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History of International Relations and World Politics (IRE₁₀₂ / IRE_{b1002})

The Ottoman Empire
and Its Heritage in International Politics

18th/19th century

Ottoman empire in decline, retreat from Europe

European imperialism

Russo-Ottoman war 1768-1774, Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca

disastrous blow to the once-mighty empire

basis for future conflict with Russia

Eastern Question

strategic competition, political considerations

of European powers resulting from Ottoman decline

late 18th to early 20th century

“Sick Man of Europe” or “Sick Man Upon the Bosphorus”

maintain the fragile balance of power in the Concert of Europe

Eastern Question

Ottoman military defeats

institutional insolvency

political and economic modernization program

rise of ethno-nationalism

Great Power Rivalries

European powers wanted to safeguard their interests

Napoleon's invasion of Egypt (1798)

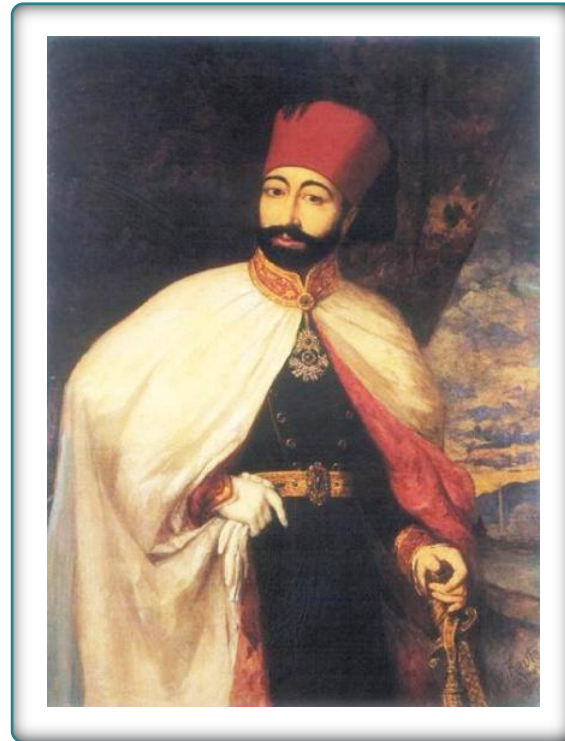
demands in Istanbul and provinces (e.g. Mosul)

end of decentralization

reassertion of sultanic authority

Selim III (1789–1807)
and
Mahmut II (1808–39)

opened the Ottoman reform
era (1789–1922)



Selim III

“New Order” (Nizam-ı Cedid) - military reform

efficiency, revenue increase

customary planning replaced with systematic planning

rationalizations

Enlightenment – systematizing spirit - esprit de système

rational-legal authority

Selim III

permanent diplomatic representation in Europe

reforms needed centralization of authority back to the sultan

warlords did not like limits to their power

too many vested interests

Selim III's deposition

Mahmut II

learned the lessons

stepped to neutralize the provincial warlords

(except for Mehmet Ali Paşa [Muhammad Ali of Egypt])

sultan's troops performed poorly against Greek rebels

Mehmet Ali's performed well – sense of urgency

Mahmut II

abolishment of the Jenissaries (1826), after a mutiny

“Auspicious Incident” - leaders executed, others imprisoned

resentment among Christians and new Muslim converts

would lead to more rebellions

but it allowed resurrection of Selim’s program and beyond

Mahmut II

new modern army (and a special guard for the sultan)

new schools, diplomatic corps, institutional reform

foreign help indispensable – new utility for diplomacy

multiple purposes of modernization:

survival, defense and appeal to the West

Mahmut II

1838 Ottoman-British treaty, effectively free trade

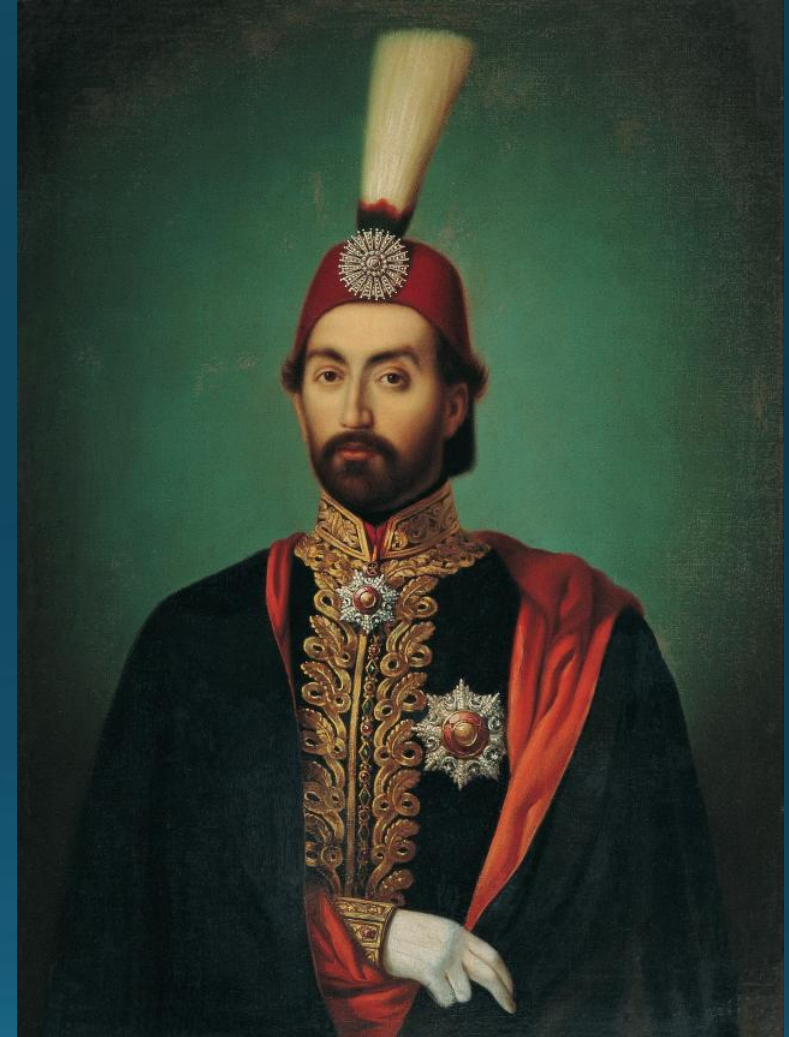
needed British support to contain Muhammad Ali

free trade hurt Ottoman manufacturing

especially Egyptian manufacturing

Abdülmecid I
1839 - 1861

opened the **Tanzimât** era (1839 – 1876)



Gülhane Decree (1839)

a.k.a. Hatt-ı Şerif (the Supreme Edict), Tanzimât Fermânı (Reorganization Edict)

start of the **Tanzimât** era (1839 – 1876)

promise of new reforms, path to equality of rights

tax reforms (end of tax farming), procedural rights

rights for life, honor and property to all subjects

Muslim or non-Muslim

conformity with sharia (*şeriat*) guaranteed, it proclaims sharia's restoration, even though it effectively brought its erosion

Reform Decree (1856)

Islâhat Fermânı, a.k.a. Islâhat Hatt-ı Hümâyûnu (Imperial Reform Edict)

basically reformulates the Gülhane Decree in greater detail

more guarantees of religious and personal freedom

changes in the political process

before: central rule, politics – rivalries between factions

now: emergence of proto-politics

advent of print and popularly distributed newspapers

in the Ottoman Turkish language

most drastic changes:

military organization

Tanzimât changes driven by the needs of military strengthening

education (Ministry of Education, weakening of the *ulema*)

needs of this world, not the next

changes in the legal system, secularization of the law

undermining the authority of sharia

equality before the law among all citizens regardless of religion

that is undermining one of the basic sharia principles

territorialization of the legal system (a feature of all modern nations)

ground for territorial nationalism, territorialization of identity

more non-Muslims in civil service

the state implementing elements of European nationalism

a sense of patriotic bond among citizens

the state had been losing purely religious legitimacy

new meanings of familiar words

vatan – used to mean “local homeland”, now “fatherland”

millet – used to refer to religious communities, now “nation”

all encompassing sense of nationhood, like in Europe

Ottoman(ism) – before it referred just to the ruling elite

now the entire population was Ottoman

Young Ottomans

the first real opposition movement

used the new media tools of print

they later published from exile in Paris

not a party, but they brought a lot of liberal nationalist ideals

criticized the elite, the weakness of reforms

modernization without westernization (i.e. through Islam)

Namık Kemal



these reforms remove traditional constraints of

sultan's power - the ulema, the Janissaries

the Islamic institute of shura (consultation)

later justification of writing of a constitution, parliament

Islamic constitutionalism

if the empire survives but loses its Islamic character, what good is it?

increasing power of civil bureaucracy, diplomacy, civil service
power at Bāb-ı Ālī (Sublime Porte) – now centered in the civil
bureaucratic headquarters
grand vizier (“prime minister”) was now usually
the foreign minister

Tanzimât

reform period

Western ideas – threat and inspiration

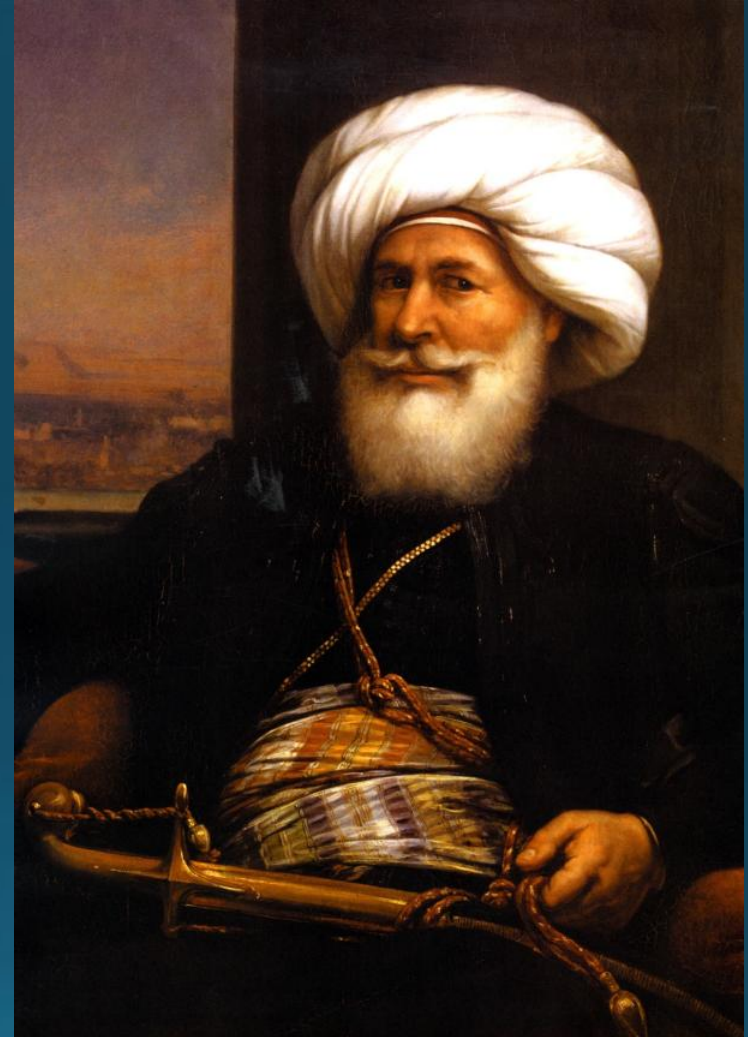
era of the deepest crises but also reforms

it did not bring freedom, to the contrary, it brought centralization

but it extended the life of the Ottoman Empire by almost a century

set the stage for Atatürk's Turkey

Crisis with Egypt



Crisis with Egypt

Muhammad Ali had conquered Crete, Syria, defeated the

Ottoman army in Anatolia, Ottoman fleet defected

European powers didn't want the empire to collapse

a coalition of European powers intervened and pushed Ali back

he had to give up most of his conquered lands, just rule Egypt

Crisis with Egypt

the military emergency when Muhammad Ali threatened

Istanbul and the need of European help partly motivated the

passing of the Gülhane Edict in 1839

Crisis with Egypt

Egypt formally part of Turkey but grew more autonomous and dependent on Europe

British cotton exports, Suez canal 1868 – strategic interest,

Britain occupied Egypt in 1882 – de facto protectorate, WW1

real protectorate, until 1952 continued occupation

greater freedoms were supposed to get more loyalty from

Christians and other minorities towards to empire

in reality, the opposite happened

if equality, then independent states

a series of local crises

Crete, Lebanon – deepening sectarianism

a massacre of Christians in Damascus in 1860

Crete revolt of 1866 (wanted to join Greece)

Serbian autonomy, Greek independence

asylum to revolutionaries from Hungary, Poland...

tensions with Austria, Russia

Crimean War 1853-1856



proximate cause: conflict between Catholic and Orthodox church
over Bethlehem (meanwhile resolved)

Russia, claiming protectorship over Orthodoxy issued an
ultimatum

root cause: Russia wanted Ottoman territories

France and Britain were not willing to allow that

Russia was ultimately defeated

Treaty of Paris 1856

this emergency was a motivation to pass the Reform Decree in 1856

the Ottoman Empire became part of the Concert of Europe
many Ottoman lands were neutralized or internationalized
its integrity and sovereignty was further breached

More separatist nationalism

Romania joined the revolutionary wave of 1848

independence: 1878

rebellions: Bosnia, Montenegro, Bulgaria

the Ottoman empire had gone bankrupt after Crimean War

defaulted on foreign debt – no foreign help

massacres of Christians and counter-massacres of Muslims

unstable political situation in Istanbul

two sultans dethroned in three months

Young Ottomans had returned from exile

1876 – new sultan Abdülhamit II., “last great sultan”

controversial, democratic/despotic?

The 1876 Constitution: Sultan Abdülhamit II., the Grand Vizier, and the millets grant freedom to an idealized female figure representing Turkey, whose chains are being smashed. The flying angel displays a banner with the motto of the French Revolution: Liberty, Equality, Fraternity in Turkish (Arabic script) and in Greek. The scene takes place in a generic Bosphorus scenery. Reproduced from a 1908 postcard (the printed caption of 1895 is inaccurate) celebrating the re-introduction of the constitution thanks to the Young Turk Revolution of 1908.



1876 Constitution

in part to ease European interference

constitution written by Young Ottomans

end of the *Tanzimât* period, the *First Constitutional* period

parliamentary elections ordered

1876 Constitution

relatively modern contemporary constitution

division of power, independent courts

but also absolute sultanic authority, primacy of the sharia

religious officials in courts, no political party system

Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)



Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

the configuration of power had changed

increased role of public opinion, domestic politics in Britain

Britain had gotten invested Egypt

unified Germany a major power

rapprochement between Britain and Russia

Russia was given a free hand

Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria – revolts against tax collectors

sharp escalation

mass killings of Christians and counter-killings of Muslims

Orthodox Balkan states + Russia attacked the Ottoman empire

Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

Russia eventually broke Ottoman defense, barged into Istanbul

full of Muslim refugees from the Balkans - massacred

Russia gained vast territories

de facto independent Balkans states became independent

Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878)

The Ottoman empire – “the sick man of Europe”

close to extinction

various territorial losses

new influx of Muslim refugees into the shrunken territory

the empire became more Asian and more Muslim

that reflected on Abdülhamit’s politics and policies

Abdülhamit II.



criticized for his conduct of the war, he dismissed the parliament

vowed not to wage another war (almost successful)

except for a war with Greece (1897)

revolts of Ottoman Greeks who wanted to join Greece

+ conflict over the status of Crete

the Ottoman Empire won, but Crete got de facto independent

Abdülhamit's reign – a break from the *Tanzimât*

use of Islam and sultan's role as the universal protector of Islam

interpreted as despotic by republican Turkey

but: flourishing popular press, universal education (boys and girls)

increase in public services

big changes in everyday life, economy

(because of reforms or just sheer progress)

Unrest brewing again

after years of relative peace, unrest in the Balkans (Macedonia)

strengthening of political dissent

Young Turks

a group of students began meeting, especially in Thessaloniki

ideas of Turkish nationalism

mostly ethnically non-Turkish Muslims

Young Turks – many different agendas, factions

backgrounds - often foreign-educated bourgeoisie, but also

aristocrats who fought for liberalization, privatization, etc.

Young Turks

Committee of Union and Progress - CUP

seat in Thessaloniki

slogan:

Hürriyet, Müsavat, Adalet (Liberty, Equality, Justice)

Abdülhamit's "betrayal"

unrest in the Balkans continued, Abdülhamit met with British and Russian monarchs to strike a deal

the arrangement would lose much of its remaining control over the Balkans

Young Turk Revolution

CUP took to arms, set demands

restoration of the constitution

the sultan sent a delegation to restore order

a key officer was killed and others refused to fight

Abdülhamit agreed to restore the constitution, parliament



يا ماسون وطن - يا ماسون ملت - يا ماسون حريت.

VIVE LA PATRIE - VIVE LA NATION

VIVE LA LIBERTÉ

24 JUILLET 1908
1.8.1908

11 تموز 1324

Second Constitutional Era Constitutional Revolution

1908

the sultan's power was greatly diminished

new constitution – system of political parties, popular elections

CUP started dominating politics

a brief religiously motivated counter-revolution

Abdülhamit II. had nothing to do with it

but was forced to step down regardless

prelude to the first World War

strong ties to Germany

animosity to Russia

joined the Central Powers

Armenian Genocide



Armenian Genocide

historical animosities towards Armenians (educated, wealthy)

Young Turks – extremely nationalistic, propaganda against

non-Turks, labeling as enemies

WW₁ – labeled as potential collaborators with the enemy

threat to national security, deportations, killings

security policy, but all definition criteria of a genocide met

Armenian Genocide

official Turkish position: killings took place, but were not state policy

result: 90% of Armenians killed or displaced

because of this and events of 19th century (separatism)

Turkey a became a homogeneous Turkish nation-state

Literature

Kasaba, Reşat. *The Cambridge History of Turkey. Vol. 4: Turkey in the Modern World*, pp. 2-61.