these sociological developments by dividing them into a technical side and a real side and argued that 'the West', whilst achieving technological superiority over the rest of the world, had not achieved real civilization; technical civilization, he argued, could be transferred and borrowed between countries, but real civilization could not.¹⁹⁷

During the First World War, the Ottomans were allied with Germany and Austria and were initially successful, scoring victories over Britain and Russia at Kut, Gallipoli and in Eastern Anatolia. However, by the end of the war the Empire's military weaknesses were starting to show. The new Sultan – Mehmed Vahdeddin – and his Grand Vizier – Izzet Pasa – attempted to reach a diplomatic solution to the War and to prevent the Empire from crumbling by signing an armistice on October 29 1918. As a result, the era of moderate modernization was over and a political vacuum had been created into which many new proposals for rescuing the Turkish state were thrust.

After the War, the former Ottoman Empire had fallen apart with many other states declaring their independence and autonomy; its former capital, Istanbul, was occupied by Allied Forces and Izmir was occupied by the Greeks with the support of the Allies. The intention of this manoeuvre was to create a 'Greater Greece' by seizing control of Western Anatolia and, with the backing of British, French and American warships, the Greek forces began a march to the East to put into motion the plan to

¹⁹⁶ Lewis, 234.

¹⁹⁷ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Amme Hukukumuz Bakımından İkinci Meşrutiyetin Siyasi Tefekküründe İslamcılık Cereyanı* (Istanbul: Hukuk Fakültesi, 1948), 594-5.

restore to the Greek state the glories it had enjoyed as the Greek Christian Empire of Constantinople¹⁹⁸; the spent Ottoman army were unable to prevent the offensive from continuing apace, but the Ottoman people took it upon themselves to engage the Greeks with guerrilla tactics in a bid to prevent their assault. On 23 May at the Sultan Ahmed Square in Istanbul, a wave of national sentiment prompted the Turks to defend their state against their invaders, an act which demonstrated that if a Turkish state was to be resurrected, then it could be established according to the nationalist sentiment displayed in the resistance to the Greek invasion.

4.2. The Constitutional Revolutionary Process in Iran

According to the research of various scholars of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, it seems apparent that the loans that Iran received from Britain and Russia were given to them with the expectation that they would not be paid back.¹⁹⁹ Instead, they were used by the British and the Russians as a means of applying pressure on the Iranian government to accept their own policies in Iran. The Belgians who were appointed to reorganize Iranian customs are a case in point as they neither helped to increase Iranian revenue from Western trade nor help to pay their loans back; what they did, though, was to increase Western economic and political influence in Iran and reduce exports – a favourable set of circumstances as far as the British and the Russians were concerned.

4.2.1. The Campaign for Constitution

Nauz, one of the Belgian customs officials, agreed a trade treaty with Russia in 1903 that harmed the prospects of the Persian bazaars – not only did it reduce the tariffs payable on Russian imports, it simultaneously increased the tariffs on goods exported from Persia. Being so clearly favourable towards Russian merchants, the British were moved to impose upon the Persian government a similar treaty guaranteeing the same privileges for British traders. Unsurprisingly, this caused wave of protest amongst Persian merchants who turned to the *ulema* for assistance, who wrote letters to 'Ayn al-Daula and the Shah to express their discontent at Nauz's

¹⁹⁸ Lewis, 241-2.

¹⁹⁹ See Algar, *Religion and the State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*, 231-6.

activities, as well as the treatment of Persian traders and the conditions granted to merchants from overseas.²⁰⁰ However, the protests fell on deaf ears, with the Persian state maintaining their support for Nauz, and eventually promoting him to the position of Minister of Post and Telegraphs.

The *ulema*, being a religious body, had to wait for an opportunity to express their discontent in religious terms before their protests against Nauz could be seen to be legitimate. Such an opportunity came in the form of Nauz dressing himself in the traditional clothes of the *ulema* at a fancy-dress ball in March 1905. The *ulema* could use this as evidence of Nauz's disregard for them and make the further claim that by doing so he was insulting Islam itself.²⁰¹ Although the photograph of Nauz in his costume that *ulema* used as to justify their disapproval was over two years old in 1905, they were still able to use it to stimulate protests against the new tariffs by the people on religious grounds; with the *bazaaris* also still angry at Nauz for his economic treaties, the conditions were right to launch a wave of protests against his tenure.²⁰² Indeed, the anti-Nauz feeling coincided with *Muharram*²⁰³, the Shia's holy month – a convenient coincidence which helped the *ulema's* protests reach a wider demographic. By July 1905, Tehran's merchants, led by Hajji Muhammad Ismail Maghazei and Hajji Ali Shalforosh, had decided to close up their bazaars and congregate in the holy shrine of Shah 'Abd al-'Azim, whereupon their protests were taken more seriously by the state than they had been before. Abbas Mirza, the Crown Prince, promised to remove Nauz and the Shah travelled to Europe to attempt to negotiate more favourable terms for his merchants and end the dispute. Although the intention of the protests against Nauz was not aimed at instigating a constitutional change in Persian society, it was actually as an important step on the road to the Revolution. There was popular support for protests organized largely by the *ulema* and the *bazaaris*; further movements against local governors in Shiraz, Sabzevar, Qazvin and Kirman are also symptomatic of the discontent in Persian society.

Despite the controversy surrounding Nauz and his treaties with Britain and Russia, the Russians themselves remained largely unaffected and continued with their program of attempting to reinforce the grip they had taken on Persian trade. One step

²⁰⁰ Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*, 105-7.

²⁰¹ Afary, 51.

²⁰² Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (London/New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006), 33.

²⁰³ *Muharram* is the black month in which the Third Shia Imam Husayn was killed in Karbala.

that they took at this time to meet this end was to buy the land of a former cemetery and a derelict school with the intention of building a branch of the Russian Bank on it. Yet the fact that they were trying to build on traditional *vaqf* lands was deemed to be 'against *Shar*'²⁰⁴ and thus provoked the protests of members of the Tehran *ulema*, whose leader Sayyed Mohammad Tabatabai entreated the Russians to stop. Having received no reply from the Russians regarding their plans to build the bank, an uprising was organized by Tabatabai and Sayyed Abdollah Behbahani in which the half-completed bank building was destroyed. Having done this, the two *mujtahids* Tabatabai and Behbahani became seen as beacons of Persian resistance against the government and in time leaders of the constitutional movement. Later Sayyid Jamal al-Din 'al-Afghani' as the spokesman joined them and also became one of the chief promoters of the Revolution.

4.2.1.1. *The First Bast (1905) and the Second Bast (1906)*

The discussions about the import and price of sugar creating a disturbance in Persia gives us further evidence of the close relationship enjoyed by the *ulema* and the *bazaaris*. Being largely imported from Russia, the price of sugar had risen by 1905 due to Russia's war with Japan, which embittered 'Ala al-Daula, who at this time was the Governor of Tehran.²⁰⁵ In an attempt to force the bazaars to reduce their prices, he commanded several merchants to be whipped in his palace. This action only served to anger the *bazaaris*, who took *bast* (sanctuary) in the Masjid-i Shah (Mosque of the Shah) marching with the *ulema* after closing their bazaar to protest against the harsh treatment given to their colleagues.²⁰⁶ Continuing into the next day, this protest soon devolved into chaos with the *ulema*, the *bazaaris* and the urban masses fighting against the Governor, the government-appointed *Imam-Jum'ah* (leader of Friday Prayer), Mirza Abul Qasem, and the agents of the state in a desperate attempt to register their

²⁰⁴ The *Shar* is the religious law based on the Koran, the opinions of the Imams, and the commentaries of the Shia jurist. This body of law has been codified and divided into four heads, dealing respectively with religious rights and duties, contracts, personal affairs, and judicial procedure. See Sir Percy Skyes, *A History of Persia* (New York: Barnes & Noble Inc, 1969), 384.

²⁰⁵ Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: The Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis*, 34.

²⁰⁶ Mosques and shrines were a major area of *bast* (sanctuary) for individuals and groups that feared governmental arrest or harassment. Edward G. Browne, *A Year Among the Persians* (New York: McMillan Company, 1926), 98.

protests with higher powers.²⁰⁷ Later, various protestors were attacked by soldiers when trying to march to the shrine of Shah 'Abd al-'Azim to take refuge.

This event was important as it indicated the start of the radicalization of the movement through the creation of a network of reformist *ulema*, *bazaaris* and some intellectuals. By taking refuge in the Shah 'Abd al-'Azim shrine, the protestors were making a symbolic display of severing the ties that existed between the government and the *ulema*, with the former now setting themselves up as the spokesmen and leaders of the movement against the state and foreign influence.²⁰⁸ Though, this alone should not be taken to mean that the *ulema* were intent on diverting state power away from the government into their own hands. Rather, it was their goal to merely place limits on the absolutist control of the state whilst creating new methods for themselves to influence wider Persian society. The key to this issue lies in the fact that the *ulema* would be unable to consolidate and expand their own power and influence without supporting the changes that were being promoted by the *bazaaris* and other urban groups – as such, the *ulema* had to reform their own agenda to fall more into line with the groups that they wished to be able to influence.

The groups involved in the movement thus came to an agreement with each other. One particular reform put forward was the concept of *Adalat-Khana* – the House of Justice – suggested by the *ulema*, who took a petition to the Shah on February 9 1906 to found such an institution.²⁰⁹ The people's demand for justice, the desire to limit the power of the shah and the state and the need for democracy can be seen as the three key factors behind this action. Although by making the request to the Shah the *ulema* were not attempting to create a secular law making body, but instead to add greater credence to their traditional claims to control of jurisprudence. It was considered by the *ulema* that a House of Justice would meet their goals in this regard by limiting the interference of the state in civic matters.²¹⁰

The concerted pressure placed upon the Shah by the protestors over the course of several days of heated discussion eventually reaped a reward, when the Shah decided to accept the demands made of him, and on February 11 the *ulema* were met on their return from Shah 'Abd al-'Azim by a vast crowd of onlookers. Their first sanctuary attempts, however, were to be short-lived as the Shah and his government

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 100.

²⁰⁸ Bayat, 111.

²⁰⁹ Skyes, 401.

²¹⁰ Kamali, 131.

failed to act upon their promises and did not found the House of Justice, as agreed.²¹¹ This caused further unrest in many Persian cities where there were more uprisings against local governors that displayed the discontent stimulated by the Shah's actions; the revolt of Mashad was particularly noticeable, with many people left dead and injured.

Concurrently, the people of Shiraz rose up against their governor Shu'a al-Saltana and forced him into exile – further evidence of the discontent caused in Persian society by the government's broken promise of a House of Justice – which prompted the *ulema*, in turn, to take a more radical position against the state. It was after this that a *Majlis-e Mashvarat* (Consultative Assembly) was first mooted, in a letter written by Tabatabai to the Prime Minister, 'Ayn al-Daula. Similarly, the ongoing movement for change also became more radicalized as a result of the increased involvement of the general populace in direct conflicts with authority. As such, Tabatabai was moved to again write to the Prime Minister to demand the establishment of a *Majlis*. The *ulema* came to conclusion that the most important obstacle facing the reforms was 'Ayn al-Daula who was exercising his tyrannical rule, not the shah himself and thus decided to talk to shah directly since he was kept uninformed about the ongoing political developments in the country.²¹²

The fanaticism that was beginning to become more widespread was, however, not always useful to the *ulema*, who as the organizers of civil protests were finding it increasingly difficult to exercise control. Several riots broke in Tehran after the killing of Sayyid Abdul Hamid and the massacre in the Masjid-e Jom'a, and the *ulema* removed themselves to the holy city of Qum, where they said they would stay until their demands had been met. This event which took place on July 21 was known amongst the Persians as 'the Great Exodus'.²¹³

For their part in the protests, the *bazaaris* and the *tullab* took their concerns to the British embassy in Tehran, being unable to remain in the mosques, picking up significantly more recruits as the journey went along. At the start on June 19 there were around 50 *bazaaris* and *tullab*; by the eleventh day there were over 12,000; and by July 2 there were 14,000.²¹⁴ The group demanded to meet the British Ambassador,

²¹¹ Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909*, 115.

²¹² Bayat, 124-5.

²¹³ Afary, 106-110.

²¹⁴ Denis Wright, *The Persians Amongst the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986), 203.

Grant Daff, refusing to negotiate with the Shah's other representatives that were sent to meet them, to put forward their demands, which became gradually more radical as the discussions went on. To begin with they asked for a few moderate concessions, as the conditions of their return to home; the dismissal of 'Ayn al-Daula, the promulgation of a code of law, and the recall of the religious leaders from Qum, but later came to demand the foundation of the *Dar al-Shura* – a *Majlis* or parliament – which signified the first demands for constitutional change.²¹⁵

This second *bast* that the *bazaaris* took had several consequences: the bazaars were closed; the city's economy collapsed; and the *ulema* left for Qum (an act which severely affected the religious and social life of the city). Crucially, it also compelled the Shah to listen to the demands of the refugees and on July 29 1906, Prime Minister 'Ayn al-Daula resigned after two years of opposition to his tenure; the much-desired *Majlis* was established by Mozafar al-Din Shah's decree of a week later on August 18 1906. The *ulema* were thus able to enjoy their victory by returning to Tehran to a crowd of thousands celebrating the landmark triumph. The bulk of the first constitutional law was translated from the Belgian Constitution of 1831 and Bulgarian Constitution of 1879. The elections were held in early October and although it was not completed in all the provinces, the assembly would prove to be efficient and independent from the pressures of the Shah and the government started to work on 7 October 1906. The assembly represented a coalition of the *ulema*, the *bazaaris* and westernized liberals.²¹⁶ The Constitution of 1906 determined the duties of the cabinet, Prime and ministers (who are appointed and dismissed by the Shah), but did not aim to arrange the distribution of authority between the Shah and the cabinet. It is understood that their relations remained the same as given at the time.²¹⁷ Prior to the Shah had been determining all executive, judicial and legislative policy, but the urban areas, religious authority, strong guild system and Sufi order had executing in the name of the Shah.²¹⁸ In the Constitution, Shiite Islam was declared as the official religion of Iran. In addition, the duality of the traditional judiciary system was endorsed as done in the Ottoman Fundamental Law, i.e., the religious courts were recognized along the civil

²¹⁵ Browne, 118-9.

²¹⁶ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 578.

²¹⁷ Leonard Binder, "The Cabinet of Iran: A Case Study in Institutional Adaption", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.16, No.1 (Winter 1962): 33-35.

²¹⁸ Reza Arasteh, *Man and Society in Iran* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970), 112.

courts.²¹⁹ A few months after the declaration of constitutionalism, Mozafar al-Din Shah died on January 8 1907 and his anti-constitutionalist son Muhammad Ali (1906-09) became the new Shah.

4.2.2. Attempts against Constitution

The disputes between the *Majlis* and Muhammad Ali Shah started on the first day. Muhammad Ali, being against the constitution and the *Majlis*, caused a crisis during his coronation ceremonies by inviting only the high ranking *ulema* and the royal family members of *Majlis*.²²⁰ Although the *Majlis* was trying to limit the allocation of the shah and his civil list, the new regime was not strong enough to establish its authority in the provinces. Peasants were refusing to pay taxes and the road concessionaires were unable to collect tolls, while the rapid revival of smuggling was decreasing the revenues of the customs. Problems between the tribes and the government were also increasing. Still reactionary activities, such as the publication of several newspapers²²¹, the development of journalism and the establishment of *anjomans* (councils), were to retaliate against Shah's regime. The *Majlis* began to function by abolishing the *tüyul* system and establishing private property on land. Hence, the majority of villages fell under landlord ownership, and peasants became landless sharecroppers. The *Majlis* also accomplished to dismiss Nauz, the Belgian customs official, on 10 February 1907 and also the establishment of a national bank was prepared to compromise on 1 February 1907.²²² The power struggle between the Shah and the *Majlis* and the reformers had already reached a climax when the Anglo-Russian treaty of 31 August 1907 came to the agenda. According to this treaty, these two powers were guaranteeing the territorial integrity of Iran. However, the main

²¹⁹ Said Amir Arjomand, "Constitutions and the Struggle for Political Order", in *Cultural Transitions in the Middle East* edited by Şerif Mardin (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 21.

²²⁰ Robert A. McDaniel, *The Shuster Mission and the Persian Constitutional Revolution* (Minneapolis and Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1974), 65.

²²¹ Important examples of these newspapers were the weekly *Sur-i Israfil* or 'Trumpet-call of Israfil' (the Angel of the Resurrection) which first appeared on 30 May 1907; the *Habl al-Matin*, or 'Firm Cable', which had been published since 1892 in Calcutta, published its Persian edition on 29 April 1907; the *Majlis* or 'Assembly', which gave full reports of the debates at the National Assembly, first published on 27 December 1906; and the weekly *Tamaddun*, or 'Civilization', which was first published on 1 February 1907. See Yahya Armajani, *Middle East Past and Present*, 123 and Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 127-8.

²²² Browne, 136-7.

purpose of the treaty was to divide Iran into three zones where these two powers share out their interests on Iran against escalating threat from Germany.²²³ The Southern part of Iran became the influence zone of Britain while the Northern part was the zone of the Russians. The third zone was a neutral zone between them where both could act. This agreement created a further distrust against these countries.²²⁴

The Shah led his final attempt to abolish the Revolution on 22 and 22 June 1908 with the help of the Cossack Brigade, which joined with the Shah's own military forces to occupy the Sepah Salar Mosque, ambush the *Majlis*, and attack its defenders. After a long battle on June 23, the constitutionalists' resistance was broken and their supremacy was at an end – many of their number were killed during the fighting and afterwards in jail.²²⁵

As a consequence of these events, the movement for constitutional change had entered a new phase, with the traditional mechanisms of government and power-broking evolving to take new forms and traditional political alliances facing the possibility of dislocation and extinction. In order to steady themselves in the face of anti-revolutionary forces, the revolutionaries needed to form new alliances, especially considering the state's destruction of constitutionalist military forces in Tehran. Outside of Tehran, the picture was slightly different with many revolutionaries continuing to oppose the state-led military. This was particularly noticeable in Tabriz.

After the Shah besieged the city for ten months, which ended with Russian military intervention, the citizens of Tabriz all became *mujahidin* and *fadais*, who fought bravely against the reactionary forces. With the help of radicals from Transcaucasia, people organized an army composed of workers, artisans, peasants, and tribesmen. There were even some women who took up arms. They held elections in the city and reconstituted the Tabriz *Anjuman*. During this period, the Tabriz *Anjuman* took the place of the *Majlis* and became an example to the uprisings against the anti-constitutionalist forces in the other parts of the country, namely Gilan and Isfahan. The Tabriz resistance movement produced two heroes, Sattar Khan and Bagir Khan, who headed the constitutionalist forces and gained victory.²²⁶ The constitutionalists began

²²³ Hafez Farman Farmayan, *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Historical Analysis 559 BC-AD 1971* (Utah: Middle East Center, University of Utah, 1971), 21.

²²⁴ See Jacob Coleman Hurewitz, *The Middle East and North Africa in World Politics, A Documentary Record* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), 538-540 and also Armajani, 259-260.

²²⁵ Bayat, 230-1.

²²⁶ Afary, 211-2.

to produce their own propaganda, publishing a newspaper in Tabriz, *Nalah-yi Millat* (The Appeal of the Nation) and sent petitions informing Western powers that they would not be responsible for the loans given to the Shah. Intellectual groups were also important to the revolutionaries and their cause, since many had fled to Europe in the wake of the coup and spread anti-Shah sentiment by establishing new political groups to champion the work of the revolutionaries. Along these lines, The Society of Success and Development in Iran - *Anjoman-e Sa'adat-e Iran* – was set up in Istanbul to distribute information about the revolutionaries' struggle throughout Europe and *Atabat*, which was one of the main centres granting legitimacy to the politically ambitious.²²⁷ Especially after the Young Turk Revolution in the Ottoman Empire, the Society established close ties with the CUP and began to be influential in activities helping the revolutionaries in Iran.

Before the Revolution, Muhammad Ali Shah attempted to bring the *ulema* of the *Atabat* to his side of the dispute in the hope that they would grant him some much-needed legal legitimacy to back his anti-revolutionary agenda. He was, however, thwarted in this matter as the *ulema* instead decided that his attempts to block the constitutionalists conflicted with Islam; indeed, after the coup, the *ulema* issued a fatwa that made it illegal for the Persian army to cooperate with the Shah.²²⁸ The *ulema's* position in the matter was strong and had to be accepted as they were protected, in their residence at *Atabat*, from any threats that the state could make; they were able to express their opinions on the matter without fear of recrimination and thus adopted a tactic of propagandizing their pro-constitutionalist stance to aid the Tabriz revolutionaries. A further fatwa was issued at this time which made the declaration that 'war with the people of Tabriz is like war against the Hidden Imam' and as a result Tabriz became a centre that spearheaded the resistance to counter-revolutionary forces despite being put under tremendous pressure by the military.²²⁹

Crucially, the revolutionaries had the backing of various groups of civil society that supported their modernist views of government, which in turn lent their cause greater legitimacy; the counter-revolutionaries, meanwhile, were not fortunate enough to receive such support and as such the Shah's coup conflicted with the traditional role of the state and violated the Islamic legitimacy that his position was based on. The

²²⁷ Ibid., 222.

²²⁸ Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (New York: Random House, 1978), 729.

²²⁹ Kamali, 133.

Shah's desperate attempts to bring the *ulema* back onto his side continued to fail, with the *ulema* choosing instead to found an alternative to the closed *Majlis* - the *Anjoman-e iyalati-ye Tabriz* (Provincial Association of Tabriz). The small number of *ulema* that remained loyal to the Shah and took up an anti-constitutional stance were not sufficiently powerful to provide the legal, religious and social legitimacy that he required. The Shah thus turned to the Russians and other Persian tribes for support, such as Shahsavān, Qarah Dagh, and some Kurdish tribes such as Shakkak and Jalali, in his battle against the constitutionalists of Tabriz.

Such tribes were deemed to be useful to the Shah due to their military capabilities – their armies were very skilful users of weapons, on foot and on horseback, and would help to bolster the state's military struggles against the constitutionalists. Indeed, in the struggles of 1908-09 tribal forces played a crucial role in that there were such forces on the side of the revolutionaries, as well as the counter-revolutionaries. One such tribe, the Bakhtiyari, was one of Persia's largest and aided the constitutionalists to fight the troops of the Shah, scoring a significant victory against government forces in Tehran in 1909.²³⁰ A confederation of Bakhtiyari tribesmen from the south and an armed rebel force of the province of Azerbaijan from the north entered the capital in July and restored the constitution. Muhammad Ali Shah, who had taken refuge in the Russian legation, was deposed of in favour of his young son, Ahmed, who became shah under regency (1909-25). The second *Majlis* convened in August 1909²³¹, the constitution had been successfully defended, but it remained to be seen whether a constitutional regime representing such diverse interests could govern effectively. Such tribal forces seemingly decided their loyalties depending on the beliefs of their chiefs: those with traditional beliefs – Rahim Khan, for instance, who led the Shahsavān tribe – took the side of the Shah, whilst those educated in modern ways of thinking – the Bakhtiyaris – fought under the banner of the revolutionaries.²³²

As a result of the struggles going on in Persia that had culminated in the Constitutional Revolution and the subsequent counter-revolutionary coup, Muhammad Ali Shah imposed upon the *ulema* the choice of either taking part in the

²³⁰ Bayat, 258-260.

²³¹ Joseph M. Upton, *The History of Modern Iran: An Interpretation* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970), 37-39.

²³² Kamali, 134.

Revolution or taking his side in fighting against it. After closing the *Majlis* on June 28 1908 with the help of the Russians, the Shah was in a relatively strong position to dictate such terms to the *ulema*, who were faced with the unenviable task of deciding their stance. On the one hand, a constitutional regime would decrease the power and influence that they hitherto enjoyed. On the other they did not want to risk alienating themselves from a Persian society that was generally in favour of constitutional change, and damage their close relationship with the *bazaaris*. After the opening of the second *Majlis*, there was constant friction between the reformers and an alliance of *bazaaris* and *ulema*. The coalition that had been united in opposition to the Qajar regime broke apart over such issues as the relationship between the state and the religious establishment, the question of equal rights for non-Muslims, and the extent and pace of social reform. The verbal arguments in the *Majlis* escalated into armed clashes on the streets of Tehran between supporters of the various political factions. Once again, government became paralyzed, the local powers such as tribal khans increased their power and reasserted their independence and an age-old pattern repeated itself.²³³

4.2.3. The Aftermath of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran

As a result of the authoritarian stance taken by many non-Western countries regarding modernization, the gap between civil society and the state became increasingly wide, with the military playing an important role in the modernizing process. This situation often stirred up civil unrest in areas where this heavy-handed approach to reform had been particularly severe. Forming a military elite, which as a group came to be very influential in the state-reforming process, facilitated the continuity of such reforms at the expense of involving wider civic society in the modernizing debate.

The civil war that followed the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-09 had damaging consequences for the state, as Persian society in the years immediately after 1909 was unstable; foreign influences also contributed to a situation that threatened the continued existence of the country. To compound matters, the British and the Russians were quick to take the opportunity to further disintegrate the Empire in order that it might be divided into two parts which could be controlled by these two Western states. An agreement of 1907 between Russia and Britain placed the southern

²³³ Cleveland, 138.

areas in the jurisdiction of the British, whilst the northern areas would be controlled by the Russians, as mentioned above. This Anglo-Russian contention became what Keddie has aptly called 'concession hunting':

In general, concession hunting in Iran was a game of speculators and adventurers, out for quick profits, whose wits were matched against those of wily courtiers, and the shah who equally wanted as little trouble as possible.²³⁴

This action prompted the Iranian parliament to gather its forces and attempt to ward off the threat of disintegration militarily; the army thus created can be seen to have contained four parts: the government and armed forces; the tribal armed forces; the Cossack Brigade; and the Government Gendarmerie.²³⁵

As discussed in the previous chapters, examples of attempted renewal strategies were Crown Prince Abbas Mirza's *Nezam-e Jadid* of the 1830s; Prime Minister Amir Kabir's reforms of 1848-51, and reforms introduced by Mirza Hasan Khan-e Mishir al-Dawlah in the 1870s. However, any such attempt to reform the Iranian state according to Western principles faced several obstacles, such as the poor equipment available to the army and an alliance that had been agreed between the conservative court, Qajar nobles and other bureaucrats. The lack of a well-drilled military meant that the Persian tribes, being more adept at using better-quality equipment, found themselves split into groups that both supported and opposed the state. The state itself depended on its tribes to support its military campaigns, whilst the revolutionary opposition to Muhammad Ali Shah at the beginning of the twentieth century also utilized the skills of tribal military units. It was the Bakhtiyari tribe who eventually won the day for the constitutionalist, forcing their way as they did into Tehran to end Muhammad Ali Shah's autocracy.²³⁶

The Cossack Brigade, established by Naser al-Din Shah, was one of the staunchest anti-revolutionary groups in Persia. It was led by Colonel Domantowich, a Russian, who came to Tehran in 1879 as part of al-Din Shah's initiative and helped to facilitate a dissemination of Russian ideas into Persia whilst at the same time

²³⁴ Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 7.

²³⁵ Kamali, 143.

²³⁶ Arash Khazeni, "The Bakhtiyari Tribe in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (2005): 378.

promoting that country's interests.²³⁷ As Cronin argues, "for the Russian officers of the Cossack Brigade, the furtherance of Russian interests was indissolubly linked to the defence of Qajar absolutism. The Shah, for his part, was entirely dependent on the Brigade, which, prior to the establishment of the Government Gendarmerie and the *Nazmiyyah*, was the only organized body of troops available for the maintenance of order"²³⁸, the Brigade played an important role in the modernization of Persian politics at this time. Indeed, Mozafar al-Din Shah, sovereign at the time of the Constitutional Revolution, left the Brigade as custodians of law and order whilst he was away in Europe. Controlling Tehran was of the utmost importance to the Shah, who was afraid of the damage that urban unrest could cause to his position, and the Brigade often used oppressive tactics to suppress the reactionary forces during the rule of Colonel Liakhov, the Russian commander of the Brigade during the 1907-1909 troubles. Hence, "it was not until the appearances of a rival corps, the Government Gendarmerie that the brigade began to undertake, in a major way, operations against tribal disorders and provincial rebellions"²³⁹.

In fact, the Cossack Brigade was hated in general in Persia at this time, due to its close ties to the shahs and its anti-revolutionary stance during the Constitutional Revolution. Despite being only a small corps of 1600 men, mostly Persians, in 1902, the Brigade still remained powerful, perhaps due to the general lack of major internal disorder and the strong civic-religious relationships that made Persian people generally unwilling to become involved in many large-scale uprisings. In 1899 the corps had 10 Russian and 133 Persian officers, and in 1911 it was estimated that only 10 per cent consisted of ethnic Persians, while 85 per cent were drawn from various Turkish and Kurdish tribes.²⁴⁰

On June 23 1908 the Brigade, under the control of Liakhov, committed one of its most severe actions, by suppressing the *Majlis* at the behest of the anti-constitutionalist Shah, Muhammad Ali. Martial law was declared, and Liakhov was appointed the military governor of Tehran, however the subsequent civil war soon ended Liakhov's reign. The constitutionalist forces led by Sipahdar and Sardar As'ad-e

²³⁷ Firuz Kazemzadeh, "The Origin and Early Development of the Persian Cossack Brigade", *American Slavic and East European Review* 15 (1956): 35.

²³⁸ Stephanie Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1997), 55.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁴⁰ Kamali, 144.

Bakhtiari were able to march into Tehran and force the Brigade to disarm whilst negotiations took place between the two groups. The Brigade was later re-established under the constitutionalist government, although its future was always uncertain after the conclusion of the Revolution.

To rival the anti-constitutionalist government's Cossack Brigade, the constitutionalists created the Government Gendarmerie (*Zhandarmiri-yi Dawlati*) when they were in power in the period 1910-12. This new arm of the military was created at the same time as the American financier Morgan Shuster was brought in to reform the country's finances, and with his proposal a new branch called the *Zhandarmiri-yi Khizana* (Treasury Gendarmerie) was launched.²⁴¹ Shuster's reforms were met with a hostile reaction and he was forced to leave after concerted pressure from conservative groups in 1911.²⁴²

By December of 1910, the *Majlis* took it upon themselves to request help from the Italian and American governments to create a Gendarmerie in Persia. However, objections were made by Britain and Russia who were opposed to such an establishment. It was then that the *Majlis* turned to the Swedish government, who agreed to help and subsequently sent three officers, headed by Captain H. O. Hjalmarson, to assist in the creation of a Persian Gendarmerie. Although the new military force was bolstered by the addition of 1,000 troops from Shuster's disbanded Treasury Gendarmerie upon his departure, it still took some years for it to become an effective tool of the government.²⁴³ By 1912, the Gendarmerie had indeed grown to a powerful size and strength, comprising 21 Swedes alongside nearly 3,000 Persians and could thus compete with the Cossack Brigade; by 1913, its ranks had swelled to 36 Swedish officers and over 6,000 Persians.²⁴⁴

The Gendarmerie, of course, had its detractors and enemies from the start, such as the conservative court, the tribes, and the Cossack Brigade. The Gendarmerie's loyalty to the constitutional government brought with it the enmity of the shah and his court, who were wary of its anti-royalist aspirations, whilst the tribes posed a serious threat due to their powerful military capabilities. The Bakhtiyari tribe that had assisted

²⁴¹ Stephanie Cronin, "An Experiment in Military Modernization: Constitutionalism, Political Reform and the Iranian Gendarmerie, 1910-21", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.32, No.3 (July 1996): 110.

²⁴² Upton, 39. See also Amin Banani, *The Modernization of Iran 1921-1941* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 33.

²⁴³ Stephanie Cronin, "Iranian Nationalism and the Government Gendarmerie", in *Iran and the First World War: A Battleground of the Great Powers*, edited by Touraj Atabaki (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), 44.

²⁴⁴ Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran, 1910-1926*, 21.

the constitutionalists in their quest for power and remained their allies became suspicious of the Gendarmerie's motives, which they saw as an unwanted rival to the influence they enjoyed in Persia. The Bakhtiyari-dominated government of 1912-13 was especially hostile to the Gendarmerie, which was responsible for the protection of trade routes between the empire's major cities at this time, competing for the role of maintaining peace in Tehran.

As far as the Gendarmerie was concerned, the timing of the First World War was convenient as it thrust them to the centre of Persian politics. They were seen as important allies to Persian nationalists who were wary of the Cossack Brigade's Russian connections and tendency to promote Russian interests over Persian ones. The Gendarmerie were used to agitate against the very existence of the Brigade which in turn caused Persian Brigade members to rail against the Russian influence in their ranks. The Germans were seen as useful allies during the war insofar as they could gain some leverage against the British and Russian influence in Persia, and an alliance was duly created between Persian nationalists, the Germans and the Government Gendarmerie. By 1915, the Gendarmerie was sufficiently strong to be able to engage the Cossacks in battle and defeat them; of the 300 Cossacks stationed in Hamedan, many defected to the nationalist side.²⁴⁵

Faced with the threat of growing Persian nationalism, the British and Russians wanted to protect their interests in Persia and the British duly increased the number of the Cossacks whilst simultaneously creating a new arm of the military in the south called the South Persia Rifles. This had the effect of dividing the country into two, with the Russians controlling the north of Persia and the British the south; these two states enforced their presence in Persia further when Farman Farma – a man of pro-ally allegiance – became the Prime Minister; his successor, Sipahsalar, continued to provide Britain and Russia with opportunities to maintain their influential positions. The 'Sipahsalar Agreement' was created, which stipulated that the Persian government had to accept the power of the Cossacks and the South Persia Rifles, although Sipahsalar's subsequent unpopularity in society compelled the shah to remove him from office and replace him with Vusuq al-Dawlah.²⁴⁶ This clear weakness of the Persian government was exploited by the British and the Russians, who continued the expansion of their military forces unabated.

²⁴⁵ Kamali, 146.

²⁴⁶ Cronin, *The Army and the Creation of the Pahlavi State in Iran*, 67.

However, after the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, the Cossacks were left facing a serious threat to their continuing existence as the new Soviet government ordered them to return to their homeland. The British, committed opponents to communism and the new Russian regime, sided with the Cossacks and agreed to meet half of their costs, with the Persians paying the leftover portion. After this, the Cossacks were utilized by the Persians to quell uprisings in urban centres, such as at Tabriz in 1920, and as part of the campaign against the *Jonbesh-e Jangal* (Jungle Movement, or Jangalis)²⁴⁷ – an uprising in the north of Persia. The Cossacks' success in averting the danger posed by the popular Jangalis movement strengthened their position in Persia.

Another effect of the new Russian communist regime's seizure of power was that the British were left as the only influential foreign player in Persian politics, and they were able to benefit from this by forcing through the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 which left the weakened Persian state as a virtual colony of the British Empire.²⁴⁸ As a result of this agreement, there were various uprisings and widespread unrest throughout Persia, with even the political establishment discussing how the state could be returned to its former glories and be freed of British interference; a military coup was suggested, with the aim of creating a new state comprised of a centralized, nationalist regime controlled by the political elite.

4.3. Conclusion

Despite their common aspects regarding the constitutional movements, there were significant differences between Turkey and Iran. For instance whereas the Iranian constitutional movement was defined as a grassroots and urban movement with the participation of the *ulema* and the *bazaaris* groups, the first Ottoman constitutional movement, occurred in 1876, was the product of the Ottoman official's efforts as a continuation of the Tanzimat reforms. The European interventions on the behalf of developing the status of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire also had an

²⁴⁷ Jangalis is the name of a movement in 1919-20 in northern Persia. Its leader Mirza Kuchek Khan attracted a strong body of supporters, who used the jungles of the northern province of Gilan to conceal themselves from government troops. It was neither a separatist nor a bourgeois nationalist or a communist revolution. The target was solely recovering the country from foreign imperial domination and domestic administrative corruption. See Homa Katouzian, "Nationalist Trends in Iran, 1921-1926", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 10 (1979): 534.

²⁴⁸ Banani, 34.

effect on these reforms. Iran had to deal with similar religious dissent as well such as the Babi-Baha'i Movement especially in the north part of the country. Iranian middle class and intellectuals were mobilized as a result of the territory losses from the Caucasus to Russia throughout the first half of the nineteenth century and also the concessions granted to the subjects of Russia and Britain. The struggle against the economic penetration of the West (and Russia) into the Iranian markets united the Iranian middle class, the *ulema* and the intellectuals. The same kind of struggles were faced by the Ottoman Empire, although the Ottoman economy was much more inclined to be open to Western economic influence.

The growing strength of the German military and the 1882 Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy concerned Ottoman and Iranian leaders in that the need to strengthen their own armies was starkly apparent. The subsequent pact between France and Russia in 1894 and Britain's eventual inclusion in the Entente Cordiale of 1904 meant that the navies of these empires were combined to combat the industrial and naval threats posed by Germany. The rights of the British in Egypt and the French in Morocco were also recognized in this treaty. The ending of Britain's dispute with Russia in the 1907 Triple Entente came at the expense of Iran – these two empires agreed to recognize each other's rights to control areas of Iran, rather than competing with each other over the same regions, with Britain dominating the southeast and Russia the north. Although the central zone was supposed to be neutral, this was often violated when it suited the needs of either nation.

This partition of Iran by Britain and Russia duly alarmed the Ottomans, who became wary of a similar action taking place in their own territory. In the face of the threat, Ottoman leaders promoted military reform in the hope that they could follow in the footsteps of the Japanese by countering the military power of the West; an alliance with Germany was also agreed to increase their chances of warding off the European threat. In the meantime, the Ottomans and Iranian reformists had an impact on each other since their contact on commerce, diplomacy and intellectual issues were further advanced with the impact of the Turkish-speaking Azeri intellectuals and merchants. Additionally, a wide range of print media namely newspapers, journals and books in the prominent cities of the two Empires was an effective way of sharing the political ideas such as the nature of reform, the form of government, the role of Islam and Sharia, freedom and liberty, and independence from foreign control.

The common discourse about civil society and government, which was anti-colonial, proto-nationalist and modernist, continued into the Republican era in Turkey

and the reign of Reza Shah in Iran. In fact, Ottoman and Iranian modernity had much more in common with each other comparing to their Western counterparts. For instance, both reformists aimed to restrict the absolute hegemony of the sultans and the shahs, improve the army, restore the legal system and central administration and expand the secular and Western education. The creation of a civil society and the pursuit of full citizenship rights were the unforeseen outcomes of these reforms. The missionary and modern secular school graduates were very active in advancing these reforms through achieving checks and balances on the sole power of the ruler and his ministers. These ministers would be accountable to the elected representatives who would finalize the troublesome concessions to the subjects of Britain and Russia, defend the well being of local merchants and producers, and establish a fairer government within the structure of a constitutional form of monarchy.

The sovereignty of the people, the extent of the sacred and executive authority of the sultan and the shah, the legislative authority of the national assembly, the role of Islam, the Shari'a, the *ulema* in the legislative branch and the judiciary were questioned in both movements as rival issues having direct affect on the religious aspects of the two constitutions and the citizenship rights of religious and ethnic minorities. Balkan nationalism encouraged the Committee of Union and Progress established by young military officers and secret cells in the Balkans. The Committee advocated radical reforms and a termination of the reign of the caliph-sultan Abdül Hamid II. Young Turk policies spearheaded in many ways the state building and secular reforms of Atatürk. In Iran the conflict between the liberal secularists like Taqizade and the more conservative *ulema* like Sheikh Fazlullah Nuri was never solved whereas the liberal elements lost out in Turkey. There was big cooperation between the Turkish and Iranian constitutionalists and they created a united front whenever necessary. They also had connections with the liberal elements abroad, especially the Social Democrats in Russia and the liberal members of Parliament in Great Britain. The World War I and occupation impeded the success of the two movements.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, a European-centric framework has dominated the study of the Middle East, something which has led many scholars to ignore the many local factors at play in the modernization of this region; Middle Eastern modernist reformers themselves did not hold one single view of modernization and rather adapted what they had seen and read of the West to meet the specific goals of their own states. In Europe, the rise of the middle classes is perhaps what best characterizes modernity in that a new relationship between the individual and the state arose within newly-industrialized societies that sought constitutional justifications for their existence. This, however, was not the case in Ottoman Turkey or Iran, since the middle classes in these states tended to be comprised of non-Muslim minorities who came to be ostracized and excluded from high society. Key to modernity in the Middle East is how reformers adopted and adapted European practices to meet their own ends; in Europe, the post-Enlightenment period witnessed a rise in the importance of the rights of the individual, whereas in the Middle East the rights of the individual were often bypassed in favour of the desires of the ruling elites. Such elites' attempts to maintain their own status often had the coincidental effect modern reforms that allowed greater personal freedoms to the general populace, but it must be said that any notion of the rights of the individual was an unimportant side issue to those in power, who were solely interested in protecting their own privileged positions.

The very adoption of modern reforms by the Middle East can be seen to have been different in its genesis to that of the West – the modernization of the West came about as a result of the ambitions of empire-building rulers who waged aggressive overseas wars, whereas the Middle East's modernization was a means to ensure the continuing existence of the Ottoman and Persian states in the face of the colonial threat from states such as Great Britain and Russia. In other words, European states were largely formed due to internal clashes between rival elite groups and the desire to expand colonial overseas territories; by contrast, the Middle Eastern states of the modern era were formed as a result of forces outside of their original states coming to interfere within. Saving the state was paramount in Middle Eastern reformers' thoughts, and any longer-lasting modernizing effects, such as the centralization of their governments and political institutions, sprang from quickly-implemented

military or commercial policies intended to ward off the overseas threat rather than any unswerving loyalty to democracy or constitutionalism. This had the further effect of galvanizing Middle Eastern elites into opposing the West's colonial designs whilst, ironically, simultaneously adopting Western practices in the name of progression and modernization. A top-down approach to modernization, centred on a strong and powerful leader was implemented in the Middle East as a means to their continuation into the twentieth century. The need to ensure the continuing existence of these Middle Eastern states was central to the reforms and changes seen in Iran and Ottoman Turkey during the nineteenth and twentieth century.

As far as the Ottoman Empire and Iran were concerned, the nineteenth century was a period in which the seeds of their respective constitutional revolutions were sown, with the revolution in each empire following distinct cultural and socioeconomic paths. One theme common to both empires was the interference of their European neighbours – the powerful empire-building states of France, Britain and Russia – who came to subjugate the Ottomans and the Persians by way of military and economic strength and later manipulate them to meet their own ends, a process which had the knock-on effect of introducing theories of modernization to the Ottomans and their Persian counterparts. Successive military defeats and the internal shock that they caused to the once-militarily mighty Eastern empires led them to adopt Western modes of thinking and embark on a journey that we now characterize as the modernizing process. Understandably given the circumstances, the first reforms that such a modernist approach prompted were those that were conducted within each empire's army – it was clearly crucial to strengthen the military in order to counter the growing threat that was appearing on Ottoman and Persian horizons. Power structures were also centralized as a way of making state governance more efficient and both empires came to be financially and at times militarily dependent on their European allies. Although this aided domestic security in the short-term, it had the undesirable long-term consequence of disaffecting large swathes of the indigenous population which was not helped by both states' governments adopting an authoritarian and despotic approach to introducing reforms. There was an ever-growing gap between those in power and the increasingly West-oriented intellectual class which pushed for more sweeping socioeconomic and political reforms than any that were forthcoming, such as the weakening of the sovereign's absolute power over his state. The reluctance of the Ottoman and Iranian governments to meet these demands led to a period of civil unrest and a series of uprisings in which

revolutionaries and radicals pushed forward with their plans for constitutional change. These events culminated in the twin constitutional revolutions – 1906 in Iran and 1908 in the Ottoman Empire.

The modernizing process in both countries, whilst following their own distinct cultural paths, did nevertheless share similarities:

1. Common sources of ideological and cultural influences.
2. Military and administrative reforms.
3. Judicial reforms.
4. Increasing dependence on foreign powers.
5. Decreasing contacts between the government and the indigenous groups in society
6. Increasing demands for socio-political changes and constitutionalism.

These similar characteristics can be traced back to the European roots from which the modernizing process grew in the Ottoman Empire and Iran. Both states were influenced by ideological, cultural and perhaps most importantly liberal ideas and, generally speaking, in most parts of society; be it the educated intellectual classes or the traditional indigenous tribes in the provinces, waves of modernization lapped at the shores of Ottoman and Iranian society. Numerous newspapers, satirical journals and books printed abroad became important instruments in the introduction of modern ideas which led to the development of constitutionalism in both countries. Although the administrations mostly tried to control and ban these kinds of publications, they were secretly smuggled into the countries disseminating the news of government, civil society, modernization and independence of Muslim societies, thus becoming guidebooks for reformers. Also the insistence of leading religious groups that their states should retain their Islamic character dragged them into the modernization debate, and compelled them to reconcile their traditional stance with the new modes of thinking.

It can also be said that there was a degree of cross pollination between the Ottoman and Persian states as far as modernizing reforms were concerned. Diplomats and emissaries between the two states were able to report back to their own rulers about the innovations and could persuade their superiors to adapt the traditional system to incorporate new ideas. The political and religious elite of Iran considered the reforms implemented by Turkey during the Tanzimat era to be a model for their own country, viewing the Ottoman Empire as a bridge between Europe and Iran. Iranian

bureaucrats who visited the empire often attempted to implement or at least recommend similar reforms in Iran on their return home.

It was quite clear that decentralization of administrative and political structures in both countries appeared as an obstacle to the modernization process at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus a centralized structure was accepted as one of the major tools to reinstall a uniform government and to balance the Western military superiority. To realize this main goal establishing a modern army according to the latest developments was, naturally, the first step on the way. After the military had been reformed, state bureaucracy was next in line to be reorganized according to modern principles.

The *ulema*-controlled judicial system also came under the modernizing microscope, with new *urf* courts established by Ottoman and Persian reformers in order to wrest away from the *ulema* a modicum of control of judiciary matters, also to insulate much of the military and administrative of that country from Islamic influences. Diplomacy was also crucial at this time, and there arose an interdependency between the Ottomans and the Persians in the East, and the Western powers Russia, France and Britain. All of the Western states wanted to expand their military and imperial horizons, and viewed their Asian neighbours as important parts of the process; garnering extra political and military support in the East would be greatly beneficial to their empire-building intentions. The upside of this for the Ottomans and Persians was that the frequent squabbles that occurred between the Western powers gave them opportunities to take a diplomatic advantage, although their military weaknesses often meant that any such advantageous alliances formed would be broken. Consequently, the Ottoman and Persian states became internally dislocated from their wider societies which in turn led to the radicalized opposition to the governments of these empires. The Ottoman Constitutionalism of 1876 and Constitutional Revolution of 1908, and the Persian Tobacco Movement of 1891 and Constitutional Revolution of 1906-09 all sprang from the unrest caused in society by an authoritarian government. The bureaucrats and constitutionalists of 1870s and 1900s were united in fighting against unlimited executive power and establishing a constitutional state in place of traditional monarchy.

Despite their common features, the modernization and developments in the Ottoman Empire and Persia differed in the following ways:

1. Engagement of the Ottoman Empire and Iran in alliance-making and wars with the Great Powers.

2. The central role of the military
3. State Bureaucracy
4. The connection between the *ulema* and the state
5. Nationalist movements for independence

The large expanse of land that was under the control of the Ottomans rivalled that of their European counterparts, and meant that the Empire would be closely engaged with the West; various alliances were made and wars fought with the Great Powers, who mostly attempted to divide the empire up among themselves. The Persians were less involved in wars with the West, fighting more regularly against Russia, which prompted them to turn to France and Britain for diplomatic and military back-up. The Western states were fickle in their alliance-making however, and any such bonds would often be swiftly broken were they to become disadvantageous. The British, for example, pledged their support to Persia in its first war against Russia, but switched to the Russians' side when it became clear that their assistance would be needed to defeat Napoleon at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Britain tried to maintain her interests in India, the largest and most important colony, against the developing expansion of her rival Russia which was seeking to control in Iran as a part of its consistent warm waters policy. Thus their imperialistic aims actually trapped Iran as a buffer state to preserve the *status quo* in the region while the Ottoman Empire was going through a process of disintegration.

As far as the Ottoman and Persian armies were concerned, they held different positions in each empire, dependent on the differing histories and institutional arrangements of each empire. The Ottoman army played a key role in binding the empire together and maintaining its power structure. During the period of territorial expansion the army was the most important source of revenue for the state treasury due to the income from the new conquests. However, after the expansion it became a burden for the state; the vast lands of the empire, spread over three continents, forced the Ottoman rulers to keep a large number of troops under arms. Especially throughout the nineteenth century the Ottoman army underwent a process of modernization and increased its importance as the separatist movements among the different nations of the empire and the powerful local notables formed a great danger for the continuation of the state. For instance, when Mahmud II saw the need to act decisively against the centrifugal political forces that paralyzed royal authority, he used the janissaries to move against the relative powerful position and the autonomy of the ayans and succeeded in breaking their power. Later, in the counter-revolution

period, the rebels were eventually dispersed by the army which helped the continuation of reform afterwards. The powerful and disastrous role of the Turkish army in the political life of the Republic can be understood on the basis of the army's central role in the life of the Ottoman Empire, and, also later, in the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Sections of the army made up the military forces of the revolution of 1908 supporting the democratic opposition to the sultan. In the Persian case the Bakhtiari tribe constituted the main military force giving their support for the victory of 1909.

The Persian army, on the other hand, operated on the margins and was based on the tribal system on which the empire itself was based; the *Nezam-e Jadid* Ottoman inspired reforms did little to establish a more centralized army in Persia, and as such the military played a less substantial role in the revolutionary movements as it did in the Ottoman Empire. The army was so weak that prior to the establishment of the Government Gendarmerie and the *Nazmiyyah*, the Russian officered Cossack Brigade was the only organized body of small troops available for the success of civilian protest in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11; the maintenance of order against tribal disorders and provincial rebellions, making Shah dependent on itself. The Cossack Brigade began to undertake, in a major way, operations promoting the country's interests and at the same time helped to facilitate a dissemination of Russian ideas into Persia. The Anglo-Russian Treaty of 1907, which divided Iran into two spheres of influence and a neutral zone, ended any hope of British support for the constitutionalists and against Russian intervention. The coup of Muhammad Ali Shah with the help of the Brigade headed by Colonel Liakhov in 1908 and the bombardment of the *majlis* resulted in the execution of nationalists and the exile of leading intellectuals.

The Ottoman Empire attempted to form a strong bureaucracy at the turn of the nineteenth century, which played a very important role in the transformation of Ottoman society. The Tanzimat reforms that first appeared in the Ottoman Empire were designed to bring state bureaucracy into the modern age, to help centralize the state's financial institutions and to create new institutions to re-organize social and political life. The centralization efforts were the only way to weaken the influences of internal and external forces in the Empire. As the power of the state increased, the new bureaucracy became more effective against the privileges of new economic groups and the authority of the Palace. At the end of the Tanzimat period, a new period started in Turkish political development with the declaration of 1876 constitution and the

conversion of the regime into a constitutional monarchy. Even though the constitution was short-lived and did not meet the needs of the Ottoman Empire thoroughly, it provided some basic rights and liberties to the subject of the Empire and thus a new state of law against the traditional system. Also the growing network of Western style schools during this period paved the way for a gradually increased change in Ottoman scientific and educational life. This contributed to the education of the generation by establishing a social base which helped the formation of the revolution later.

Similar reorganization reforms in 1880s were implemented to a certain extent for a more democratic and consultative form of government in Iran. Nevertheless, unlike the Ottomans, Iran did not have such a major constitutional experience until 1906. Both the Safavids and Qajars made efforts to establish centralized bureaucracy, but they never approached to the level of nineteenth century Ottomans. This major difference demonstrates that the reformers of the Ottoman Empire made considerable headway in their modernization efforts considering the developments in Iran that would most probably affect the later developments in the twentieth century. This early experience of the Ottomans caused them to change their mentality and come up with more sophisticated texts with legal concerns.

Other differing characteristics of the Ottoman and Persian Empires are the relationship between the *ulema* and the state, and the growing nationalist movement for independence in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman *ulema* enjoyed closer bonds and an easier cooperation with their state than their Persian counterparts, with the Ottoman Sunni *ulema* traditional allies of the sultan, who was considered to be their religio-political leader. The Ottoman *ulema* thus considered their religious duty to help their sultan and relatively more centralized and strong Ottoman governments managed to get the *ulema* and their revenues under state control.

Persia's Shia *ulema*, on the other hand, did not experience such a cordial relationship with their sovereign, instead considering him to be a temporary custodian in the period before the appearance of the Hidden Imam – their true leader. In other words, in Shi'ism the ruler had no legitimate status in the *Shari'a*. Consequently, the Shah had to cede to the prominent role of the *ulema* in society, who were also gaining power by sustaining the collection of important amounts of revenue and taxes directly from the people or endowments, and not interfere in the civic matters that were under their jurisdiction. The Persian *ulema* in particular became keen to cut their ties to the state when Naser al-Din Shah granted the tobacco concession to foreign interests in 1892. There appeared a reaction in the form of an alliance between merchants, who

resented the intrusion of foreigners on their traditional turf, and the *ulema* who were weary of infidel infiltration. The Shah had to cancel the concession; however the prestige of the monarchy was tainted. Under the influence of Western ideas a constitutional movement grew, borne by an alliance of the *ulema* with the emerging middle classes. This cooperation aiming to end the arbitrary rule of the monarchs' powers finally triumphed in the Constitutional Revolution.

The nineteenth century nationalist movements in the Ottoman Empire were inclusive of people from diverse religious backgrounds and ethnic identities – existing within the framework of the *millet* system- contained in the Empire, but particularly Christians and Arab Muslims such as Egyptians. Such nationalistic movements caused ructions within the Empire and made it difficult for the state to become fully integrated and modernized in the way that its reformers wished. As such, the Ottomans found themselves fighting wars against not only foreign opposition in Europe but also against the Greeks, Arabs and Serbs that were traditionally subjects of the Empire. This in turn dislocated the Turks from other ethnic and cultural groups and led to a growing sense of 'Turkishness' in the centre; the 1908 revolution, being an attempt to democratize the Empire, was viewed by non-Turks as an aid to their quest for independence and by Turks as a method of unifying the Empire. While the Ottoman Empire was dismembered after 1918 and seven new states came into being, Persia did not face with such kind of nationalist movements. Relatively Iran was a more homogenous society and its distinct mountainous topography encouraged the expansion of tribal confederations as a political unity. Such tribes with their own ruling structures were deemed to be useful to the Shah due to their military capabilities and also helpful to bolster the state's military struggles. Indeed, in the struggles of 1908-09 tribal forces played a crucial role in that there were such forces on the side of the revolutionaries, as well as the counter-revolutionaries; one such tribe, the Bakhtiyari, was one of Persia's largest and aided the constitutionalists to fight the troops of the Shah, scoring a significant victory against government forces in Tehran in 1909.

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