The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War

The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage

Politics, Society and Economy

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The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War

Between Voluntarism and Resistance

By

Mehmet Beşikçi

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Cover illustration: on the right, regular troops in uniform departing for battlefield; on the left, newly enlisted men on their way to military barracks (Istanbul, early days of the Great War). Source: *The Times History of the War*, vol. 3 (London: The Times Printing House, 1915), p. 47.

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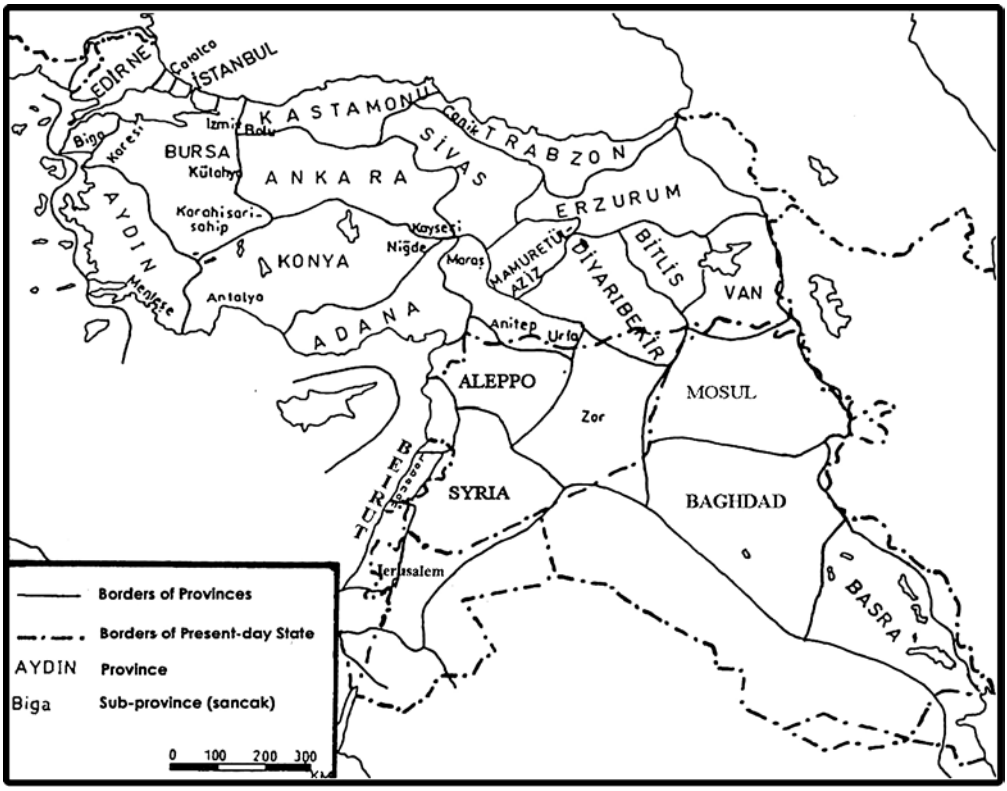
ABBREVIATIONS

CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti*)

Abbreviations of Archival Sources

ATASE	*T.C. Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Arşivi* (The Turkish General Staff Military History Archives).
BOA	*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri* (The Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives).
DMA	*İstanbul Deniz Müzesi Komutanlığı Deniz Tarihi Arşivi* (The Istanbul Naval Museum Archives of Ottoman Naval History).
TNA: PRO	The National Archives of Britain, Public Record Office.

MAP



Source: Vedat, Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı Imparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994)

Ottoman Provinces in 1914

INTRODUCTION

In terms of the extent, intensity and duration of mobilization, the First World War surpassed every previous military conflict. In addition to the military implications, such as the continual increase in the destructiveness of war, the magnitude of mobilization also redefined and reshaped state-society relations in the belligerent countries, including the Ottoman Empire. This book is about the human dimension of the Ottoman mobilization experience during the First World War. In particular, it examines the mobilization of manpower for the Ottoman war effort from the perspective of social history. By focusing mainly on Anatolia and the Empire's Muslim population, this book aims to explore not only how the Ottoman state tried to cope with the challenges of permanent mobilization, but how this process re-shaped state-society relations in Anatolia.

In this book I examine how the conditions of wartime mobilization pushed the state to become more centralized, authoritarian and nationalist. I contend that constant and large-scale mobilization required the state to increase its control at the local level and to permeate into deeper and deeper levels of provincial society—both by reinforcing existing mechanisms and creating new ones where needed. However, I argue that this increasing dependence on the people for the war effort paradoxically also enlarged the space of action of social actors in their encounter with state authority. In this sense, I contend that social actors were not passive vis-à-vis the state during the Ottoman mobilization effort: they had agency and produced responses that would re-shape the mobilizing policies that targeted them. Based on how social actors' own expectations and priorities matched up with state policies under ever-deteriorating wartime conditions, I demonstrate that these responses constituted a wide spectrum ranging from voluntary support to open resistance. In turn, the state responded by revising its mobilization policies and reformulating new mechanisms of control at the local level.

Furthermore, I demonstrate how the Ottoman mobilization experience during the First World War was a constant, two-pronged attempt on the part of the state at accommodating voluntary participation and containing resistance. In this process, new alliances—or something like a new "social contract"—were formed between the state and those social groups it tried to mobilize and which were willing to situate themselves

inside the consensus with the state. The manpower mobilization during the war had a two-fold effect: firstly, its participatory dimension helped shape new alliances between the state and the Anatolian Muslim population, and secondly, resistance to it required the state to revise its policies and reinforce control mechanisms in order to better exercise authority on the local level. While the former phenomenon led to the formation of new bonds between the state and Anatolian society, it marginalized social groups which did not become a part of this new consensus (such as non-Muslim groups). In the latter case, we see an increase in the state's control in provincial Anatolia. This increase in control at the local level, I argue, facilitated the remobilization effort during the National Struggle period (1919–1922).

This book's focus on the issue of manpower mobilization will help us to better understand the broader Ottoman mobilization experience during the First World War and integrate the Ottoman experience of the War within world history. In addition to providing a basis for comparative history, this book also has another, perhaps more general aim, which is to contribute to broader discussions of how state-society relations were reshaped in Anatolia during the emergence of Turkish nation-state. A more comprehensive understanding of the issue of manpower mobilization during the Great War will undoubtedly contribute to our understanding of how the social infrastructure of Republican Turkey was shaped by processes in place at the end of the Ottoman Empire.

The Total War Paradox

After the emergence of the July Crisis in Europe on 28 July 1914, the Ottoman state declared mobilization on 2 August and entered the war in late October. However, like the other belligerents, the Ottomans would soon realize that the conflict they had just entered was a different kind of war. The First World War was a long and multi-front war of attrition, which required the belligerents to mobilize all of their resources to keep up with the war effort. In this war, preparation for war became as important as the battle itself, and the home front and the battlefield became closely interconnected.

This "total" character, which made warfare much more catastrophic, resulted from a combination of various factors which had actually been in process since the mid-nineteenth century. These factors included "industrialized mass society, nationalism, chauvinism, and racism, the

participation of the masses in politics, mass armies equipped and provisioned with modern weapons, industrialized economies that provided the means for large-scale destruction, and the erosion of distinctions between soldiers and civilians."[1] In fact, according to some historians, signs of such total warfare had already emerged in various wars in the nineteenth century, of which the American Civil War (1861–1865) and the German Wars of Unification (1870–1871) have been presented as earlier examples.[2] Recent historiography has also demonstrated that the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 was also a precursor to catastrophic conflicts in the age of world wars.[3] In this respect, as will be discussed in Chapter 1, the Ottoman Empire's Balkan War experience in 1912–1913 also possessed a "total" character in some respects, especially in terms of the process through which the home front became an integral part of warfare.

While modern warfare had already begun to acquire a total character in the nineteenth century, the Great War[4] surpassed by far all previous wars in one specific respect, namely the mobilization of manpower for war. It can be said that the well-known Prussian military strategist-historian Carl von Clausewitz's earlier claim that war had become "people's war" in the modern era,[5] a claim which he made after observing the Wars of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, was actually fully realized during the Great War. The concept of a "citizen army" which emerged during the French Revolution had become an established system in the form of universal and compulsory conscription in almost all of the belligerent countries on the eve of the Great War. And, "of the male population between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine on the eve of the war, a huge proportion became soldiers: about 80 percent in France and Germany,

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[1] Stig Förster, "Introduction," in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.

[2] See, for example, Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler (eds.), *On the Road to Total War: The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, 1861–1871* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). David Bell places the beginning of this process of totalizing as early as the Napoleonic Wars. See David A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know it* (New York: Mariner Books, 2007).

[3] See, for example, David Wolff et al. (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Rotem Kowner (ed.), *The Impact of the Russo-Japanese War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007); Selçuk Esenbel, "1904/05 Rus-Japon Savaşı," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 176 (August 2008), pp. 69–71.

[4] Throughout this book, I use the "First World War" and the "Great War" interchangeably.

[5] Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. J. Matthijs Jolles (New York. The Modern Library, 1943), p. 457.

75 percent in Austria-Hungary, between 50 and 60 percent in Britain, Serbia, and the Ottoman Empire, and 40 percent in Russia."[6]

Of course, as the development of the industrial economy, participation in mass politics or the possession of modern weapons, etc. (the factors which have been mentioned above), varied from one country to another on the eve of the war, the question of just "how total" the war was varied as well. The First World War as a total war certainly did not have a uniform history. But it did have a global reach, in which the Ottoman Empire was definitely engulfed. The intensity and duration of the war pushed the war experience of each belligerent towards totality, though the degree at which each went through it varied. The Ottoman Empire remained on the battlefield throughout the four years of the war. Moreover, although its performance greatly diminished in the later half of the war and it was ultimately defeated, the Ottoman army performed surprisingly well on many notable occasions.[7] Ottoman forces waged war on four major exhaustive fronts (the Dardanelles, the Caucasus, Sinai-Palestine, and Mesopotamia-Iraq), as well as on less intensive ones (Arabia-Yemen, Romania, Galicia, Macedonia, Persia, Azerbaijan).[8] As with all the belligerents, the Ottoman economy was mobilized for the war effort.[9] Moreover, the civilian population was not only subjected to continuous state requisition of provisions for the troops,[10] but civilians were also asked to contribute to the financial mobilization, as in the case of an extensive internal borrowing (*dâhilî*

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[6] "Introduction," in Jay Winter, Geoffrey Parker, and Mary R. Habeck (eds.), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University, Press, 2000), p. 2.

[7] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire* (London: Abacus, 1994), p. 283. Though in a somewhat exaggerated tone, a recent work on Ottoman military history has described Ottoman successes during the Great War (at least during the war's first half) as "a renaissance of Ottoman military capacity." See Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk* (Santa Barbara: Abc-Clio, 2009), p. 176.

[8] For an official military history of the Ottoman fronts in the First World War, see Turkish General Staff publications, *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi*, 8 vols (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1967–1996).

[9] For a detailed account of the Ottoman economic mobilization, see Zafer Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi: Savaş Ekonomisi ve Türkiye'de Devletçilik, 1914–1918* (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2003). For a short overview, see Şevket Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," in Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (eds.), *The Economics of World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 112–136.

[10] The issue of provisioning the Ottoman armed forces in the First World War has not yet been studied in detail in a synthesized fashion. For a study which deals with the issue in the Ottoman Third Army Zone (namely, the Northern-Eastern Anatolia), see Tuncay Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesi'nin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1999). But, though this is a comprehensive account, it examines the issue by relying largely on laws and regulations issued concerning the problem, and does not penetrate enough into its practice.

istikrâz) campaign towards the end of the war.[11] The home front was an integrated part of the war in other respects as well. The demographic structure of Anatolia was subjected to a nationalist homogenization by the CUP-dominated government.[12]

The tendency towards totality in the Ottoman mobilization for war was evident even in the very term for "mobilization" (*seferberlik*) used by the Ottomans. Especially in popular usage, the word "*seferberlik*" was used not only in the specific sense of manpower mobilization for the armed forces, but also in a more general sense for the entire war experience.[13]

On the other hand, while the concept of total war is now commonly used to describe the First World War, it poses certain problems and needs revision in certain respects. As Roger Chickering has warned, uncritical uses of the concept as a master narrative describing the war experience as an absolute outcome can cause "historical myopia." What the concept of total war actually represents is not an absolute outcome, but an absolute "toward which the development of warfare is tending."[14] No war can be entirely total. In this sense, it can be said that total war "resembles a mathematical asymptote, or Xeno's paradox, always approaching a limit but never getting there."[15] At least in the Ottoman case, the Great War experience was surely not total in the sense of ensuring the complete use of all resources and providing the full participation of all people for the war effort. But it was definitely a process towards totality, because it sucked

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[11] Extensive patriotic-nationalist propaganda also accompanied this campaign. See Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 117–126.

[12] For a recent study on the CUP's nationalist homogenization activities in Anatolia during the Great War, see Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği (1913–1918)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008). The Armenian population, which was subjected to forced migration in 1915, suffered most from this policy. According to the statistical information in the recently published personal files of Talat Pasha, Interior Minister of the period, the total number of Armenians who were subjected to deportation (*Tehcir*) was 924,158 (out of a total of approximately 1,500,000). See Murat Bardakçı (ed.), *Talat Paşa'nın Evrak-ı Metrukesi* (Istanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2009), pp. 77, 109. Many of the deported Armenians were massacred on their way, and many others died of disease or unbearable living conditions on the roads. There is still no consensus among historians on how many were killed and died. But the result of this process is that almost the entire Armenian population in provincial Anatolia disappeared. An in-depth analysis of "the Armenian question" is outside the scope of this book.

[13] This usage is particularly common in memoirs. Many such memoirs are cited throughout the book.

[14] Roger Chickering, "Total War: The Use and Abuse of a Concept," in Manfred F. Boemeke, Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 16.

[15] "Introduction," in Winter, Parker, Habeck (eds.), *The Great War and the Twentieth Century*, p. 2.

in increasing amounts of manpower and resources as the war dragged on and turned into a battle of attrition.[16]

Rather than being a master narrative, the concept of total war should function as an analytical tool. It "represents an ideal type of the sort that Max Weber envisaged."[17] Here I also find it important to warn about the use of total war as an all-pervasive model of modern warfare to justify the "national security" ideologies in the post-war period. By this I primarily mean what the German general Erich Ludendorff pioneered in theorizing after the defeat of Germany. Ludendorff argued that the major defeat of Germany was because of lack of total commitment to the war effort,[18] and that the requirements of modern warfare "demanded the ruthless mobilization of all society's material and moral resources," which necessitated a military dictatorship.[19] This strategic outlook, and similar versions of it, equated the issue of national security with constant preparation of society for a future total war. Ludendorff's outlook was actually the continuation and adaptation of Colmar von der Goltz's idea of "a nation in arms" (*Volk in Waffen*) which asserted that in the age of modern warfare, society always needed to be ready for mobilization through an extensive system of obligatory military service.[20] This perspective paved the way to the prioritization of military issues over all others, and sometimes served to make militarism a "normal" state of affairs.[21]

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[16] For a discussion on the potential and limitation of the concept of total war in studying the late Ottoman warfare, see Mehmet Beşikçi, "Topyekûn Savaş Kavramı ve Son Dönem Osmanlı Harp Tarihi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 198 (June 2010), pp. 62–69.

[17] Chickering, "Total War," pp. 15–16.

[18] Förster, "Introduction," p. 4.

[19] Chickering, "Total War," pp. 16–17.

[20] See Colmar von der Goltz, *The Nation in Arms: A Treatise on Modern Military Systems and the Conduct of War*, trans. Philip A. Ashworth (London: Hugh Rees, 1906 [1883]). Goltz's ideas were highly influential on the late Ottoman military thought and practice. Goltz's perspective continued to influence the Turkish military during the early Republican period and was one of the main sources of the national-security (*milli güvenlik*) ideology in modern Turkey. See Gencer Özcan, "Türkiye'de Cumhuriyet Dönemi Ordusunda Prusya Etkisi," in Evren Balta Paker and İsmet Akça (eds.), *Türkiye'de Ordu, Devlet ve Güvenlik Siyaseti* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2010), pp. 175–222. For an ethnographic-anthropological study on the evolution of such a national-security ideology in the educational system of Turkey, see Ayşe Gül Altınay, *The Myth of Military Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). There will be more discussion on Goltz's influence on the Ottomans in Chapter 4.

[21] I use "militarism" in the broad sense of Michael Mann: "I define militarism as a set of attitudes and social practices, which regards war and the preparation for war as a normal and desirable activity." Michael Mann, "The Roots and Contradictions of Modern Militarism," in Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 166.

More importantly, I take issue with the preconception that stems from the understanding of total war as an absolute outcome. I specifically refer to the assumption that in the Great War as a total war, people's participation in the mobilization was a given fact, or the view that people were passive actors vis-à-vis the state in this process and that total war increased state power so much that people did nothing but comply completely with the state's requirements. Rather, as I demonstrate in this book, the Ottoman mobilization of manpower was not characterized by passivity on the part of the people targeted. Resistance to mobilization was a major part of the process (one might also argue that resistance to total war was an integral part of this totalizing process). Moreover, even when people volunteered to contribute to the mobilization effort, volunteerism became a part of the relationship of power between the state and volunteers, in which the act of volunteerism served to promote the status of the volunteer groups with regard to state authority.

It is true that wartime conditions encouraged the tendency of the CUP government, which had already established a single-party rule with a coup in 1913,[22] toward authoritarianism. The total character of the Great War mobilization expanded the state's ability to exercise control on society.[23] But the need to sustain a large-scale, permanent mobilization under wartime conditions also required mass participation. It increased the state's dependence on the people. In order to demand increasing sacrifices, the state needed to maintain its legitimacy. The dependence on people and the need for legitimacy actually formed a reciprocal relationship, or a "tacit contract" between the state and people, in which the state of course continued to make claims on society, but under which people were emboldened to voice their concerns and expectations about the requirements of the mobilization.[24] The bottom line of this tacit

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[22] Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 116–121; M. Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), pp. 205–213.

[23] This was a global phenomenon: "Certainly, the world wars did promote far greater state control in its broadest sense as a response to wartime challenges." Ian F. W. Beckett, "Total War," in Arthur Marwick, Clive Emsley and Wendy Simpson (eds.), *Total War and Historical Change: Europe, 1914–1955* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2001), p. 32.

[24] This argument echoes Charles Tilly's description of the relationship between the rise of the modern state and militarization in Western Europe: "With a nation in arms, a state's extractive power rose enormously, as did the claims of citizens on their state. Although a call to defend the fatherland stimulated extraordinary support fort he efforts of war, reliance on mass conscription, confiscatory taxation, and conversion of production to the

contract for the ordinary Ottoman enlisted man was that 1) his and his family's basic needs were provided by the state in return for his service; 2) his collaboration with the state increased his social status; 3) he was to be assured that the war effort was worth sacrificing himself for; and, 4) the duration and conditions of his military service remained unchanged from his initial mobilization. Failure to maintain this tacit contract could produce various forms of resistance to the mobilization effort. Of course, by tacit contract I do not mean a liberal contractual relationship; rather, against a demanding state authority such forms of resistance at local levels often had to take covert forms that could be described as the "weapons of the weak,"[25] the most common of which were draft evasion and desertion. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, they could become a persistent, extensive problem, no matter how strongly they were condemned legally, religiously and culturally. On the other hand, in its attempt to cope with such responses, it was incumbent upon the state to revise and re-shape its mobilization policies by taking the populace's demands and expectations into consideration. Inspired by Geoff Eley's essay on the relation between war and state formation in Europe in the twentieth century, I call this "the total war paradox." Eley has argued that the two twentieth-century World Wars increased the power of the state and expanded its claims on society, and they served to open channels towards popular participation. More directly addressing with wartime conditions, he says:

> The militarization of public life and the latter's heavy limitation via censorship, suspension of debate, surveillance, emergency legislation, and states of siege do not exactly conduce to the opening up of the public sphere in democratic ways, but rather make the latter more difficult. At the same time, the conditions of wartime mobilization and the terms of the associated patriotic discourse also legitimized the voice of all those groups willing to situate themselves inside the consensus. This process certainly helped bring new groups into the recognized political nation—most obviously the organized working class, but also groups with less of an established collective history, such as women and other social categories now available for political address, including youth and the ordinary soldier.[26]

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ends of war made any state vulnerable to popular resistance, and answerable to popular demands, as never before. From that point onward, the character of war changed, and the relationship between warmaking and civilian politics altered fundamentally." See Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Madlen, Mass.: Blackwell, 1997), p. 83.

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

[26] Geoff Eley, "War and the Twentieth-Century State," *Daedalus*, vol. 124, no. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 166, 170.

Needless to say, Eley's argument is primarily about the Western European experience, and my concern in this book is not to discuss the issue of democratization in the Ottoman context. But his general argument still presents significant implications that help us tie the Ottoman mobilization experience (with its peculiarities) in the Great War to the broader discussion of how the Great War transformed state-society relations.

Here I do not claim that this quest for legitimacy made the CUP-dominated state less authoritarian and less ruthless during the war. As Zürcher has argued, mass participation in Ottoman politics in the last five years of CUP rule "became much wider, the political game became less elitist," but "at the same time it also became more brutal."[27] Moreover, despite its pragmatic desire to maximize contributions to the war effort from the Anatolian non-Muslim population, the CUP government was ready to abandon this desire whenever these contributions would cause a demand for more consideration than the state was able or willing to grant, given the nationalist perspective of the CUP government. This perspective thus practically precluded the non-Muslim Anatolian population from entering into the tacit contract described above. The state dealt instead with the responses coming from the Anatolian Muslim population which constituted the main manpower pool of the Ottoman mobilization effort.

The evolution of this relationship redefined the balance between coercion and persuasion in the state's attitude towards society. The mobilization was a process which could not rely entirely on coercion.[28] It also included collaborative methods such as working with semi-official voluntary associations that aimed to mobilize popular support in civil society. It also included persuasive methods and new alliances with certain social groups. This was particularly the case in regions where the Ottoman state's level of "infrastructural development"[29] was poor, such as in the Kurdish-populated provinces. In such cases, rather than insisting

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[27] Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1995), p. 127.

[28] John Horne, "Remobilizing for 'Total War': France and Britain, 1917–1918," in John Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 195.

[29] I use "infrastructural development" following Michael Mann. See Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, vol. 2: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). Also see Linda Weiss, "Infrastructural Power, Economic Transformation, and Globalization," in John A. Hall and Ralph Schroeder (eds.), *An Anatomy of Power: The Social Theory of Michael Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 167–186.

on the application of compulsory conscription system, the state chose to resort to more "persuasive" methods such as recruiting men from these regions in the form of "volunteers," the methods applied in return for incentives offered to local notables of these regions. Such new alliances under wartime conditions constituted a major factor which contributed to the reshaping of the Anatolian population preceding the emergence of the Turkish nation-state.

On the other hand, the state's attempt at coping with resistance also created a move towards restructuring control mechanisms at the local level. Especially in dealing with the problem of desertion, the state almost completely overhauled the gendarmerie as the main armed police force in order to cope with deserters in provincial Anatolia. Though it was never completely successful in this process, this attempt produced a working internal security system which was effective to a certain extent. While the Ottoman Empire dissolved at the end of the Great War, there remained a working recruitment mechanism which could be used for manpower mobilization. I argue that this mechanism greatly contributed to the relative success of mobilization during the National Struggle (1919–1922).

A Critical Evaluation of the Existing Literature

The historiography of the Ottoman First World War experience has had difficulty in establishing itself as an autonomous field for a long time. By "autonomous" I do not mean in isolation from the pre- and post-war periods and developments. Rather, as I hope to demonstrate, the First World War was marked by such extensive and intensive internal dynamics that a scholarly attempt at understanding them requires a more singular focus and in-depth research on this period.[30] Only such an understanding of the Ottoman Great War experience *per se* will allow us to situate it in a wider context and continuum, which would then allow us to examine continuities and discontinuities with the pre- and post-war periods.

Compared to the dynamic and rich European historiography of the Great War, Ottoman/Turkish history has only recently begun dealing with the First World War. Paradoxically, there is no shortage of studies on the end of the Ottoman Empire in general, and the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918) in particular; furthermore, there is an even greater

[30] As Norman Stone says, "great wars develop a momentum of their own." Norman Stone, *World War One: A Short History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), p. 177.

abundance of studies on the National Struggle/Turkish War of Independence (1919–1922) and the foundation of the Turkish Republic. But the study of the First World War itself has remained relatively marginal. There are both ideological and historiographic reasons for this.

On the one hand, the official historiography of Republican Turkey, which more or less maintained its dominant position in academic circles through the early 1980s, always tended to treat the National Struggle process as a major break (*kopuş*) from the Ottoman past, and to exaggerate the Turkish War of Independence as the main military episode in recent Turkish history. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's *Speech* (*Nutuk*), which constituted the main source of the official historiography of the National Struggle and the early Republican period (1919–1927), began this process of definition with his landing in Samsun on 19 May 1919. In this epic speech, Atatürk devoted only one paragraph to the situation resulting from the Great War and described it as a total catastrophe.[31] The Great War experience was treated as a disastrous period followed by a "real" struggle of the people, in which the Turkish nation was entirely reborn. Consequently, the historiography based on this narrative tended to marginalize the Ottoman Great War experience, focusing only on triumphant episodes such as the Dardanelles Victory (*Çanakkale Zaferi*), which were selectively included in the story of the Turkish "rebirth."

This historiography did not produce any in-depth studies of the Great War experience as an autonomous field, but preferred to deal with it in a series of general surveys on the "History of Turkish Revolution" (*Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*).[32] Ironically, a few early monograph-surveys on the Ottoman Great War experience, which remained the only such surveys for a long time, were written either by non-historian intellectuals, such as

[31] "When I landed at Samsun on 19th May 1919, the situation was as follows: The group of powers which included the Ottoman Empire had been defeated in the Great War. The Ottoman Army had been crushed on all fronts an armistice had been signed with harsh conditions. The people were tired and poor. Those who had driven the people into the war had fled and now cared for nothing but their own safety. Vahdettin, the Caliph, was seeking some way to save his person and throne. . . ." Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *The Speech*, trans. and abridged by Ömer Renkliyıldırım (Istanbul: Metro Book, 1985), p. 24. For a full text of the *Speech*, see Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, *Nutuk* (1919–1927) (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1997).

[32] A significant example in this respect is Y. Hikmet Bayur. See Y. Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi, vol. 3, part 1: 1914–1918 Genel Savaşı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1953). This is a political history of the period and mostly focuses on the issue of the Ottoman entry into the war.

journalist Ahmed Emin Yalman,[33] or by non-Turkish officer-historians or diplomats[34] who lived through the period.

The "break paradigm" has been greatly challenged and revised in the last decades by new studies on the social-economic-cultural history of the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republican period, approaching these processes from a more multi-dimensional and world-historical perspective. Ottoman/Turkish historiography now emphasizes the significant continuities in the economic, social and cultural spheres from the late Ottoman through early Republican periods, as well as exploring discontinuities. But, again ironically, this revision has not brought about much examination of the Ottoman Great War experience. Perhaps for the sake of emphasizing the long-omitted continuity in the armed struggles which shaped the transition from the end of the Ottoman Empire through the foundation of the Turkish nation-state, the new perspective preferred to situate the First World War experience in a longer process, which has been called "the Ten-Year War" (*On Yıllık Harp*), covering the period from the Balkan War of 1912–13 through the National Struggle of 1919–1922. This designation is certainly not inapt and it has served to broaden our understanding of social-military processes of the end of the Ottoman period, situating these events and developments in a broader context. On the other hand, such historiography continues to minimize the unique importance of the Great War experience by conflating it with much smaller experiences of the Balkan War and the National Struggle. I do not underestimate the political importance of the Balkan War and, particularly, the National Struggle for recent Turkish history. But in terms of the scale of mobilization, restructuring of state-society relations, demographic transformation, changing of the geographical borders, and the extent of casualties,

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[33] Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930). This book has still not been translated into Turkish.

[34] See, for example, M. Larcher, *La Guerre Turque dans la Guerre Mondiale* (Paris: Etienne Chiron, 1926) [For its Turkish translation, see M. Larşer, *Büyük Harbde Türk Harbi*, trans. Mehmed Nihad [Istanbul: Matbaa-i Askeriye, 1927] and Joseph Pomianowski, *Der Zusammenbruch des Ottomanischen Reiches: Erinnerungen an die Türkei aus der Zeit des Weltkrieges* (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt, 1928) [For its Turkish translation, see Joseph Pomianowski, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çöküşü: 1914–1918 Birinci Dünya Savaşı* trans. Kemal Turan, third edition (Istanbul: Kayıhan Yayınları, 1990)]. Larcher was a French officer-historian, and Pomianowski was an Austria-Hungarian military attaché in Istanbul during the war.

the First World War was unique, and, therefore, deserves to receive an autonomous and in-depth focus.[35]

In studying the Ottoman First World experience as an autonomous field, Feroz Ahmad's works have made a remarkable contribution. Although he still approaches the war experience within the larger context of the entire Young Turk era, his articles on various social and economic dimensions of the Great War, particularly on the popular mobilization process at the outbreak of the war,[36] are a pioneering contribution to the development of a social history of a war that had hitherto been analyzed from purely political, diplomatic or military points of view. The social history of the Ottoman Great War experience has been developed significantly by the works of Zafer Toprak. His major works on the "National Economy" policies of the CUP government and the process of economic mobilization during the war, as well as his many articles on various aspects of the social and economic history of the war,[37] have not only greatly contributed to our understanding of the period, but also inspired many graduate-level students to conduct further in-depth research in the field. However, neither Ahmad nor Toprak has attempted to "infiltrate" subjects regarded as purely military issues, such as the mobilization of manpower, and, in this sense, their studies have not altered the traditional division of labor between military and social histories in Ottoman/Turkish historiography.

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[35] For a similar argument, see Yücel Yanıkdağ, " 'Ill-fated' Sons of the 'Nation': Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia and Egypt, 1914–1922" (Ph.d. dissertation, The Ohio State University, 2002), pp. 6–7. Yanıkdağ also aptly argues that the "ten-year war" view is actually selective and ignores the guerilla war in Yemen (1891–1911), which took serious commitment on the part of the Ottoman state and was considered no less important than the Balkan War.

[36] See, for example, Feroz Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908–18," *Review*, vol. XI, no. 2 (Spring 1988), pp. 265–286; Feroz Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality and Intervention: August–November 1914," in *From Empire to Republic: Essays on the Late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), pp. 121–148 [originally published in *Studies on Ottoman Diplomatic History*, no. 4 (1990), pp. 41–69]. I will discuss Ahmad's works also in Chapter 2.

[37] Other than his recent book on the economic mobilization during the war (*Toprak, İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*), also see his classical study on the "National Economy" policies: Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*, (*1908–1918*) (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982). Of his many articles and essays in the field, here is a representative selection: Zafer Toprak, "Nationalism and Economics in the Young Turk Era (1908–1918)," in Jacques Thobie and Salgur Kançal (eds.), *Industrialisation, Communication et Rapports Sociaux en Turquie et en Mediterranee Orientale* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1994), pp. 260–266; Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Devleti'nin Birinci Dünya Savaşı Finansmanı ve Para Politikası," *ODTÜ Gelişme Dergisi* (1979–1980), pp. 205–238; Zafer Toprak, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda İstanbul," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, 1994, pp. 239–242.

A major exception in this respect is Erik J. Zürcher, whose inspiring essays on various aspects of the Ottoman mobilization experience in the Great War greatly contributed to the awareness of the rich potential of this process for studies of social history. More importantly, his essays have shown that the ordinary Ottoman soldier's experience in the war can reveal significant clues for a broader understanding of Ottoman/Turkish history from the Great War through the National Struggle. He has also drawn attention to the importance of the problem of desertion which was long ignored by Ottoman military and social historians.[38] However, despite his thoughtful insights, Zürcher's essays represent an introductory venture, an invitation to in-depth and comprehensive studies on the subjects he revealed, rather than detailed analyses based on archival documents.

Stanford J. Shaw's recent two-volume survey of the Ottoman Empire in the Great War must also be mentioned here as the first serious attempt to write a comprehensive history of the Ottoman Great War experience.[39] In terms of the large range of documents, military and non-military, and issues dealt with, Shaw's work can also be regarded as a contribution to the total and interdisciplinary history of the Ottoman Great War experience by amalgamating various sub-fields. However, one can contend that Shaw's work suffers from two significant deficiencies. First, it seems that Shaw could not decide exactly whether this work would be a general explanatory survey or an in-depth monograph pursuing specific arguments. His work attempts to address almost every issue related to the Ottoman experience during the war. This attempt in itself is quite difficult and unreasonable for a one-man effort, given the extensity, intensity and diversity of the issues. This inconsistent approach presents only a descriptive and

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[38] See Erik J. Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert: The Ottoman Soldier's Experience," in Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle (eds.), *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced* (London: Leo Cooper, 1988), pp. 230–241; Erik J. Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," in Erik J. Zürcher (ed.), *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775–1925* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 79–94; Erik J. Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion: The Experience of the Ottoman Soldier in World War I," *Turcica*, vol. 28 (1996), pp. 235–258; Erick J. Zürcher, "Refusing to Serve by Other Means: Desertion in the Late Ottoman Empire," in Ö. H. Çınar and Coşkun Üsterci (eds.), *Conscientious Objection: Resisting Militarized Society* (London: Zed Books, 2009), pp. 45–52.

[39] Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1: Prelude to War* (Ankara: Publications of Turkish Historical Society, 2006) and Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2: Triumph and Tragedy, November 1914–1916* (Publications of Turkish Historical Society, 2008). The second volume was published posthumously. According to his wife Ezel Kural Shaw's preface to the second volume, the work was actually planned as three volumes.

relatively short account of certain issues (such as manpower mobilization), while delving into certain others, such as the Armenian question, much more deeply and essaying definitive judgments on them.[40]

The unwillingness of social and economic historians to develop interest in military issues in general and the negligence of the subject of manpower mobilization in particular largely stem from the traditional division of labor between the fields of social and military history, which is still strong in Ottoman/Turkish historiography, at least with regard to the Ottoman Great War. However, the view that military manpower mobilization belongs solely to the area of military history is wrong on two counts. First of all, as I have tried to outline above, under total war conditions, the spheres of military, society and economy were extremely intertwined. The process of military manpower mobilization was related to many other issues, such as demographic control, local administration, internal security, local economy, local culture, propaganda, and even religion. Secondly, contemporary scholarship on military history tends to emphasize the significance of interdisciplinary approaches and points to the fact that in the modern era military history is inseparable from other fields of history. "Military history can no more be separated from general history than can the activity of war itself from the societies that engage in it."[41] The history of war and the history of society are not two different fields, especially when studying the social history of a war period.[42]

This point brings us to the issue of the backwardness of Ottoman/Turkish military history in general, and within it, the military history of the First World War in particular. The field of Ottoman/Turkish military history is still dominated by the governing military institution itself, namely the Turkish General Staff, and almost entirely written by officer-historians. The field of military history as an academic branch at university history departments is still quite underdeveloped in Turkey.[43] There is

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[40] I have no objection to devoting a large space in such a work to such an important issue, nor is this the place to evaluate Shaw's judgments on it. But his work gives the impression that it was written to analyze only certain issues such as the Armenian question, rather than provide a general survey of the Ottoman Great War experience. Many subjects receive inadequate treatment.

[41] Michael Howard, "World War One: The Crisis in European History, The Role of the Military Historian," *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 57, no. 5 (October 1993), p. 127.

[42] For a similar argument, see Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 51.

[43] For a critical evaluation of the present situation of military-history studies in Turkish academia, see Gültekin Yıldız, "Bir De-militarizasyon Projesi: Geç Osmanlı 'Askeri Tarih' Araştırmalarını Sivilleştirmek," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 198 (June 2010), pp. 44–53. Regarding

actually a voluminous official military history of the Ottoman First World War written and published by the Turkish General Staff.[44] But this history is a fragmented but oversized account of the battles, rather than being a synthesized analysis of the Ottoman war experience. The only organizing framework in this work is the battlefronts. The work is broken into volumes and sub-volumes according to the Ottoman fronts in the war, and the narrative presents a descriptive account of what happened on a particular front in the war, which is based to a great extent on daily combat journals (*harb cerideleri*) kept by the command structure of a particular front. This official account is characterized not only by a nationalist perspective to a remarkably restrictive degree, but also an old, conventional military-historical approach. However, since this official history has been written by using primary documents maintained in the archives of the Turkish General Staff, they contain valuable first-hand information that can be used in secondary studies.

While Edward J. Erickson has attempted to write a synthesized military history of the Ottoman Great War experience,[45] it can be fairly said that Erickson's study is a compact and cross-checked version of the history published by the Turkish General Staff. One of Erickson's main contributions is that his study situates and integrates the Ottoman Great War experience into the global academic historiography of the war—a task which has greatly been ignored due to the lack of interest of Western historians in the Ottoman case and by the parochialism of the Turkish nationalist historical perspective. Erickson also critically revises some Eurocentric

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Ottoman military-history studies, the situation is much more developed at American and European universities. Military history of early modern Ottoman Empire is especially (relatively) well-studied. For a few works, see Rhoads Murphey, *Ottoman Warfare, 1500–1700* (London: UCL Press, 1999); Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (Harlow: Longman/Pearson, 2007).

[44] *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi*, 8 vols. Relevant information about the First World War also exists in the following volumes of the history of the Turkish Armed Forces series published by the same institution. See *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6: 1908–1920* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1971) and *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10: Osmanlı Devri, Birinci Dünya Harbi, İdari Faaliyetler ve Lojistik* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1985). For a bibliographic essay on the official military histories of the Ottoman Great War, see Edward J. Erickson, "The Turkish Official Military Histories of the First World War: A Bibliographic Essay," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 39, no. 3 (July 2003), pp. 190–198.

[45] Edward J. Erickson, *Ordered to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2001). Also see Edward J. Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge, 2007).

biases in Western historiography about the Ottomans. For example, he challenges works which significantly underestimated the Ottoman war performance and attributed Ottoman successes to external factors such as the German military presence in the Ottoman Empire. Erickson examines such internal factors as leadership, command and control, doctrine and training to show that the Ottomans' war performance was characterized by considerable endurance during the four years of the war. Erickson's work is also worth considering in terms of his effort to present cross-checked statistical data about the number of Ottoman troops which participated in the war and, much more importantly, the number of Ottoman casualties, on which there has been great inconsistencies in Ottoman/Turkish historiography.[46]

However, Erickson's work remains silent in two significant respects. First, although he aptly enters into a productive polemic with Western historiography about the latter's biased arguments towards the Ottoman war experience, he does not make any criticism of the parochial approach and nationalist comments in the Turkish official account of the war. For example, he does not question why certain problems were not included satisfactorily in the official account, such as the problem of desertion in the Ottoman army, although such problems played an important role in undermining the Ottoman war performance.[47] Second, in terms of

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[46] Perhaps the most notorious example in this respect is the recurrent mistakes made about the Dardanelles Front, which is the most popular subject of Turkish nationalist historiography on the war. The number of the Ottoman soldiers who died on the Dardanelles Front has often been enormously inflated, either because of mistaking the total number of casualties with the number of dead, or because of a nationalist tendency to inflate that number to make the victory seem more heroic. For example, historian Yaşar Yücel, who was president of the Turkish Historical Society in 1990, made the following remark in his opening speech to the International Symposium on the Dardanelles Front held in the same year: "this victory, which we won at a cost of more than 250 thousand martyrs . . ." ("*iki yüz elli binin üzerinde şehit vererek kazandığımız bu zaferin . . .*"). See *Çanakkale Savaşları Sebep ve Sonuçları Uluslararası Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1993), p. 1. The number of the Ottoman soldiers who died in combat on the Dardanelles Front is actually 57,084 and there were also 20,297 men who died in hospitals after being wounded; so the total number of dead is 77,381. The total number of casualties (which includes combat dead, the wounded, missing, deserters, prisoners of war and those who were hospitalized) is around 210,000–218,000. See *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 5: Çanakkale Cephesi Harekatı, 1., 2. ve 3. Kitapların Özetlenmiş Tarihi* (*Haziran 1914–9 Ocak 1916*) (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2002), p. 244. Also see Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. 94, 237. For slightly different figures, see M. Atabay, M. Erat and H. Çobanoğlu, *Çanakkale Şehitlikleri* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009), p. 148.

[47] Moreover, while he has spent great effort cross-checking and tabulating Ottoman casualty figures, he does not ask why the detailed official account does not include any explanatory data on the issue of desertion. He himself discusses the problem of desertion

enlarging the scope of the military history of the Ottoman Great War experience with a more interdisciplinary approach discussing military issues in a wider social history context, Erickson's work remains quite loyal to the old conventional military-history model, perpetuating the traditional division of labor between military history and other fields. Although he makes a strong argument that, despite Western expectations, the Ottoman army proved resilient until the end of the war, the study's limited historiographic perspective does not fully support this argument. The Ottoman armed forces indeed managed to remain on the battlefield to the last moment of the war, but this endurance cannot be explained only by purely military factors. It can only be explained in a wider context of manpower, economic, financial and moral mobilization, as well as military performance.[48]

This book aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the Ottoman manpower mobilization during the First World War, but it also tries to do it in an interdisciplinary way by using both military and non-military primary resources, and a large variety of secondary literature from various aspects of the Great War experience. In this sense, it aims to be an intervention aimed at challenging the traditional division of labor mentioned above, by combining both military and non-military perspectives within a single study.

The Scope of the Research

As a study of the social history of the military manpower mobilization in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, this book is neither a military history of the Ottoman war effort, nor claim to be an analysis of all the social and demographic dynamics that emerged during the war. During the Great War, nothing was purely military or purely non-military. The categories of military and society greatly overlapped, and perhaps it was in the manpower mobilization that the social and military fields intertwined most.

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in more detail in his second book on the Ottoman armed forces in the Great War. See Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I*, pp. 63, 109, 129, 144.

[48] For critical reviews of Erickson's work, see Mehmet Beşikçi, "Cihan Harbi'nde Osmanlı Askeri Gücü: Askeri Tarihte Yeni Yaklaşımlar, Yeni Eleştiriler," *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 5 (Spring 2007), pp. 289–295.

Therefore, in parallel with the idea of total war, the concept of "mobilization" has come to refer to a much wider process which includes not only the recruitment of men for the armed forces, but the economic, financial, technological and even cultural preparation for the war effort. In this sense, the use of the concept has become almost synonymous with a total social mobilization for war, especially in the recent European historiography on the Great War. I am aware of this usage of the concept and sometimes use mobilization to refer to a larger social phenomenon in this study. But this book is about only one of the above-mentioned aspects included in the wider use of the concept, and, therefore, I mainly use "mobilization" in a more specific sense, namely in the sense of manpower mobilization for war. However, as it will become clear throughout the study, even this specific dimension of the concept is sometimes interconnected with many other social, economic and cultural factors. Therefore, transitions from the specific to wider usages of the concept are unavoidable.

After this thematic specification, the contents of the research need to be limited in other and more concrete aspects as well. Let's start with geography and the population. Although the Ottoman Empire had lost a considerable amount of its European territory and population after its defeat in the Balkan War of 1912–13, it was still geographically a vast country during the Great War, and its population included different religious, ethnic and linguistic elements.[49] The main geographical focus of this study is on Anatolia and its immediate surroundings, while the demographic element on which it concentrates is the Anatolian Muslim population. In other words, what this study focuses on geographically and demographically more or less overlaps with the territorial and demographic basis of the modern Turkish nation-state.

There are both thematic and practical reasons for this limitation. Firstly, during the Great War, the governing elites of the Ottoman Empire, that is to say the people who made the decisions concerning the Ottoman war effort, were almost entirely composed of Muslims, and in this Muslim cohort Turkish nationalism increasingly became the dominant factor. But what is more relevant to focus on the Anatolian Muslim population is that it constituted the main manpower pool of the Ottoman military

[49] On the eve of the First World War, the territory of the Ottoman Empire covered present-day Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Israel, Palestine, and parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Alongside the majority Muslim population, the major ethnicities of which were Turks, Arabs and Kurds, the Empire also had a non-Muslim population comprised of different groups, the major ones of which were Christian Armenians and Ottoman Greeks, and Jews.

mobilization. As will be discussed in more detail in the book, although the Ottoman conscription system became more universal and was extended to almost all religious and ethnic groups on the eve of the Great War, in practice it was still Anatolian Muslims (namely, Turks, Kurds, and to a lesser extent Circassians and Laz elements) who formed the main mass of the Ottoman armed forces.[50] Similarly, it was this population which was mainly targeted by the mobilizing policies of the state, and its willingness or resistance to the expectations of the state greatly reshaped the mobilization process throughout the war. Therefore, any analysis of the Ottoman mobilization effort needs to pay primary attention to this population. Thirdly, I chose to focus on Anatolia and the Anatolian Muslim population because one of my aims in this book is to explore how the mobilization process during the Great War transformed the human infrastructure and state-society relationships in Anatolia, and what sort of legacy this process left to be taken over by the subsequent mobilization process during the Turkish National Struggle resulting in the establishment of the Turkish nation-state.

However, it should also be noted that this geographical and demographic focus should not slight the contribution (and, of course, also the resistance) of other demographic elements of the Empire during the Great War. First of all, the parameters outlined above do not mean that there will be no references to other social groups. At relevant points, I refer to and discuss various issues concerning the involvement of Arabs, Armenians, Ottoman Greeks, Jews and other religious and ethnic groups of the Empire in the mobilization process. Moreover, any focus on the human dimension of Anatolia during the Great War cannot ignore how a multi-ethnic and multi-religious demographic structure was transformed in favor of a more homogenous Muslim-Turkish population and how non-Muslims were affected in this process, especially the Armenians who had to go through a catastrophic episode called the "Deportation" (*Tehcir*) in official Turkish historiography, at the end of which their existence in provincial Anatolia virtually came to an end. But my point is that it is practically impossible to make an in-depth analysis of the roles of all these groups in the Ottoman mobilization effort within a single book. In fact, the story of each group can, and should, be the subject matter of separate in-depth studies. There are also some other practical factors which make such all-encompassing research difficult, at least in my case. For example,

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[50] For a similar argument, see Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. xv–xvi.

since the Ottoman Empire was also a multi-lingual entity, a researcher who dared undertake such an attempt would need to have mastery over many more research languages besides Ottoman/Turkish, such as Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Judeo-Spanish, etc. Moreover, such a study would also require conducting research in many different archives located today in many different countries. A reasonable suggestion in this respect is that as more in-depth studies on the different roles played by different social groups in this process become available in future years, studies which better synthesize comprehensive arguments about the Ottoman mobilization experience during the Great War should become possible.

In terms of dealing with the roles of men and women during the war, to a great extent my study tells the story of men. Some would say there is no surprise here by considering that military service was a male business. It is true that the Ottoman military manpower mobilization almost exclusively targeted the male population. But it is certainly also true that the process was not all about men. Under total war conditions, female labor was mobilized for industrial and agricultural sectors in all the belligerent countries, including the Ottoman Empire.[51] As I will discuss in Chapter 2, when labor was urgently needed, women were also employed in fields directly related to the military mobilization, such as the transportation of military supplies or provisioning of troops. I refer to such significant points concerning the use of female labor in the mobilization effort, but I must say that I neither conducted comprehensive research particularly on this issue, nor do I have any claim that this book aims to fill in this major gap in gender history of the Ottoman Great War experience. As regards the role of Anatolian Muslim women in the Ottoman mobilization experience, I can only hope that the points that I discuss in my study serve to draw Ottoman gender historians' attention to this important, potentially rich, but equally understudied subject.

Lastly, the implementation of mobilization was a provincial phenomenon to a great extent, and any analysis of that process needs to focus on what took place in provincial Anatolia as close as possible to the local level. While my research has been motivated by this consideration and

[51] While there are many good studies from a gender-historical perspective on the mobilization of female labor in European and American historiography of the Great War, the issue remains understudied in Ottoman/Turkish historiography. For an exception, see Yavuz Selim Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire: Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, 1916–1923* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archive and Research Centre, 2005).

I have tried to compile as much information as possible from local units across Anatolia, my analysis presents a picture of the mobilization process as it was seen to a large extent from the center. I use many local-origin documents, but these are usually correspondence or reports sent from local administrations or military units or local people to the central state administration or military headquarters in Istanbul. The center was always the dominant party in this interaction. In other words, local information has been compiled through the sources at the center. This does not mean that this information was always filtered or distorted by the center; as has been mentioned above, sometimes the information that was produced and maintained by official authorities could be less filtered and more direct than any other form of written communications under war conditions. But more data from the local level, in such sources as local newspapers, local journals or documents produced by local institutions (which my research greatly lack) could help us produce a more complete picture of the process. I leave this as a task for further research.

The Sources

Rather than solely covering what role the state itself played in the mobilization for war, my research also (actually mainly) focuses on how social actors participated in this process and interacted with the state. Therefore, I have used both official and non-official sources. By official sources I mean documents produced by the state and its institutions. Official documents were of course written from the state perspective and reflected official discourse. But it should also be noted that, at least in the context of the First World War period, they contain remarkable amounts of information and details about the actual processes and the issues that emerged throughout the Ottoman war experience. In various forms of correspondence among governing institutions, between the center and local administrative units, and between local people and authorities, the sources sometimes present many different aspects of an issue under question. What is more important and interesting in this respect is that, given the existence of wartime censorship, official documents could sometimes be the only written record of an issue. Similarly, again because of the censorship applied to all forms of communications in society, the contents of official documents could also be much less filtered (or not filtered at all) compared to the other forms of written communication.

Regarding the category of official documents, I have basically looked at both military and civilian administrative institutions' documents. While

the line between the military and civilian spheres greatly blurred under total war conditions and it was the military's necessities which always dictated priorities in bureaucratic procedures, there was still a certain division in the governing of society. Issues on the home front were mostly dealt with by the Interior Ministry and its local administrative units. In fact, as the implementation of mobilization required the state to increase its control functions and further penetrate into deeper levels of society, it was primarily Interior Ministry institutions which took on this challenge. In this sense, the Interior Ministry (*Dâhiliye Nezâreti*) files at the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives (BOA) in Istanbul contain many valuable details about the implementation and reception of mobilization in society during the war. These files also contain significant information about how the Ottoman state tried to cope with the problems that emerged in this process, and how it tried to ally itself with certain groups in society while marginalizing others. Moreover, the fact that the civilian and military spheres became largely intertwined under total war conditions often pushed civilian administrative institutions into military affairs, at least in their implementation on the home front. Consequently, civilian administrative institutions' documents sometimes include many valuable details about military affairs in general and the mobilization effort in particular.

The bulk of the documents belonging to the Ottoman War Ministry and the General Staff, and almost all the documents belonging to the military units deployed on the battlefield, are kept and maintained in the Turkish General Staff Military History Archives (ATASE) in Ankara. For the documents of the Great War period, the ATASE has a special collection called "*Birinci Dünya Harbi* (*BDH*) *Koleksiyonu*" (The First World War Collection). The documents in this collection constitute a wide spectrum ranging from correspondence between authorities vertically and horizontally, daily records of affairs on the battlefield, reports on the general situation in a military zone in a particular period of time, and all kinds of military measures concerning local civilian populations. They contain many relevant specifics regarding almost all aspects of the Ottoman Great War experience. Therefore, any original study on any aspect of social and military history of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War needs to consult these archives.[52] Instead of dealing with civilian administrative

[52] However, I cannot say that I was able to use every document that I wanted to see in the military archives. Certain restrictions apply concerning the access to documents in the ATASE. You can only get the documents which are relevant to the subject-matter you declared when applying, but the decision of which documents are relevant and which

and military documents separately, I have tried combine them to develop a solid documentary base for my arguments throughout the book.

As regards the category of non-official documents, the newspapers and periodical journals of the First World War period constitute a fundamental layer of the documentary basis of my study. However, while they provide much significant information and details about what happened in the period from the declaration of mobilization through the Ottoman entry into the war, the documentary contribution of the newspapers of the war years is actually been somewhat limited, due to censorship. The contents of different newspapers were almost the same, and all of them gave more coverage to a standard general military narrative of the battlefield performance of the Central Powers. Thus, details about the Ottoman war effort and problems on the home front are largely absent. However, the effect of censorship should not be exaggerated either. First of all, although editorial comments almost always favored the government, many daily events about the mobilization process were still covered in the newspapers. More importantly, the existence of censorship hardly affected the publication of articles discussing what pro-war Ottoman authorities and elites thought and did and how they tried to justify what they did. In this sense, the journals of paramilitary and semi-official voluntary associations and various propaganda and literary journals constitute another important source for my study. Pamphlets about various issues published by state institutions and semi-official voluntary associations are also included in this category.

In contrast to the wealth of periodical literature, sources about what the very people who were targeted by the mobilization thought and did are scarcer. Official documents of course contain some information about what people did, especially when they caused trouble for the state, but they narrate the issues from the state's perspective. Petitions submitted to various administrative units in the form of telegrams are also contained in official documents and they are important in terms of hearing the voices of the people. But the available number of such petitions about the problems relating to the manpower mobilization during the war is limited.

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not is entirely made by the staff. However, this decision can often be a tricky one at best, since the cataloguing system of the BDH Collection is based on short summaries of files of documents (not of individual documents). The number of documents that a file might contain varies from a few to a couple hundred. So, it is not always easy to decide if a file is entirely irrelevant for a given subject. Out of all the requests for files that I submitted after searching the summaries in the catalogue of the BDH Collection, I was only given access to approximately one-third.

In an overwhelmingly illiterate society such as the Ottoman Empire, the people who were mobilized for war left almost no written traces behind. For example, while soldiers' letters constitute a very rich documentary source in the European historiography on the First World War, we lack this kind of written source by enlisted men to a great extent in the Ottoman context. It is very difficult to hear the direct voice of the simple Anatolian Muslim peasant enlisted man.

However, the war memoirs and personal diaries of various high, middle and lower-middle ranking officers, which have fortunately been becoming more abundant in recent years, partially fill in this vacuum. But there are remarkable differences in terms of contents among such ego documents and they are not equally helpful. First of all, memoirs and diaries, though usually mentioned together, are actually two different kinds of documents. By closely following the experiences of the author, diaries usually present a more immediate and more factual information that is valuable for historical research. Memoirs, on the other hand, are usually written considerably after the experience (in some cases, after several decades), and a memoir writer remembers his war experience selectively. In this sense, his personal, social and political values, his life and career following wartime, and the expectations of his society significantly determine the contents of his narrative. This is no less true for the Ottoman soldiers' memoirs. One of the ways in which this discrepancy can be reduced is, as I do here, to compare an individual memoir with memoirs written by people of a similar status and in similar conditions.

Secondly, most of these ego documents were written by regular army officers, not by enlisted men. Therefore, most of them actually repeat an official perspective. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing since sometimes an insider officer's observations reveal many significant details about how the people under his command behaved in the course of the war. Still, there is a problem in that almost all of the memoirs/diaries of high-ranking officers were usually written in order to justify the deeds of the writer during the war. Details about daily life are usually omitted. Some of these officers even attempted to write a general political history of the war. But, interestingly, this "bias" diminishes as the rank of the officer-writer diminishes. Middle and lower-middle ranking officers are usually less concerned with justifying what they did during the war; after all, the responsibilities that they were to undertake were not as large as the ones taken by high-ranking officers. Details about daily life occupy more space in their narratives and, more importantly, some are rather personal in their writings and present us with more individual observations and feelings.

A more useful and interesting category in this respect is the memoirs/diaries written by reserve officers. As will be explained in Chapter 2, the Ottoman military was in urgent need of lower ranking officers during the war and the practice of recruiting educated men to be employed as reserve officers in various fields of the military became even more important during the First World War. A reserve officer was actually an enlisted man, but he was also an officer. He was himself subject to the mobilization, but he was also in charge of implementing it. Therefore, these war memoirs/diaries provide us with significant glimpses at the Ottoman mobilization effort both from outside and inside. Moreover, in the almost absolute absence of written records left behind by the peasant soldiers,[53] the reserve officers' memoirs/diaries constitute a very important, and perhaps the only, source that allow us to construct a "from below" approach to the Ottoman enlisted men's response to the war experience.

Other than the Ottoman/Turkish primary sources, I also use documents from the British National Archives (TNA: PRO) as a "balancing" element. The observations made by a major enemy of the Ottomans sometimes help fill in the important gaps left open in the Ottoman/Turkish documents. I mainly use documents from the British Foreign Office (FO) and, particularly, War Office (WO) files related to contacts with the Ottomans. The FO documents I use are consular reports about the Ottoman preparations for war, written on the eve of the Great War before the Ottoman state formally opposed Britain. The WO documents that I use are mostly military intelligence reports from the Sinai-Palestine and Mesopotamia fronts, where major engagements took place between the Ottoman and British forces. I especially use the British military intelligence documents in my chapter on the problem of desertion. The intelligence documents not only present general accounts of the Ottoman forces observed from the enemy side, but also include interrogation statements taken from the Ottoman deserters in British hands and analyses made by British authorities on the basis of these statements. The details contained in the intelligence documents are significant and relevant for a study on the Ottoman war experience, because they were not produced for propaganda, but to provide functional information for the use of British authorities about the actual situation in the battlefield zone. Therefore, the factor of exaggeration or

[53] Ego documents written by ordinary enlisted men are not entirely absent, but their number is extremely low.

distortion is usually at a minimum level. But, needless to say, sometimes the British observations need to be balanced by Ottoman ones.

The Study

The body of this study is composed of five chapters. The study will begin with an analysis of the Ottoman public mood on the eve of and at the outbreak of the Great War. Chapter 1 will mainly focus on the "war enthusiasm" issue and explore the background, mechanisms and discourses of the Ottoman call to arms at the declaration of mobilization. After presenting a discussion on how the Balkan War defeat produced nationalist radicalization and militarization within the Muslim-Turkish Ottoman population, the chapter will mainly deal with the "armed neutrality period" and its immediate aftermath, namely from the declaration of mobilization through the Ottoman entry into the war. I will discuss how attempts at mobilizing society for war were actually carried out in collaboration between the state and civil society. I will try to show how the unique dynamics of the Ottoman public sphere created political bonds between the government and semi-official voluntary associations which dominated the field of voluntary action in favor of nationalist and militarist ideas. This process channeled the spontaneous sentiments of people into a more organized war effort and, in addition, marginalized all dissenting voices. The demonstrations held on the occasions of the abolition of the capitulations and the declaration of holy war in particular will be scrutinized as the main public events of a process orchestrated and choreographed by both official and civilian initiatives collaborating in pursuit of a common political goal. Next, I will try to relate this general process to the specific subject matter of the book, namely the military mobilization of manpower. In this sense, I will look at which discourses and symbols the Ottoman mobilization used to reach people and convince them to join the war effort. I will argue that a popular Islamic language always accompanied attempts at mobilization. Finally, I will also touch upon the issue of propaganda by arguing that the capacity of Ottoman war propaganda in this process was actually much larger than it has been assumed, since it was not confined to written communication techniques, but also included the wide-spread and effective employment of oral propaganda.

The actual process of manpower mobilization for the armed forces during the war will be dealt with in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I will present a description of the evolution of the Ottoman conscription system and

discuss how conscription practice formed a new relationship between the state and society during the war years. Since the failure to mobilize manpower was given as one of the main reasons for defeat during the Balkan War, the Ottoman conscription system underwent a major reform process to create a more efficient recruitment mechanism and a more extensive service obligation. I will show that the main challenge for this process was re-establishing the draft system at the local level, since it was the local level on which the success of the system depended. This challenge required more penetration into deeper levels of society, which was accomplished mainly through recruiting office branches in districts, by which the central authority established collaboration not only with local authorities to implement recruitment, but also with important local dignitaries to justify military service to the local people.

The chapter will also draw attention to the discriminatory character of the Ottoman conscription system, which became consolidated during the war. Although the official discourse of the CUP government about military service propagated the desirability of joining all elements of Ottoman society in the mobilization effort, this aim was actually conceived as a pragmatic Ottoman-unity measure for getting the maximum use of the available manpower. This approach was in fact quite nationalist and did not reflect an idea of Ottoman equality. I will discuss how the state's growing political distrust towards non-Muslim elements in the Empire, and the latter's reluctance to enlist, produced two different service categories, armed and unarmed, resulting in discriminatory practices such as the notorious labor battalions.

Despite the reform attempt on the eve of the war, the Ottoman conscription system continued to have deficiencies in various respects, mainly due to the infrastructural weaknesses of state power. Moreover, as the war went on and the state steadily needed more manpower on the battlefield, the conscription system also constantly needed to be adapted to actual war conditions. It will be emphasized that the Ottoman state tried to overcome these challenges by combining old imperial recruitment methods with modern conscription strategies.

The resort to volunteers was a way of coping with the deficiencies of the conscription system and the increasing need for manpower during the war will be the subject matter of Chapter 3. This chapter discusses how the use of volunteers in the armed forces—a practice that had already been applied in the previous wars in the post-*Tanzimat* era—became more systematic with new legal and practical regulations during the Great War. I will first present a general panorama of volunteers in the Ottoman

armed forces during the war and deal with volunteers in four main social categories, as prisoner-volunteers, immigrant and refugee (*muhâcir*) volunteers, tribal volunteers and religious volunteers. In the first category, I will discuss why prisoners came to be preferred as volunteers in the armed forces and evaluate how they were employed in the armed bands of the Special Organization to carry out informal military missions and guerilla attacks both on the battlefront against the enemy forces and on the home front against "distrusted" civilian elements. In the second category, I will try to show how volunteerism turned into an effective tool of mobilizing the increasing *muhâcir* population during the war and why *muhâcirs* volunteers were employed in the military campaigns in the regions which they were familiar with. In the case of tribal volunteers, I will discuss how resorting to volunteers, mainly Kurdish tribal units, in eastern and southeastern Anatolia functioned almost as an alternative to the conscription system which the state could not realize in these regions due its infrastructural insufficiency. Recruiting tribal volunteers was also a way of forming political bonds between the state and peripheral tribal authorities. Kurdish tribal volunteers were usually employed as separate cavalry forces, which served as auxiliary units on the fronts near their native regions, such as the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. And in the case of religious volunteers, I will discuss how the CUP government collaborated with the *Mevlevi* and *Bektaşi* orders within the military mobilization effort. I will also argue that the expectations of the latter also resonated with the demands of the state. Then I will explain how religious volunteers were used mostly for increasing the troops' morale, and how their religious influence in society was also used for propaganda purposes to increase the legitimacy of the CUP government's war policies.

My main argument in this chapter will be that resorting to volunteers in the Ottoman armed forces during the Great War was not merely a way of increasing the available manpower, but it also, and more importantly, created a relationship of power between the CUP-dominated state and certain social groups preferred by the state authority on the basis of its political expectations. This was not a one-way relationship, as these social groups also showed willingness to interact with the state authority in such fashion, as long as this interaction welcomed their own expectations. This reciprocity functioned a way that marginalized other "undesired" social groups in Anatolia and provided popular support and collaboration at the local level for the CUP government.

However, neither the conscription system nor resorting to volunteers sufficed for an effective mobilization as the war became prolonged and

turned into a multi-front battle of attrition. As the war acquired a more "total" character, it required a permanent mobilization effort with new social mechanisms established for this purpose. The Ottoman attempts at permanent manpower mobilization constitute the subject-matter of Chapter 4 which deals with this process by analyzing the paramilitary youth associations that were conceived as an instrument to contribute to these attempts. In this chapter, I will first present a general discussion on the emergence and increasing importance of militaristic youth associations on the eve of the war. But my main focus will be the Ottoman Youth League, which was established in the middle of the war with the specific aim of mobilizing unschooled provincial and peasant Muslim Ottoman boys who constituted the backbone of the Ottoman armed forces. I will discuss that through the Ottoman Youth League, which had branches at the local level throughout Anatolia, the CUP-dominated Ottoman state aimed to permeate into deeper levels of provincial society to carry out more effective manpower mobilization. The Youth League was established to provide an extended militaristic training, both physically and mentally, for young boys from the age of 7 through 17. In this way, I argue, authorities not only aimed to prepare young boys for war by providing them with physical and military skills, but also to create a popular mechanism that would serve as a propaganda campaign to a get popular support on the home front for the government's war policies.

After describing this background and discussing the aims of the paramilitary associations, I will argue that the people who were targeted or affected by such organizations did not passively comply with the demands of the state. Based on how these people's expectations and priorities matched up with state policies, I will try to demonstrate that their responses constituted a wide spectrum ranging from voluntary support to open resistance. In this sense, I will argue that the Ottoman paramilitary associations often had difficulty realizing their originally conceived aims and were forced to respond to social actors by continually re-shaping themselves and their methods during the mobilization process.

A more general focus on the limits of the Ottoman mobilization effort will be made in Chapter 5, which will deal with the problem of desertion as the ultimate form of resistance to the mobilization for war. In this chapter, I will first discuss how desertions from the Ottoman armed forces, which increased significantly in the second half of the war, constituted an extensive problem which played a major role in the decline of the performance of the Ottoman military on the battlefield. Regarding the scale of the problem, I will also discuss that while almost all ethnic or religious

groups in the Ottoman Empire were represented in the pool of deserters, it was particularly Anatolian Muslims and Turks, the main manpower pool of the Ottoman military, who constituted a significant majority.

While I will explore in detail the specific reasons for desertions as explained by military authorities and, where possible, also by deserters themselves, I will situate these reasons in a wider context which approaches desertion as a unilateral termination of the tacit contract between the state and the enlisted man regarding military service and sacrifice on the battlefield. I will argue that the realization of basic expectations of the enlisted men was vitally important for their remaining on the battlefield, and such factors as poor provisioning and health conditions on the battlefield, the disappearance of the hope for victory, feeling betrayed by authorities, bad treatment by commanders and unbearable physical and mental exhaustion greatly contributed to the increase in desertion.

One of the main arguments of this chapter is that the extent of desertions was so wide that it quickly evolved into a major social problem requiring measures on the part of not only the military but also state authority on the entire home front. In this respect, I will explore how the effort of coping with the problem opened up new channels for the state to further penetrate into society. I will particularly examine the re-organization process of the Ottoman gendarmerie as the main provincial security force to cope with the problem of desertion. I will discuss that, whereas the state was never completely successful in tackling the issue of desertion, it was able to establish a reinforced internal security mechanism in Anatolia. I will argue that this internal security mechanism helped the re-mobilization effort during the Turkish National Struggle of 1919–1922, which resulted in the creation of the Turkish nation-state.

CHAPTER ONE

ORGANIZED SPONTANEITY: THE CALL TO ARMS IN THE OTTOMAN PUBLIC SPHERE ON THE EVE OF THE WAR

If Carl von Clausewitz was right when he said that war in the modern era had become "a people's war,"[1] then "mass mobilization and broad social support became the basis of warfare."[2] Indeed, ensuring society's permanent support on a large scale had come to be considered the sine qua non for success on the battlefield in the age of total war. The First World War was characterized by attempts on the part of the states in all belligerent countries, including the Ottoman Empire, to carry out large-scale, permanent mobilization of society. When the July Crisis emerged in 1914 and declarations of mobilization were made in one European capital after another, the Ottoman state did not wait long and declared general mobilization on 2 August 1914.[3] From this date to the entry of the Ottomans into the war in late October 1914, the state was in a period called "armed neutrality" (*müsellah bîtaraflık*), during which society witnessed attempts at both the official and popular levels to mobilize for war. In fact, popular sentiment had already become radicalized after the mobilization experience in the Balkan War of 1912–12 and the humiliating and traumatic defeat that ensued. The core of every mobilization attempt during the period of armed neutrality involved propagating the idea that the Ottomans had good reason to prepare for the imminent war and, therefore, that every Ottoman needed to willingly support the mobilization and act upon the call to arms. These points were stressed further when the Ottoman state entered the war, and the war was presented as an opportunity for the regeneration of the Ottoman Empire and an antidote to the danger of dissolution.

This chapter will explore how Ottoman society was mobilized on the eve of and during the outbreak of the Great War. I will scrutinize the

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[1] Von Clausewitz, *On War*, p. 457.

[2] Förster, "Introduction," in Chickering and Förster (eds.), *Great War, Total War*, pp. 2–3.

[3] BOA, MV, 236/17, 10 Ramazan 1332/2 August 1914.

background, mechanisms and discourses of the Ottoman call to arms. I will first give a critical summary of the ongoing debate in European historiography on the issue of "war enthusiasm" in societies at the outbreak of the Great War. By doing this I will underline that new research in this debate has challenged the claim that there was spontaneous and widespread enthusiasm for war in European societies in July 1914. I will next analyze the Ottoman case and argue that popular mobilization for war in Ottoman society was neither entirely spontaneous nor purely imposed by the state. My main contention will be that while there was no clear-cut distinction between "spontaneity" and "organized enthusiasm" (in most cases these dimensions overlapped), attempts at popular mobilization were carried out within a collaboration between the CUP-dominated state and semi-official voluntary associations in the public sphere. I will try to show how the unique dynamics of the Ottoman public sphere created political bonds between the government and semi-official voluntary associations such as the Navy League and the National Defense League, which gradually predominated the field of voluntary action in favor of nationalist and militarist ideas. I will discuss how these associations not only organized and actively took part in major mobilization activities, such as large public demonstrations that were held on the eve and at the outbreak of the war, but also worked with the support of the government to marginalize any potential dissenting voices against pro-war policies.

Finally, after examining the discourses and symbols of mobilization, I will argue that a popular Islamic language always accompanied the mobilization attempts as a proto-nationalist discourse. I will also touch upon the issue of propaganda by arguing that the capacity of Ottoman war propaganda in this process was actually much greater than previously assumed, since it was not confined to written communication techniques, but included the use of wide-spread and effective oral propaganda.

Debate on the "Spirit of 1914" and War Enthusiasm

In European historiography, the debate on the extent and contents of popular enthusiasm towards the declaration of war in 1914 remains vigorous. However, the once-dominant argument that there was pronounced willingness for war on July 1914 in the public spheres of major European belligerent countries such as Germany, France and Britain has been challenged by recent research informed by more balanced and nuanced arguments.

To give a few examples of studies that advanced the "enthusiasm argument," we can first mention Marc Ferro, who wrote that the anti-militarism of the post-Dreyfus period had lost its vigor by 1914, and that the Great War was "enthusiastically received by most men of military age."[4] Ferro has argued that this enthusiasm was particularly evident in England and the United States, where a great number of volunteers joined the armed forces.[5]

Similarly, Modris Eksteins has emphasized the voluntary spirit of 1914. Eksteins has gone as far as to claim that the density of popular enthusiasm, which unfolded in jingoistic mass demonstrations in Berlin, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, and London in late July and early August of 1914, played an important role in expediting the decisions to join the war by pushing the military leadership of Europe toward confrontation. Focusing particularly on the German case he has asserted that "the momentous decisions of the last days have all been made against the backdrop of mass enthusiasm" and "no political leader could have resisted the popular pressures for decisive action."[6]

Yet, in recent years, this debate has become more diverse, and the "spirit of 1914" approach has come under severe criticism. For example, Niall Ferguson has made equally strong assertions on the other end of the continuum. He has argued that while there was certainly some popular support for war in July 1914, the extent of this enthusiasm does not allow us to generalize about the overall "spirit" of 1914. Claiming that the existing debate on the popular-enthusiasm issue understates the extent of the anti-militarist movement in Europe on the eve of the Great War, Ferguson contends that "militarism was far from being the dominant force in European politics on the eve of the Great War."[7] For example, as a counterargument to the claim that the existence of a high number of volunteers in the British case was proof of widespread popular support for the war, he has emphasized the impact of the financial crisis of 1914 in Britain and suggested that "one reason so many men volunteered in the first weeks

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[4] Marc Ferro, *The Great War, 1914–1918*, trans. by Nicole Stone (London and New York: Routledge, 1973), pp. 8–9, 15.

[5] The tide of volunteerism did indeed seem to be remarkable in Britain, which did not have a compulsory conscription system until 1916. In August through December of 1914 alone, nearly 1.2 million men voluntarily enlisted in the army. See Charles Messenger, *Call to Arms: The British Army 1914–18* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2005), p. 130.

[6] Modris Ekteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2000), pp. 56, 61.

[7] Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War* (London: The Penguin Press, 1998), pp. 20, 28.

of the war was that unemployment soared because of the economic crisis the war had unleashed."[8] On the other hand, another influential factor might have been the conviction that the war would be short and end by Christmas.[9] Another fact that could be mentioned in a parallel line with Ferguson's argument is that the emphasis on volunteerism tends to ignore the existence of conscientious objectors to military service, which actually constituted a major problem in wartime Britain.[10]

Recent studies have further deconstructed the "myth" of the spirit of 1914 in a more balanced manner. By analyzing German public opinion at the outbreak of the war through in-depth research compiled mostly from local histories, Jeffrey Verhey has argued that the generalization of war enthusiasm is baseless. Verhey explains that while certain sections of German society, such as most middle-class intellectuals, students and much of the upper class, enthusiastically supported the entry into the war, it would be inaccurate to project their patriotic fervor onto German society as whole. He has argued that popular enthusiasm had a limited social character. Moreover, on the issue of volunteers, he has acknowledged that the fact of volunteerism was considerable, but also stated that it would be quite misleading to assume that all German volunteers volunteered due to war enthusiasm. In addition to the fact that the German press usually vastly exaggerated the numbers of men who volunteered, Verhey has highlighted additional factors (such as the financial crisis) that might have led many Germans to volunteer in the army. For example, while many unemployed petty-bourgeois and middle-class people "may have decided to join the army as a means of getting through these difficult times," many youths were actually less enthusiastic than "curious," and they volunteered because they saw the war "as an opportunity for personal growth [and] a chance to develop their personality."[11]

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[8] Ibid., p. 444. Adrian Gregory also confirms that the first impact of the war was mass unemployment and "economic distress had always been the British Army's best recruiting agent." See Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 31.

[9] J. M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, second edition (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), p. 29.

[10] Lois Bibbings, "Conscientious Objectors in the Great War: The Consequences of Rejecting Military Masculinities," in Paul R. Higate (ed.), *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Praeger, 2003), p. 130. For example, during 1916–18, some 16,500 men registered as conscientious objectors in Britain. See Messenger, *Call to Arms*, p. 136.

[11] Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 99–100.

Hew Strachan has attempted to formulate a synthesized approach. He has warned that it would be equally simplistic and misleading to conclude that popular enthusiasm at the outbreak of the Great War was a "myth." While Strachan accepts that the portrayal of widespread enthusiasm for war is certainly in need of revision by new research, he has also pointed to the fact that "the belligerent peoples of Europe accepted the onset of war, [and that] they did not reject it." According to Strachan, "without a popular willingness to go to war the world war could not have taken place."[12] Underlining the need to avoid simplistic generalizations and to take into consideration different aspects of the debate, Strachan has reached a similar conclusion with Verhey regarding the limited character of enthusiasm. He has asserted that "genuine enthusiasm was more frequent in towns and among white-collar workers" and that, [t]he largest single occupational group in most armies was the peasantry [while] the reactions of agricultural communities to mobilization were less positive."[13]

What was the situation in the Ottoman Empire? What was the mood of the Ottoman public at the outbreak of the Great War? How did the Ottoman public respond to the mobilization? Was there a "spirit of 1914" in Ottoman society? Did social agency exert any effect on the Ottoman decision for war? First of all, before attempting to answer such questions, it should be noted that issues such as Ottoman public opinion in 1914, as well as the role played by popular sentiment in shaping the decision to enter into war have remained largely understudied aspects of the social history of the war in Ottoman-Turkish historiography. Therefore, these questions have hardly been addressed. The available historical literature on this subject has focused either on general political issues such as whether the Ottoman entry into the war was inevitable and what Ottoman war aims were, or on more specific aspects of the political process, such as the Ottoman search for alliances in 1914, the secret treaty signed between the Ottoman and German governments on 2 August 1914, and

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[12] Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Volume 1: To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 104, 110, 162; Hew Strachan, *The Outbreak of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 132.

[13] Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 142. A similar balanced reassessment has also been made by Adrian Gregory who, in the case of Britain, argues that "the very idea of a uniform enthusiastic reaction from the 'masses' owes more to contemporary beliefs of the excitability of mass society, widespread amongst liberals and conservatives alike, than it does to empirical evidence." Adrian Gregory, "British 'War Enthusiasm' in 1914: A Reassessment," in Gail Braybon (ed.), *Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914–18* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), p. 69.

whether the decision to enter the war was made too early or not. Needless to say, all these issues are related fundamentally to political and diplomatic fields, and extant studies in this respect focus almost entirely on elite perspectives in this period.

The political history of various aspects of the Ottoman decision for war in 1914 is, relatively speaking, quite dynamic and well documented. Earlier studies in this field emphasized the idea that the decision for war was made under heavy pressure from Germany and only by the initiative of an ambitious faction within the CUP, and without adequate deliberation or consensus. An influential representative of this approach is Y. Hikmet Bayur, whose comprehensive work (though now mostly considered outdated) argued that the decision was fatalistic and there were no compelling reasons for entering the war.[14] Ulrich Trumpener's classic study on German-Ottoman relations has challenged this view by arguing that the Ottoman state was not a passive party vis-à-vis Germany, nor was it forced into war by Germany. On the contrary, he has argued that the Ottoman state also shaped the course of the alliance by its own terms and that the event that provoked Russia to declare war on the Ottomans—namely the bombing of the Russian ports on the Black Sea coast by the *Yavuz* (SMS *Goeben*) under the command of the German admiral Souchon in late October 1914—was actually planned in collaboration with leading Ottoman and German politicians.[15] An important article by Kemal Karpat further challenged Bayur's argument and clarified Ottoman war aims in the political context of the period.[16] Likewise, Mustafa Aksakal's recent study has critically reevaluated the existing literature and used new primary sources to argue that Ottoman participation in the First World War was neither a fait accompli nor a result of a decision taken by a handful of hawkish politicians. Instead, Aksakal asserts that it represented continuity in Ottoman political thinking. In this sense, he argues that there was considerable support for entry into war not only among the Ottoman elite, but also in Ottoman society, who regarded war as the only acceptable course of action for "saving" the empire.[17] But Aksakal's study revolves

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[14] See. Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi, vol. 3, part 1: 1914–1918 Genel Savaşı*.

[15] See Ulrich Trumpener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) and also his, "Turkey Entry's into World War I: An Assessment of Responsibilities," *Journal of Modern History* 34 (December 1962), pp. 369–380.

[16] See Kemal H. Karpat, "The Entry of the Ottoman Empire into World War I," *Belleten*, no. 253 (December 2004), pp. 687–733.

[17] See Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

almost strictly within the circle of political history and elite perspectives. Thus, it does not explore the social parameters of how this support had evolved and how it resonated with the pro-war policies of the government. What Aksakal means by public support is actually the support given by politically interested elites whose expectations converged with those of the CUP government regarding the entry into the war.

Feroz Ahmad's studies have represented a major attempt to contribute to this discussion from a more social perspective, and have attempted to balance the political narrative with explorations at the social level. In particular, two important articles have presented significant details about the changing nature of CUP attempts at popular mobilization from the Balkan War through the Great War.[18] His exploration of the collaboration between the CUP government and Muslim trade corporations in mobilizing the public is worth mentioning in this respect. However, despite their pioneering contributions, Ahmad's articles can be considered complementary essays to his main work on the Young Turk regime, and they have mainly presented a general description of the social and political affairs leading to the war, rather than being in-depth discussions that specifically focused on the Ottoman mobilization effort.

Militarization of the Ottoman Public Sphere after the Balkan Defeat

Was there an Ottoman public sphere on the eve of the Great War, where social actors could take voluntary action and express their opinions and expectations vis-à-vis the state? Historical studies on the evolution of the public sphere were once heavily influenced by Jürgen Habermas's notion of a liberal bourgeois public sphere. According to Habermas, the public sphere emerged in Western Europe from the eighteenth century onwards as a result of specific historical circumstances, such as the development of the modern state, the rise of industrial capitalism and the emergence of print capitalism accompanied by mass media. During this process, a new distinct social domain was opened between the private sphere and the state authority, where bourgeois social actors could form civic initiatives, establish autonomous mechanisms to pursue their own economic interests, gather in common forums to influence political action and enter

[18] See Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks" and Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality."

into negotiation with the state. In Habermas's words, "in its clash with the arcane and bureaucratic practices of the absolutist state, the emergent bourgeoisie gradually replaced a public sphere in which the ruler's power was merely represented *before* the people with a sphere in which state authority was publicly monitored through informed and critical discourse *by* the people."[19]

The liberal notion of the public sphere assumes an antagonistic relationship between the state and civil society, placing them in binary opposition. It tends to attribute democratic implications to the development of the public sphere. This notion assigns a key role to civil society associations as the main source of voluntary action vis-à-vis the state, and some analysts even tend to "predict a positive correlation between their density and the vitality of democracy."[20]

This understanding of the public sphere has proven to be too limited to explore the dynamics of the public sphere in non-Western societies whose experiences do not correspond exactly to the Western European model. From the liberal perspective, the existence of a strong authoritarian state, which usually characterized "latecomer" societies in the modernization process, could be seen as a sign of a weak public sphere or its complete absence. This approach has been subject to extensive revision in recent years. For example, as Harry Harootunian's analysis of the Japanese experience of modernization has shown, modernization needs to be perceived as a manifold process, which situates unique experiences within a shared framework of contemporaneity without erasing their differences.[21] Therefore, instead of using the liberal notion as a prototype or litmus test to measure the maturity of a particular civil society, the liberal notion should

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[19] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. xi.

[20] Frank Trentmann, "Paradoxes of Civil Society: Introduction," in Frank Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000), p. 5. Also, for a critical reevaluation of the limits of the Habermasian concept of the public sphere within the context of the nineteenth century, see Geoff Eley, "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 289–339.

[21] "Japan's modernity . . . was rather an inflection of a larger global process that constituted what might be called co-existing or co-eval modernity, inasmuch as it shared the same historical temporality of modernity (as a form of historical totalizing) found elsewhere in Europe and the US . . . What co-eval suggests is contemporaneity yet the possibility of difference." Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. xvi–xvii.

be regarded as just one among various types of public sphere within a "multiple modernizations" framework.

The relationship between civil society and the state can be much more complicated and blurrier than the binary opposition implied by the liberal approach; civil society institutions could sometimes even assume governmental functions, collaborating with the state.[22] Similarly, Joseph Bradley's study on voluntary associations in late imperial Russia has shown that the existence of an authoritarian state did not preclude the emergence of dynamic voluntary action in the expanding public sphere, and the relationship between the state and civil society was much more complicated than the liberal notion would suggest.[23] The historiography of the Great War now also tends to run counter to this liberal perspective and the emphasis is increasingly being put on the argument that "voluntary organizations compensated for the shortcomings of the State, proving indispensable in the mobilization of the material and cultural resources of the nation, and even benefiting from the war."[24]

This revisionist approach to civil society has been influential in late Ottoman historiography as well. For example, Nadir Özbek's study on philanthropic activities in the late Ottoman Empire demonstrates that philanthropic associations and related voluntary initiatives contributed to the development of a dynamic public sphere which was not antagonistic to or distinct from state authority. Rather, the ruling authority managed to bring philanthropic associations under its control and tried to use them as instruments to expand its control over society and consolidate its legitimacy.[25]

In fact, the Young Turks' 24 July 1908 revolutionary intervention and subsequent restoration of constitutional monarchy opened channels in Ottoman society for voluntary social action. A great range of civic and

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[22] For this argument in a study on gymnastics clubs in Germany in the first half of the nineteenth century, see Daniel A. McMillan, "Energy, Willpower, and Harmony: On the Problematic Relationship between State and Civil Society in Nineteenth-Century Germany," in Trentmann (ed.), *Paradoxes of Civil Society*, pp. 176–195.

[23] See Joseph Bradley, "Subjects into Citizens: Societies, Civil Society, and Autocracy in Tsarist Russia," *American Historical Review*, vol. 107, no. 4 (October 2002), pp. 1094–1123.

[24] Pierre Purseigle, "Warfare and Belligerence: Approaches to the First World War," in Pierre Purseigle (ed.), *Warfare and Belligerence: Perspectives in the First World War Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 23–24.

[25] See Nadir Özbek, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet: Siyaset, İktidar ve Meşruiyet, 1876–1914* (Istanbul. İletişim Yayınları, 2002) and Nadir Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere during the Late Ottoman Empire: War, Mass Mobilization and the Young Turk Regime (1908–18)," *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 43, no. 5 (September 2007), pp. 795–809.

semi-official associations emerged within the aura of "liberty" which had been propagated by the Young Turks during the revolutionary process and its immediate aftermath. Impressed by this development, Tarık Zafer Tunaya has written that socio-political life during the Second Constitutional Era was characterized by associations rather than by political parties.[26] The change was indeed striking. While only seven associations were established in Istanbul in 1907, 83 new associations were established during the last five months of 1908; 70 new ones were added to these in 1909.[27] Moreover, on 16 August 1909, a legal framework was also created by issuing the Law for Associations which provided a legal base and legitimacy for newly emerging civil society organizations.[28]

A considerable expansion in the freedom of press also accompanied this process. In the two months after the 1908 Revolution, more than 200 licenses to publish newspapers were issued. In total, between 1908 and 1909, 353 newspapers and journals were published in Istanbul; this number was 130 in 1910, 124 in 1911, 45 in 1912, 92 in 1913 and 75 in 1914.[29] This growth in the realm of print media could well be described as an important step in the development of "print capitalism" in the Ottoman Empire, which certainly played a significant role in setting the stage for the rise of a nationalist mentality.[30]

However, although this sudden increase of freedom in the realm of civic action was impressive and significant, it was only temporary. The pluralistic aspect of this process proved to be as fragile as the regime became increasingly authoritarian in the 1910s, especially after the coup of 1913, when the Committee of Union and Progress forcibly declared single-party rule. This fragility further increased during the beginning of

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[26] Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler, vol. 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Devri* (Istanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1988), p. 367.

[27] Mehmet Ö. Alkan, "İstanbul'da Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları, 1856–1945: Toplumsal Örgütlenmenin Gelişimi," in A. N. Yücekök, İ. Turan and M. Ö. Alkan (eds.), *Tanzimat'tan Günümüze İstanbul'da Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), p. 105.

[28] "Cemiyetler Kanunu," 5 Ağustos 1325/16 August 1909, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 1, pp. 604–607; Zafer Toprak, "Cemiyetler Kanunu," *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), p. 205.

[29] Orhan Koloğlu, "Osmanlı Basını: İçeriği ve Rejimi," *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 1 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), p. 90.

[30] Irvin Cemil Schick, "Osmanlı Döneminde Matbuat Kapitalizmi," *Virgül*, no. 126 (January–February 2009), pp. 58–63. On the relationship between the rise of print capitalism and nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso, 1993).

the First World War with the introduction of firm censorship.[31] Nevertheless, although the state under the Young Turk regime increasingly became more authoritarian, it did not exert complete control over associational life and print media in civil society. Rather, it tried to shape voluntary action according to its own terms by forcing public actors to collaborate with the state. This involved certain restrictions on potentially dissident and non-conformist associations, but the state also offered various incentives as long as voluntary initiatives in civil society acted along the lines of the nationalist and militarist tendencies of the government. Thus, civic associations, which were at the same time voluntary and "semi-official," characterized associational life in the Ottoman public sphere towards the First World War.

Two such associations were particularly significant in terms of influencing public opinion both on the eve of and during the First World War. These were the Ottoman Navy League (*Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti*) and the National Defense League (*Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*). Both of these associations propagated nationalistic ideas and worked to arouse popular enthusiasm among the Ottoman population for the war effort. They also organized important fundraising campaigns to make material contribution to their own specific aims. With the support and protection of the state authority, their nationalist and militaristic discourse and practices had "the effect of marginalizing other civic initiatives not directly related to patriotic goals."[32] In other words, they served as instruments not only for creating bonds between the ruling authority and the public sphere, but also for containing and suppressing any potential popular dissent to that authority.

The Ottoman Navy League was established on 19 July 1909 by four middle-class Ottoman professionals: physicians Hafız İbrahim, İsmail Hakkı and Petraki Papadopulos, and chief engineer Haşim Bey.[33] The Navy

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[31] In fact, formal and informal censorship had already begun with the CUP's seizure of power on 23 January 1913, after which Ottoman politics became increasingly authoritarian. But the censorship during the war years was more systematic and strict. Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 13 [This book is an abridged translation of Erol Köroğlu, *Propagandadan Milli Kimlik İnşasına: Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı, 1914–1918* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004)].

[32] Özbek, "Defining the Public Sphere," p. 797.

[33] For a detailed account of the Ottoman Navy League and its activities together with an analysis of its membership structure and discourse, see Mehmet Beşikçi, "The Organized Mobilization of Popular Sentiments: The Ottoman Navy League, 1909–1919" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 1999). For an institutional history of the league, also see Selahattin

League emerged at a time when CUP circles insisted on the pressing need for creating a powerful Ottoman navy to confront the Greek threat in the Aegean Sea, where the Crete question of 1909 had proved the weakness of Ottoman naval power. This propaganda was reinforced by the influence of the naval armament race occurring at this time in Europe, especially between Britain and Germany.[34] The remarkable popular support for naval armament in those countries, which was rallied by voluntary associations, also inspired the emergence of the Ottoman Navy League. The founders and active members of the Ottoman Navy League particularly admired and were heavily influenced by the German Navy League (*Deutscher Flottenverein*), which constituted a genuine mass movement through its large membership, its strong organizational structure, and the size of its literary output and the range of its propaganda.[35]

The major aim of the Ottoman Navy League was to collect donations (*iâne*) from the public to contribute to the building of a new, strong navy. These donations were collected on both regular and irregular bases. Regular dues came from recorded members in the form of a monthly payment (usually at least 1 piastre/*kuruş*). Irregular donations included large amounts of occasional cash contributions from high state officials, including the sultan himself, as symbolic gestures to set an example for other people to donate.[36] Moreover, the League also organized various occasional events such as lotteries and auctions, and sold souvenir objects to raise funds for the Ottoman navy. And, since the League obtained a fatwa from the *şeyhülislam* (the chief jurisconsult) proclaiming that collecting donations for the navy was allowable according to Islamic law, it also asked Muslim people to present their religious alms (*fitre* and *zekât*)

Özçelik, *Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2000).

[34] For a summary of the Anglo-German battleship race, see Richard Hough, *The Great War at Sea, 1914–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 12–21.

[35] The German Navy League, which was founded on 30 April 1898, enlisted 86,675 members in its first eighteen months, with this number reaching 331,493 in 1914. Its official publication, *Die Flotte* (The Navy) had a subscriber base of 270,000–280,000 after 1900 and had 360,000 readers in 1913. See Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German Right: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp. 102–366. Britain established its own Navy League in 1893, and it had 100,000 members in 1914. See Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 145.

[36] For example, Sultan Mehmed Reşad V, who was the legal protector (*hâmi*) of the Navy League, also donated his salary. "Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti Merkez-i Umûmisinin 6 Temmuz 325'ten [19 Temmuz 1909] 30 Haziran 326 [13 Temmuz 1910] Tarihine kadar 325 Günlük İcraât ve Muâmelâtını Rapordur," *Donanma*, no. 6 (August 1326/1910), p. 513.

to the League.[37] Furthermore, some public institutions supported the Navy League in various forms. For example, the Naval Museum of Istanbul granted entrance fees to the League, and the right to operate a ferry between the ports of Eminönü and Galata was also given to the League; the Ottoman Bank, into which the League deposited all its cash, paid a higher interest rate to the League than the standard rate paid to its normal customers.[38]

To organize these donation campaigns, an extensive associational structure was conceived. Branches were established in as many provincial units of the empire as possible, as well as in Istanbul, where the central office was located. The Navy League opened a total of 122 branches (29 of which in provincial centers, the rest in sub-provinces and districts) within its first year. While the League did not record the number of members for all branches, it had figures for the capital; the number at the end of June 1910 was given as around 36,000 members.[39]

Membership in the Navy League was theoretically open to every Ottoman, but in practice it required potential members' approval of the CUP's nationalist perspective in general and its naval armament policies in particular. While a considerable level of voluntary participation in the activities of the League was evident, the line between voluntarism and compulsion was sometimes blurred, as in many provincial areas administrative authorities expected their employees to join Navy League branches. This blurring could also be seen in the collection of donations. Sometimes donations were automatically deducted from state employees' monthly salaries as fixed amounts without asking for their consent (or by taking their consent for granted).[40]

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[37] *Salnâme-i Servet-i Fünûn*, 1326/1910, p. 205.

[38] For various forms of donations, also see *Donanma-yı Osmani Muâvenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti'nin İkinci Sene-i Devriyesi için Heyet-i Umûmiyeye Takdim Kılınmak üzere 1326 senesi 6 Temmuz'undan* [*19 July 1910*] *1327 senesi Haziran gâyesine* [*13 July 1911*] *kadar olan Muâmelât-ı Esâsiyesini Hâvi Rapordur* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Hayriye, 1327/1911); Deniz Müzesi Komutanlığı Deniz Tarihi Arşivi (The Naval Museum Archives of Ottoman Naval History, Istanbul; hereafter DMA), Mülgâ Bahriye Nezareti Bölümü, Tahrirat Kalemi, Defter no. 666, p. 89, 27 Temmuz 1326/9 August 1910; DMA, Daireler Bölümü, Defter no. 57, p. 13, 6 Temmuz 1331/19 July 1915; DMA, Mülgâ Bahriye Nezareti Bölümü, Tahrirat Kalemi, Defter no. 727, p. 47, 7 Ağustos 1329/20 August 1913.

[39] "Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti'nin 5 Ağustos 1325 [18 Ağustos 1909] tarihinden 30 Haziran sene 1326 [18 July 1910] tarihine kadar olan Ahvâl-i Maliyesini Mübeyyin Rapordur," *Donanma*, no. 6 (August 1326/1910), p. 492.

[40] Documents show that some state institutions had their employees sign a short statement declaring that the undersigned agreed to give the donation out of his salary. For examples of such statements signed by police officers in Istanbul in 1914, see ATASE, BDH,

The overwhelming majority of the members were educated, middle-class and mostly urban people. Their composition reflected the combination of voluntary and semi-official character of the association, which involved people from both civilian and governmental circles.[41] Besides local governmental employees, who were almost "officially" supposed to participate, local branches also usually included notable people of the locality, such as merchants and other important figures. It is also noteworthy that in most of the branches there was at least one non-Muslim member, usually a merchant or professional. This suggests that provincial branches were conceived as a kind of microcosm of the middle-class elements of the region to which they belonged.[42] It is important to note that the local membership structure of the Navy League, which combined governmental authority with local power networks, served to mediate between the center's (pro-CUP) policies and local expectations. Local members also propagated pro-CUP goals at the local level. Some middle and upper-middle class Muslim women, especially those who were wives of various leading CUP politicians and high-ranking state officials, also took active part in the donation campaigns of the Navy League.[43]

A distinctive aspect of the Ottoman Navy League was that a comprehensive militaristic-patriotic propaganda program accompanied its major

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Klasör 1523, Dosya 44, Fihrist 1-1, 1-2, 1-3. But since the contents of such statements are entirely identical, it can be suggested that this application was a routine procedure in which everyone was "officially" expected to participate.

[41] For example, of the twenty-five members of the executive committee in 1910, six were state officials, three were army officers, one was a parliamentary deputy; among the remaining were four physicians, seven merchants, one engineer, one lawyer, one university teacher and one journalist. See "Donanma-yı Osmanî Muâvenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti Merkez-i Umûmisi Heyet-i İdâre Azâlarının Esâmisi," *Donanma*, no. 6 (August 1326/1910), p. 486.

[42] But this "imperial" aspect of the membership's composition gradually disappeared and it assumed a more Muslim and nationalist identity as the Ottoman Empire went through a serious of catastrophic wars; this situation became more noticeable in the aggressively nationalist environment towards and during the First World War. For example, while one of the four founding members was an Ottoman Greek, there was no non-Muslim member in the executive committee that was elected on 24 January 1914. See Beşikçi, "The Ottoman Navy League," pp. 123, 135; Selahattin Özçelik, "Aydın Vilayeti Donanma Cemiyeti," *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi*, vol. VI (1991), pp. 120–121.

[43] One such example was Hadiye Hanım, wife of a CUP deputy Vehbi Bey, whose contribution to the Navy League's campaigns in Istanbul was recounted in the memoirs of her daughter Cahit Uçuk, a female Turkish writer. This family had to migrate to Istanbul from Salonica when the latter was lost during the Balkan War, and this trauma seems to have motivated Hadiye Hanım to participate in such nationalistic activities. See Cahit Uçuk, *Bir İmparatorluk Çökerken*, thirteenth edition (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2000), pp. 247–250.

campaign of collecting donations for the navy. The journal of the League, *Donanma* (The Navy), not only played an important role in raising awareness among the Ottoman public for the need for a powerful navy, but it also functioned as a sort of a "forum" for the greater patriotic cause of coping with the threat of the disintegration of the empire. Besides giving extensive coverage to propaganda inviting people to show their patriotism by donating to the Navy League, articles on various topics ranging from the naval armament race to Ottoman history, international relations, and literature were published. Written by quite a large number of writers, professional and amateur alike, the articles shared a nationalistic tendency and alarm at the threat of the disintegration of the empire.[44]

This prolific propaganda helped to form a public opinion that was highly sensitive to the need to increase the naval power of its country in a social-Darwinian struggle to survive.[45] The public increasingly associated its own well-being with the strength of the navy. This process produced a highly politicized popular sentiment in Muslim and Turkish elements of Ottoman society on the eve of the Great War—a sentiment that could be mobilized for militaristic efforts. For example, the severe reaction among some segments of Ottoman society in the wake of British confiscation of the two Ottoman battleships on 2 August 1914 presented an opportunity for such popular mobilization. This event not only helped the CUP garner a significant amount of public support for signing a treaty of alliance with Germany and declaring general mobilization on 2 August 1914, but it also exerted an accelerating effect on the Ottoman decision to enter the First World War.

In the armament race at the beginning of the twentieth century, a battleship was not an ordinary weapon; it was regarded as a "savior." The navy, the ultimate symbol of technological superiority at that time, determined who would triumph in the age of mechanized warfare, so much so that the HMS *Dreadnought*, a British battleship launched on 10 February

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[44] *Donanma* began to be published as a monthly journal in March 1910 and remained so until its forty-eighth issue in February 1914. The journal's subtitle reads "illustrated, moral, literary, historical, scientific journal." It was highly popular; its first and second issues, each of which was published in the amount of ten thousand copies, were sold quickly and extra five thousand copies for each of these issues were published. It came out weekly as of 29 June 1914 and served as an influential propaganda journal during the First World War years. Its last issue, numbered 191, appeared on 1 March 1919.

[45] Social Darwinian ideas were popular among nationalist circles of the Young Turks. On this subject, see Atila Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006).

1906, dramatically set the standard for battleship construction after this date; "all the major powers (and most of their smaller imitators) now hastened to pour massive resources into the construction of 'dreadnoughts.' "[46] The Ottomans were no less enthusiastic in this respect than their European counterparts. After humiliating defeats at the hands of the Italians and Greeks in 1911 and 1912 respectively, the Ottomans began to dream of having at least a few of the most advanced battleships of the era. The strengthening of the Greek navy during these years and the way Greeks, including Ottoman Greeks, supported the Greek navy was particularly provocative to the Ottomans.[47] Therefore, the high point of the campaign of the Ottoman Navy League was its significant contribution to the ordering of two dreadnoughts, the *Sultan Osman* and the *Reşadiye*, from Britain. The order for the battleships was contracted on 4 April 1911 between the Ottoman Ministry of the Navy and the Armstrong-Vickers Company of England, according to which the *Sultan Osman* would be ready in July 1914, while the *Reşadiye* would be completed in early 1915.[48]

The Ottoman public impatiently waited for the delivery of the *Sultan Osman* throughout July 1914 and asked for explanations for the exact date of its arrival, as the British company repeatedly delayed its delivery.[49] The delivery would never be made. As the July Crisis resulted in Britain's imminent entry into war (which occurred on 4 August 1914), the British government confiscated the two Ottoman battleships in its dockyards on 2 August 1914 without return of payment.[50] Since Britain had not yet

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[46] Williamson A. Murray, "Towards World War, 1870–1914," in Geoffrey Parker (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 258; Mehmet Beşikçi, "İktidarın Çelik Sembolleri: I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Donanma Sembolizmi ve Milliyetçi Propaganda," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 127 (July 2004), pp. 92–95.

[47] The Greek case of popular support for the navy, which culminated in the purchase of the armored cruiser *Georgios Averof* (popularly considered a battleship), not only provided an example for the Ottomans to imitate and compete against, but also increased hostile sentiments among Turkish nationalist circles in the Ottoman Empire towards Ottoman Greeks, resulting in a call for a boycott against Greek merchants in 1913 and 1914. See Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Donanması, Averof Zırhlısı ve Ulusal Kimlik," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 113 (May 2003), pp. 10–19.

[48] Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi*, 3/1, p. 71. For a recently published well-documented and balanced study on the story of these two battleships, see Serhat Güvenç, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na Giden Yolda Osmanlıların Drednot Düşleri* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009). Güvenç uses both Ottoman and British archival sources.

[49] See, for example, "Osman-ı Evvel ve Reşadiye," *Donanma*, no. 50 (23 Haziran 1330/5 July 1914); "Osman-ı Evvel," *Donanma*, no. 51 (20 Haziran 1330/19 July 1914).

[50] The payment for the *Sultan Osman* had been made entirely at this date. Güvenç, *Osmanlıların Drednot Düşleri*, p. 80.

entered the war, the Ottoman government claimed that the British government's action was illegal. However, the British announced in a memorandum dated 12 August 1914 that the act was not a confiscation but only a preemptive measure as they had the right to detain the ships in its dockyards.[51]

Whatever its legality, the event was a tremendous shock for the Ottomans. The Navy League stated that it "caused extreme grief and sadness for our association,"[52] and expressed that its psychological impact would motivate "all Muslims and Turks" under the influence of "this shared feeling."[53] The event had widespread repercussions in the Ottoman press as well. For example, Yunus Nadi, a leading CUP propagandist and famous columnist of the day, used the word "piracy" to describe the confiscation of the dreadnoughts.[54] Ahmed Agayef [Ağaoğlu], a Turkish nationalist intellectual, expressed his condemnation of this act by stating that it exerted a heartrending impact on the Ottomans since they had regarded the battleships as significant factors that would help create a safer future.[55] Another newspaper article described the event as an act of "injustice, unimaginable unfairness, and unforgettable harm."[56]

In addition to those in the press, there were also significant expressions of condemnation among the populace, especially from various people in the provinces, who expressed their grief and reprehension in telegrams sent to the British embassy in Istanbul.[57] Two such telegrams were actually sent via the pro-CUP newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkâr* which, along with other newspapers, published them as propaganda.[58] The mediation of a pro-government newspaper suggests that governmental networks organized

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[51] TNA: PRO FO 800/240, pp. 620–623.

[52] "Muhterem Millete," *Donanma*, no. 55 (28 Temmuz 1339/10 August 1914), p. 98.

[53] "Yâd-ı Hazin," *Donanma*, no. 57 (18 Ağustos 1330/31 August 1914), cover page.

[54] *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 25 Temmuz 1330/7August 1914.

[55] Ahmed Agayef, "Müteessir Olmamak Kâbil midir?," *Tercümân-ı Hakikat*, 26 Temmuz 1330/8 August 1914.

[56] "İngilizlerden Beklenilir mi idi?," *İkdâm*, 27 Temmuz 1330/9 August 1914. Celâl Bayar, an active CUP figure of the time (and the third president of the Turkish Republic) described the confiscation as one of the major factors that led the Ottoman Empire into the war. See Celâl Bayar, *Ben de Yazdım: Milli Mücadeleye Gidiş*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Sabah Kitapları, 1997), p. 195.

[57] Copies of these telegrams are available in the British National Archives. See, TNA: PRO FO 800/240, pp. 609–618. Also see, Mübahat S. Kütükoğlu, "I. Dünya Savaşı Arefesinde İngiliz Hükûmetinin El Koyduğu Gemiler ve Türk Kamuoyu," in *Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi Hâtıra Kitabı* (Istanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti Yayını, 1995), pp. 206–218.

[58] *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 8 Ağustos 1330/21 August 1914. See also, "Sultan Osman ve Reşadiye için İngiltere'nin Dersaâdet Sefâretine Hitâb," *Tanin*, 12 Ağustos 1330/25 August 1914.

or facilitated sending telegrams to the British embassy. One of these two telegrams was sent from Rize, a sub-province of Trabzon, and was signed by seven local people. Containing statements both of anger and respect, the signatories implied that they spoke on behalf of a larger Islamic community in their locality.[59] The other telegram was sent from Atina (Pazar), a district of Rize. It was signed by the mayor, one Bahri, who made an explicit statement that he spoke on behalf of the fifty-thousand-strong Muslim population of the Atina district. Similar to the former telegram, he expressed reprehension and asked for the delivery of the battleships.

There were also various telegrams which were sent directly to the British embassy. Some of them were sent by individuals on their own behalf, such as an Ahmed who was a merchant of dry goods, while others were sent by people speaking on behalf of an institution or a group of people, such as Gâlib from the Teacher's Training College (*Dârü'l-mu'allimîn*) or Müntakim who was the scribe of the Turkish Nail-Makers Society. The statements in these direct telegrams seem to be more direct and are often angrier. A telegram sent by a woman named Behice, who described herself as "a mother of a soldier," is particularly interesting. She expressed her anger quite straightforwardly: "Your seizure of our battleships, which we purchased by working hard and making self-sacrifices really hurt us in this uneasy time . . . I hope God causes all your battleships to be crushed by the German navy, amen."[60]

This event and the popular reactions to it caused significant effects among the public after the Ottoman state's declaration of general mobilization on 2 August 1914. As Feroz Ahmad says, the loss of the dreadnoughts was never forgotten by the Turkish public and it changed the course of events towards the First World War.[61] While the event certainly caused much sorrow among the public, the outcome was also something of a political gift to the CUP to be exploited as propaganda.[62] Due to the reaction against the British in particular and the Entente powers in general, the alliance with Germany was easily legitimized in the eyes of the

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[59] ". . . We request that our battleships be delivered to us if you want to gain the friendship of Islam." The telegram was signed by people by the names of Fahri, Hüseyin, Osman Zeki, Safvet, Hulûsi, Süleyman and Abdi. There is no clue to their professions or political connections. TNA: PRO FO 800/240, p. 617.

[60] TNA: PRO FO 800/240, p. 613.

[61] Feroz Ahmad, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Dış Politikası (1908–1919)," in *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), p. 300.

[62] Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Pocket Books, 2006), p. 105.

public.[63] The German battlecruiser SMS *Goeben*, together with its smaller partner, the light cruiser SMS *Breslau*, escaped from British battleships in the Mediterranean and took refuge in the Dardanelles on 10 August 1914. They eventually joined the Ottoman navy (with the Turkish names of *Yavuz* for *Goeben* and *Midilli* for *Breslau*) as part of the alliance deals between Germany and the Ottoman state and were welcomed enthusiastically by the Ottoman public.[64] At both the popular and official levels, they were regarded as a kind of compensation for the battleships confiscated by the British.[65] Their coming was announced as "glad news to the Ottomans" by the press.[66] When they sailed down the Sea of Marmara in the presence of the Sultan on 15 September 1914, hundreds of rowboats full of men and women came out to greet them. The journal *Donanma* gave extensive coverage to the event and published various photographs of the naval parade.[67] The parade was also filmed by the Navy League, and it was announced that for those who had not been able to see the parade, the film would be shown in the Navy Theatre at Şehzadebaşı in Istanbul.[68]

The public mood that took shape after the confiscation of the battleships also served more general end regarding mobilization. It created a larger context of enthusiasm for revenge in which the mobilization order easily resonated with the Ottoman public, and the call to arms as of 2 August was widely propagated. The journal *Donanma*, for example, not only published essays and articles which embraced the idea of a great war as essential for the salvation of the empire, but the journal also served as some kind of a public wall on which propaganda posters for mobilization would be hung.[69]

Another semi-official voluntary association that worked for patriotic mobilization in the post-Balkan defeat period was the National Defense League, which was established during the first Balkan War, on 1 February

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[63] Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 69; Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın, *Siyasal Anılar* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976), p. 215.

[64] On their escape and joining the Ottoman navy, see Stefanos Yerasimos, "Akdeniz'de On Gün," in Stefanos Yerasimos (ed.), *İstanbul: 1914–1923*, trans. Cüneyt Akalın (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997), pp. 41–61.

[65] Djemal [Cemal] Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman, 1913–1919* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), p. 120.

[66] "Osmanlılara Müjde," *İkdâm*, 29 Temmuz 1330/11 August 1914.

[67] See *Donanma* 59 (8 Eylül 1330/16 September 1914).

[68] Ibid., cover page.

[69] For some examples of such propaganda pictures published in the journal, see *Donanma*, 56 (4 Ağustos 1330/17 August 1914), pp. 124–125.

1913.[70] During the calamitous days of the war, which were characterized not only by news of defeat on the battlefield, but also by social disasters such as the influx of Muslim refugees into the empire and the poverty that accompanied them, the National Defense League was conceived as a public instrument that would work not only to provide contributions to the troops on the battlefield and refugees coming into the empire, but also to raise popular support on the home front for the war effort.

While the National Defense League was similar to the Navy League in many ways (for example, its organizational structure with provincial branches and its membership profile), it was a more immediate product of war conditions and, therefore, had objectives derived from the particulars of current circumstances. Similar to an umbrella organization, it involved five sub-committees within itself, each of which was formed to deal with a major aim. Besides the executive committee which dealt with general administrative procedures, the donation collection (*iâne*) committee worked to raise funds for the war effort and the support of refugees, while the health committee tried to provide medical support and acted as an auxiliary to the Ottoman Red Crescent Society (*Osmanlı Hilâl-i Ahmer Cemiyeti*). The volunteer recruitment committee was very important, as it was the first organized initiative which emerged in the public sphere to recruit men for the military. The effort of the National Defense League to gather volunteers for the armed forces also continued during the Great War (See Chapter 3). Finally, there was the committee for the enlightenment of public opinion (*tenvir-i efkâr*), which produced propaganda and materials to agitate popular sentiments in support of the war effort. It included various important nationalist literary figures of the day, such as Yusuf Akçura, Hüseyin Cahid and Ahmed Rasim.[71]

The semi-official character of the National Defense League was stronger and its organic ties with the CUP government were more visible. This more official profile was due both to the urgent needs that the National Defense League had to address under war conditions and to the political climate of the period when it emerged. The year 1913 was a significant turning point in the political atmosphere of the post-1908 era. Politics became increasingly authoritarian as the CUP seized full control of the government through a coup in January 1913 and turned itself into a single-party

[70] On the emergence, organization and activities of the National Defense League, see Nâzım H. Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 1991).

[71] Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, pp. 27–28.

state. After the Balkan defeat and loss of Albania, the Young Turk regime "began to view the ethnic Turks as the core group that should become the foundation of the state and assure its survival."[72] In fact, it was the CUP itself which formulated the idea of founding a patriotic association that would work to gather support from all segments of society for the salvation of the empire. The CUP expressed this opinion in a declaration to the press on 31 January 1913. Underlining that "our fatherland is in danger" (*vatanımız tehlikede*), the declaration stated in corporatist rhetoric that it was a duty (*vazife*) for all Ottomans to forget every selfish feeling and to work together to save the fatherland from this common disaster.[73]

The nationalist character of the association was also evident. In various places, such as in İzmir, the National Defense League worked in close collaboration with the Turkish Hearth Society (*Türk Ocağı*), a Turkist literary association established during the Balkan War and which actively worked to propagate Turkist ideas.[74] However, having organic ties with the CUP did not mean that the National Defense League was a completely Unionist and Turkist unit from the beginning. Among prominent initial members were various non-Muslim and non-Turkist figures. For example, the executive committee of the association included Diran Kelekyan, editor-in-chief of the daily *Sabah*, and Ohannes Vartkes (Serengülyan), a deputy from Erzurum in the Ottoman parliament.[75] But this pluralistic structure was quite fragile, like the pluralism in the Ottoman political system of the period in general. As the political system became more authoritarian on the eve of the Great War and later as policies of nationalist exclusion more manifest during the war, that pluralism almost entirely disappeared.[76]

While the Ottoman state imposed heavy restrictions on the public after it declared general mobilization on 2 August 1914, the Navy and National

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[72] Karpat, "Entry of the Ottoman Empire into World War I," p. 707.

[73] "Beyânnâme," *İkdâm*, 18 Kânunisani 1328/31 January 1913.

[74] Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, p. 6. On the Turkish Hearth Society, see Füsun Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-Develete Türk Millilyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları, 1912–1931* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997).

[75] Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, p. 28.

[76] This process is also reflected by the fate of two Armenian figures mentioned above. In 1915, both Diran Kelekyan and Vartkes Serengülyan were arrested during the purge against Armenian political figures. Kelekyan was exiled from Istanbul to Çankırı and Vartkes Serengülyan was murdered, together with Krikor Zohrab (a deputy of Istanbul), on their way from Istanbul to the court martial in Diyarbekir by an armed band of the Special Organization (*Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa*). See BOA, DH.ŞFR., 52/266, 23 Cemâziyelâhir 1333/8 May 1915; Rober Koptaş, "Meşrutiyet Döneminin Umut ve Umutsuzluk Sarkacında Ermeni Devrimci Partileri ve Krikor Zohrab," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 182 (February 2009), pp. 70–75.

Defense leagues were hardly affected by these new measures. They were for all intents and purposes the sole prominent associations in the Ottoman public sphere on the eve of the Great War, and they practically faced no dissent throughout the war.[77] They not only served to throw other alternative forms of voluntary action out of the arena, but also acted in collaboration with the CUP government to regiment civil society.[78] The increasing authoritarianism of the CUP government after 1913 made these two associations the only available channels in the public sphere to absorb popular opinion. But this absorption also involved the re-shaping of public opinion according to their political outlook.

According to some contemporary observers, the regimentation of Ottoman civil society through heavy governmental restrictions on any form of freedom of speech and the dominance of the pro-CUP, semi-official voluntary associations in the public sphere accounted for the lack of anti-war opinion in Ottoman society. There were practically no public channels to express anti-war sentiments. In fact, according to journalist Ahmed Emin Yalman, there were actually many people who did not like the idea of entering another major war after the disaster of the Balkan War. But such people "were disorganized and silent: All the available organized channels in the country were in the hands of a minority which was composed of pro-war extremists."[79] While pro-war voluntary associations served as social forums where people could utter their opinion as long as they supported the mobilization effort, they also acted as mechanisms to muffle the voices of people who would raise any kind of objection.

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[77] Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, p. 135.

[78] These associations were close to the government and enjoyed its patronage. As a result, they took on a semi-official character which allowed them to withdraw contributions directly from the salaries of state employees. Such donations therefore obligatory rather than voluntary. See, for example, ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1523, Dosya 44, Fihrist 1-1; DMA, Mülgâ Bahriye Nezareti Bölümü, Tahrirat Kalemi, Defter No. 687, pp. 22–29, 1329/1913; DMA, Mülgâ Bahriye Nezareti Bölümü, Tahrirat Kalemi, Defter No. 690, pp. 100–101, 1329/1913. Donation collection sometimes also became more directly "forced" during the war and caused inconvenience. For example, upon the complaints about cases of forced donation collection (*cebren iâne toplama*) in some provinces, the Interior Ministry needed to warn provincial administrators to take necessary measures against such forced donation activities and to ensure that donations be collected only according the existing regulations. See, for example, BOA, DH.ŞFR., 39/174, 10 Cemâziyelevvel 1332/6 April 1914; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 46/19, 25 Şevval 1332/16 September 1914; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 67/253, 13 Zilkâde 1334/11 September 1916.

[79] Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim, vol. 1: 1888–1918* (Istanbul: Rey Yayınları, 1970), p. 219.

While one needs to be cautious about exaggerations in talking about opposition to war in Ottoman society on the eve of the Great War (especially by anti-CUP figures of the time), there is indeed some truth in Yalman's observation. Many opponents were indeed disorganized and silent. One of the main reasons for this silence, of course, was due to the existence of very strict censorship. With the declaration of mobilization came even heavier censorship which practically put every kind of communication under official, or more specifically, military control. These measures remained in effect throughout the war. Postal and press censorship did not simply grow out of security concerns; they were conceived as a major tool of social control on both the home front and the battlefield. Censorship committees were established in Istanbul and in the provinces, and they were to be composed primarily of military officers.[80] Every form of written correspondence sent through the post was subject to censorship; thus, all letters were to be sent in open envelopes.[81] This order also applied to soldiers' incoming and outgoing letters which were censored by military authorities at headquarters.[82] No new newspapers and journals were allowed to emerge, and the existing ones were subject to daily censorship. In the case of disobedience, severe punishments applied and newspapers and journals could be permanently shut down. [83]

The regimentation of society was augmented further by the establishment of a martial-law administration (*idâre-i örfiye*) on the same day as the declaration of mobilization.[84] This establishiment also involved the creation of martial-law courts (*divân-ı harb-i örfî*) throughout the empire, which replaced those administered by civilian officials in peacetime. The martial-law administration and martial-law courts were all under the authority of the War Ministry, and thus Enver Pasha.[85] Under the martial-law administration, the highest military authority of a provincial unit became the ultimate authority of local administration.[86] This reorganization not only increased the military authority's power to mobilize

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[80] *Sansür Talimâtnâmesi* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Askeriye, 1330/1914), pp. 2–3.

[81] Ibid., pp. 7–10; BOA, DH.EUM.5.Şb., 3/4, 16 Zilhicce 1332/5 November 1914; "Mektuplar Açık Yollanacak," *Tanin*, 23 Teşrinievvel 1330/5 November 1914.

[82] *Sansür Talimâtnâmesi*, p. 7.

[83] Ibid., pp. 16–17.

[84] BOA, DH.EUM.EMN., 90/10, 11 Ramazan 1332/3 August 1914; "Memâlik-i Osmaniyede İdâre-i Örfiye," *İkdâm*, 21 Temmuz 1330/3 August 1914.

[85] Stanford J. Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2*, p. 763.

[86] In this chain of hierarchy, army corps commanders were the highest authority in their regions. Osman Köksal, "Tarihsel Süreci İçerisinde Bir Özel Yargı Organı Olarak Divan-ı Harb-i Örfiler, (1877–1922)" (Ph.d. dissertation, Ankara University, 1996), p. 34.

society for war but also provided it with an almost unlimited right to control social affairs. However, this was true at the theoretical level; in practice, its effectiveness depended on the ability of the same authority to penetrate every level of society. Nonetheless, the military had tremendous power because no formal popular initiative could raise its voice without the approval of the martial-law administration. The powers of martial law administrators included investigating the residences of any suspicious persons day or night, confiscating arms and munitions owned by civilians, closing down newspapers which published "news that may disturb public opinion" (*zihinleri karıştırıcı yayın*), and banning every kind of association (*her türlü cemiyetleri men etme*).[87] And, as could be expected, the martial-law courts were extremely strict regarding problems directly related to the mobilization, such as draft-evading, desertions and disobedience to war-tax requirements.[88]

Attempts at a militarist disciplining of society also involved various decisions that would affect civilians in their daily lives, albeit symbolically. For example, civilians were obliged to stand at attention and salute like a soldier when they saw a military unit parading in their locality with a banner. This decision was sent by the Interior Ministry in a circular to provincial units.[89]

The Post-Balkan Defeat Trauma and the Discourse of Regeneration

In many respects, the Balkan War of 1912–13[90] constituted the first total war experience for the Ottomans. Some historians have described the

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[87] Köksal, "Divan-ı Harb-i Örfiler," p. 33.

[88] Ibid., p. 82.

[89] BOA, DH.HMŞ., 22/10, 15 Rebîülâhir 1333/2 March 1914; BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 80/8, 15 Rebîülâhir 1333/2 March 1915.

[90] The Balkan War was actually a two-phase war, and is therefore sometimes also mentioned in plural as the Balkan Wars. The first phase started on 8 October 1912, in which the Ottoman state fought against a coalition consisting of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro. The main battles took place in the first phase and the Ottoman forces suffered a heavy defeat; the first phase ended on 10 June 1913 with the signing of the Treaty of London. The second, minor, phase involved a conflict between Bulgaria and other Balkan states, which presented the Ottomans with an opportunity to regain Edirne in July 1913. On the general history of the Balkan War, see Aram Andonyan, *Balkan Savaşı*, trans. Zaven Biberyan, second edition (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 1999); *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, Balkan Harbi (1912–1913)* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1979); Edward J. Erickson, *Defeat in Detail: The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912–1913* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003);

Balkan War as a "rehearsal"[91] for or a "prelude"[92] to the Great War. This war showed to the Ottomans that the home front had become an integral part of modern warfare. The Balkan experience demonstrated that a key aspect to sustaining a war effort involved getting continuous material and mental support from society for the military. Moreover, war efforts now required systematic propaganda in the public sphere to mobilize such support.[93] Although the Ottomans were never completely successful at coping with hardships caused by the changing nature of warfare during the Balkan experience, they tried to mobilize society by resorting to certain novel methods. The phenomenon of public demonstration gained momentum during the Balkan War. Demonstrations were held in Istanbul and provincial centers to mobilize popular support for the Ottoman war effort.[94] As has been mentioned above, semi-official associations such as the National Defense League not only carried out various public, popular mobilization activities but also directly recruited volunteers for the armed forces on the battlefield.

The most important effect of the Balkan experience on Ottoman society, however, was its tragic consequences. Although Edirne was regained in the second phase of the war and this event was presented to the public as if it was an important victory won by the CUP-led army,[95] the Balkan War actually ended in humiliating defeat. It was experienced as a collective trauma. Understanding this trauma is very important in fathoming the public mood in Ottoman society on the eve of the Great War. First of all, this defeat and the consequent loss of territories in the Balkan

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Leon Troçki [Trotsky], *Balkan Savaşları*, trans. Tansel Güney, (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1995).

[91] Zafer Toprak, "Cihan Harbi'nin Provası Balkan Harbi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 104 (August 2002), pp. 44–51.

[92] Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars: Prelude to the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[93] See Eyal Ginio, "Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation during the Balkan Wars (1912–1913): Awakening from the Ottoman Nation," *War in History*, vol. 12, no. 2 (2005), pp. 156–177.

[94] Zeki Arıkan, "Balkan Savaşı ve Kamuyoyu," in *Dördüncü Askeri Tarih Semineri, Bildiriler* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1989), pp. 168–187; Andonyan, *Balkan Savaşı*, pp. 199–200.

[95] "The Balkan Wars served to solidify the CUP's hold on the government, since it appeared to the public that the CUP was responsible for abrogating the London Treaty and for retaking Adrianople (Edirne) and Thrace. The leadership that would take the Ottoman Empire into the First World War was now established, with Sait Halim as grand vizier, Talat Pasha as the minister of the interior, Enver Pasha as the minister of war, and Cemal Pasha as the minister of marine." Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 4.

Peninsula,[96] including one of the most important cities in the empire, Salonica, made the threat of imperial dissolution acutely palpable to the Ottomans. The idea that "the fatherland is in danger" became widespread among elite and non-elite alike. This perception constituted a baseline for any potential mobilization propaganda campaign on the eve of the Great War. Secondly, the military's failure in the Balkan War, particularly the inability of the Ottoman military to carry out a successful mobilization, urged the Ottomans to undertake a comprehensive reorganization (primarily in the system of conscription) after the defeat (See Chapter 2). This reorganization would increase the resilience of the Ottoman military effort during the Great War in terms of its manpower recruitment. Thirdly, the loss of territories in the Balkans created another deep human tragedy, when thousands of Muslim residents of these territories were forced by the invaders to migrate into the remaining part of the empire, mainly to Anatolia. The influx of these immigrants and refugees, who were called *muhâcir*s, not only caused major changes in the demographic composition of Anatolia, but also led to severe poverty which accompanied these unfortunate people from their migration to resettlement.[97] Their misery on the roads was broadcast to a broader audience by photographs published in the press and caused sadness and anger among the Ottoman public.[98] This human tragedy created a deep feeling of injustice on the part of the Muslim Ottoman public, a feeling that easily resonated with the rising nationalism of the period. The feeling of injustice was easily converted into the sentiment of revenge in the nationalist discourse.[99]

During the period of "armed neutrality" from August to November 1914, the post-Balkan trauma was mobilized and elevated to a level that could be channeled into enthusiasm for the imminent war. Although the con-

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[96] After the Balkan War, the Ottoman state had lost 83 percent of its territory in Europe. This loss amounted to 32.7 percent of the total territory of the Ottoman Empire, along with 20 percent of the total population. Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 19.

[97] The waves of *muhâcir*s from the Balkan territories actually continued through the 1920's. Between 1912 and 1920, a total of 413,922 *muhâcir*s were recorded. Justin MacCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995), p. 161.

[98] For a description of such a poverty scene of *muhâcir* families at the Sirkeci Train Station in Istanbul, see Andonyan, *Balkan Savaşı*, p. 467. For another contemporary observation by a French journalist, see Stephane Lauzanne, *Balkan Acıları: Hastanın Başucunda Kırk Gün*, trans. Murat Çulcu (Istanbul: Kastaş Yayınları, 1990), pp. 62–63.

[99] As John Horne has aptly put it, defeat can be "as powerful a stimulus as victory to the creation and definition of national identities." See John Horne, "Defeat and Memory in Modern History," in Jenny Macleod (ed.), *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 13.

temporary press, which was to a great extent aligned with the war party under severe censorship laws, always implied that popular enthusiasm emerged in a spontaneous way, this process of popular mobilization actually had an organized character. Semi-official patriotic associations such as the Navy League and the National Defense League were the leading actors of this organized mobilization effort. Public demonstrations that were held during this period reflected this organized attempt to channel popular reactions into war enthusiasm. Public meetings that took place on the occasion of the abrogation of the capitulations present a perfect example in this respect.

Committed to creating a Muslim-Turkish bourgeois class within the framework of "national economy" policies, the CUP government had always been against the economic and legal privileges, known as the capitulations, which had been granted to foreign merchants within the empire. But the existing binding legal agreements and the pressure of the Great Powers had always inhibited such an action. The outbreak of the war in Europe provided an opportune situation for a move against the capitulations without the fear of intervention from the Powers, and the CUP government abrogated the capitulations on 9 September 1914.[100] In addition to extensive press coverage, local branches of semi-official associations also helped publicize their abolition. For example, the Navy League circulated leaflets declaring the event as good news for the people.[101] When the news became publicized, it created an atmosphere of excitement among the Muslim and Turkish population and was received with particular enthusiasm by large and small Muslim-Turkish trade corporations (*esnâf cemiyetleri*)[102] which enjoyed the favor of the CUP government due to their role in the establishment of a "national economy." The

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[100] For a detailed analysis of the process of the abrogation of the capitulations, see Mehmet Emin Elmacı, *İttihat-Terakki ve Kapitülasyonlar* (Istanbul: Homer Kitabevi, 2005).

[101] Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler, vol. 3: İttihat ve Terakki: Bir Çağın, Bir Kuşağın, Bir Partinin Tarihi*, enlarged edition (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), p. 346. An interesting and ironic point in this respect was that the initial reaction of Germany, the main ally of the Ottoman Empire in the war, was no different than the other European powers and German ambassador in Istanbul, Wangenheim severely condemned the decision to abolish the capitulations. See Elmacı, *İttihat-Terakki ve Kapitülasyonlar*, pp. 84–85. However, this reaction did not receive much coverage in the press.

[102] As of the regulations for the trade corporations came into effect on 25 January 1910, totally fifty one different trade corporations were established in Istanbul through the First World War. For a list of these corporations, see Zafer Toprak, *İttihat—Terakki ve Devletçilik* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), document no. 11, pp. 186–187.

Muslim-Turkish trade corporations, which had organic ties with the CUP government, constituted a major support group for the pro-war policies of the CUP government and always took part in public demonstrations held on the eve of the war either as organizers or spontaneous participants.

On the same day of the abrogation, the news immediately caused sporadic festive demonstrations in various suburbs of Istanbul. Many shops and houses were decorated with flags and banners. Moreover, telegrams were sent from the provinces congratulating the government on its decision.[103]

But larger and more organized demonstrations took place the next day, on 10 September 1914, both in Istanbul and provincial centers. These festivities were organized to absorb popular enthusiasm into a political demonstration that would serve both to consolidate support for the regime and to make the public think that the war situation actually provided an opportunity for the survival and reinvigoration of the Ottomans.[104] The demonstration that was held at the Sultanahmet Square in Istanbul included the participation of thousands of people and was particularly spectacular.[105] From contemporary press accounts, it is clear that the organizing initiative involved CUP authorities, the Navy League and the National Defense League; Muslim-Turkish trade corporations also largely supported the organization. The associations not only acted as the main organizers of the demonstration and participated in it with their many associates, but they also provided bands that enthused participants with patriotic songs.[106]

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[103] Elmacı, *İttihat-Terakki ve Kapitülasyonlar*, p. 77; Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality," p. 127.

[104] This aspect was actually common to the other belligerent countries as well. "The central paradox of the Great War is that from the beginning, and probably even most strongly during the bleak periods when the belligerents were discouraged, when determination sagged—as it did everywhere after the two big battles of Verdun and the Somme of 1916—each side believed they were waging war because it would bring a new and radiant world in the future, a purified world rid of its central flaw: war. This belief predated the popularisation of President Woodrow Wilson's statement that it was a 'war to end all wars'." Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914–1918: Understanding the Great War*, trans. Catherine Temerson (London: Profile Books, 2002), p. 159.

[105] While there is a tone of exaggeration about the size of the crowd, some newspapers mentioned that as many as 80,000 people participated in the demonstration. See, for example, "Miting Alanına Muvâsalat," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914.

[106] It seems that music was always a part of such patriotic demonstrations of the period and major associations such as the Navy League had permanent bands. "Miting Alanına Muvâsalat," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914; Elmacı, *İttihat-Terakki ve Kapitülasyonlar*, pp. 78–79.

Similar public demonstrations were also held in provincial centers, mostly at the initiative of provincial mayors, pro-CUP authorities and semi-official associations.[107] Provincial demonstrations in some places were particularly spectacular, and they caught the attention of foreign observers. For example, the British consulate reported from Edirne on 11 September 1914 that demonstrations and celebrations took place in the city day and night. While it was evident that "prominent local members of the Union and Progress party" orchestrated them, the report still acknowledged that "there is a genuine feeling of enthusiasm here at the action of the Government, and it is recognized that a great effort is being made to recover for Turkey complete independence."[108] On the other hand, another British consulate report, which described the situation in İzmir, stated that there was not much exaggerated demonstration on the part of the public.[109] But whatever the actual mood regarding the public reaction to the abolition of the capitulations was, the Ottoman press invariably reported provincial meetings in an exaggerated way. For example, the demonstration that was held in the town center of Kütahya, a subprovince of Hüdavendigâr, was described as a huge event that was as large as the one that took place in Istanbul; it was reported that "fifty thousand Ottomans" participated in it.[110]

The discourse that surrounded the abrogation of the capitulations and subsequent demonstrations described the event as the moment of "independence" (*istiklâl*).[111] As Hüseyin Cahid, a pro-CUP journalist, stated in his speech at the demonstration at Sultanahmet, "from now on the Ottomans have become truly sovereign and gained their independence."[112] If the reaction to the confiscation of the Ottoman battleships by the British in early August were characterized by a sense of violation and anger,

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[107] "Taşrada Tezâhürât," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914; "Her Tarafta İstiklâl-i Millî Şenlikleri," *Tanin*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914.

[108] TNA:PRO FO 195–2460, Turkey-1914 on the Eve of the War, Adrianople, 11 September 1914.

[109] TNA:PRO FO 195–2460, Turkey-1914 on the Eve of the War, Smyrna, 11 September 1914.

[110] "Taşrada Tezâhürât," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914. The total population of the entire sub-province of Kütahya was 145,443 in 1914. Given communications and transportation facilities of the time, it is obviously not reasonable that almost one-third of the entire local population would join such a public meeting held in the town center. For the population statistics, see Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 186–187.

[111] "İstiklâl Günü," *Tanin*, 28 Ağustos 1330/10 September 1914.

[112] "Hüseyin Cahid'in İrâd Ettiği Nutuk," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914.

popular sentiments after the abrogation of the capitulations involved a certain amount of pride and hope. Describing the moment as the affirmation of the Ottomans' will to survive, Hüseyin Cahid also proposed that the date of the abolition of the capitulations be regarded as a national festival (*'îd-ı millî*) and be included among the official holidays of the empire.[113] It is understood from the reports in the newspapers that this proposal was already on the agenda of the CUP and, therefore, it was quickly accepted.[114] 9 September became a national holiday and was given the same status as 23 July, the day the constitution was restored in 1908.[115] The newspaper *Tanin* described the demonstrations as "national independence festivities."[116]

During the next few days, the Ottoman press invariably supported the action "with a unanimity never achieved either before or after" and described the event in assertive terms, such as "the beginning of a new life," "the opening of a new chapter" and "the turning of a new page"; many people sincerely believed that Ottoman society, particularly its Muslim-Turkish elements, would now really advance and develop.[117]

When the Ottomans finally entered the war on 29 October 1914 after they attacked the Russian ports on the Black Sea, the German general and reformer of the Ottoman army, Colmar von der Goltz sent a congratulatory telegram to Enver Pasha, in which he said, "Old Turkey now has the opportunity . . . in one fell swoop, to lift itself to the heights of its former glory. May she not miss this opportunity."[118] The CUP government and pro-war Young Turks really did not want to miss this opportunity, since the war "held out the promise of regaining, if not 'former glory', as Goltz

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[113] Hüseyin Cahid'in İrâd Ettiği Nutuk," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914.

[114] "Kapitülasyonlara dair," *İkdâm*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914.

[115] Ahmad, "War and Society under the Young Turks, 1908–18," p. 276.

[116] "Her Tarafta İstiklâl-i Millî Şenlikleri," *Tanin*, 30 Ağustos 1330/12 September 1914. The commemoration of national festivals, primarily the July 23 festival (*10 Temmuz 'Id-ı Millîsi*), had acquired special importance after the 1908 Revolution. For a study that approaches the issue of festival commemoration during the Second Constitutional Period as a new mechanism in the public sphere by which a connection could be forged between the daily concerns of social groups and the affairs of state authority, see Nadide Özge Serin, "Festivals of the 'July 10' in the Young Turk Era" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2000). The Navy League and the National Defense League were key actors in organizing these festivals, and this role became even more apparent during the war years. It can be argued that, with their active role in these events, these associations undertook the responsibility for converting local populations to the national cause.

[117] Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality," pp. 128–129; Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, pp. 270–271.

[118] Quoted in Aksakal, *The Ottoman Road to War*, p. 17.

had put it, then at least the empire's security and independence."[119] For the CUP, the Great War was a "war of independence."[120] It was from this elite perspective that popular sentiments were mobilized in an organized way. It was from this perspective that people were called to arms.

Demonstrations for the Declaration of Holy War

Public demonstration was a widely used tool to mobilize popular sentiments on the eve of the Great War. After the Ottoman state officially entered the war in the beginning of November[121] and proclaimed a holy war (*cihâd*) on 11 November, further public demonstrations were held both in Istanbul and in the provinces on the same and following few days. Compared to the demonstrations held on the occasion of the abolition of the capitulations, these were more empire-wide and more organized, as well as more official. The Ottoman government tried to combine the domestic mobilization attempt with a general Islamic call to war, which was issued to all Muslims worldwide by using a religious discourse presented within a pragmatic rhetoric of the Ottoman state.

Complying with historical religious procedures, the head of the Muslim ulema and the highest religious authority in the empire, *Şeyhülislam* Ürgüplü Hayri Efendi declared holy war by issuing a religious decree (*fetvâ-yı şerîfe*). In fact, the Ottoman proclamation of holy war was a process that involved issuing three different sets of documents with specific purposes. The first one was the original religious decree addressed to all the Muslims in the world, which actually consisted of five sub-decrees (in the format of questions and answers) in a single document.[122] Secondly, an imperial declaration, titled "To My Army and Navy," was

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[119] Ibid.

[120] Toprak, *İttihat-Terakki ve Devletçilik*, p. 2.

[121] The Ottoman state virtually started war against Russia when the Ottoman fleet attacked Russia's Black Sea ports at the end of October 1914; the Entente powers all declared war against the Ottoman Empire within a week of the attack, Russia on 2 November, Britain and France on 5 November 1914.

[122] For the text of the decree, see the official journal of the office of the *şeyhülislam*, *Ceride-i İlmiye*, vol. 1, no. 7 (Muharrem 1333/November 1914), p. 433. It was also published in all major newspapers, such as *Tanin* and *İkdâm* on 15 November 1914, and also in various journals, including the journal of the Ottoman Navy League: see, *Donanma*, no. 69 (10 Kasım 1330/22 November 1914), cover page. For the text transcribed into modern Turkish, see *Ceride-i İlmiyye Fetvaları*, edited by İsmail Cebeci (İstanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2009), pp. 230–231. For its English translation, see *Source Records of the Great War, Vol. III*, ed. by Charles F. Horne (Indianapolis: The American Legion, 1931).

issued on 11 November 1914, in which Sultan Mehmed Reşad V addressed the Ottoman troops directly and explained that it was their duty as Muslims to defend not only the country, but also the religion of Islam in the world.[123] Thirdly, another declaration was prepared by the High Religious Council (*Meclis-i Âli-i İlmî*) at the office of the *şeyhülislam*, which was issued under the signatures of the most prominent religious dignitaries, as well as Sultan Mehmed Reşad V in his capacity as caliph of all Muslims. This third declaration was directed at all Muslims, and explained the contents of the religious decree in clearer, detailed language, thus trying to justify further why all Muslims should join the war against the Entente powers.[124] All these documents were published in Arabic, Persian, Tatar, Urdu, as well as in Ottoman Turkish.

The first ceremony for the proclamation of holy war was a purely official one, which took place on 11 November with the participation of the sultan, the *şeyhülislam*, most government ministers and a delegation from the Ottoman Parliament (*Meclis-i Mebûsân*). The group gathered outside the chamber of the holy relics in the ancient Topkapı Palace, where the religious decree was read publicly. The sultan gave a short speech praising the Ottoman forces and expressing his confidence in their ultimate victory, which was followed the whole group's praying for God's blessings on the Ottoman war effort.[125]

The proclamation of holy war to the general public was made through public demonstrations held on 14 November 1914. The one that took place in Istanbul was held at the Fatih mosque. The press gave extensive coverage to the demonstration and described the event as a "magnificent ceremony."[126] The narratives of the demonstration implied that the meeting took place spontaneously, as if people all around the city were moved by their inner enthusiasm to participate in it. They also implied that it was like a festival, but one that belonged only to Muslims.

> Men, women, youth and elderly . . . people spilled out into the streets yesterday morning. All Muslim households, Muslim shops and national

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[123] For the original text of the imperial declaration, see *İkdâm*, 2 Teşrinisani 1330/15 November 1914. For the text in modern Turkish, see Metin Hülagü, Hülagü, *Pan-İslamizm: Osmanlının Son Umudu* (Istanbul: Yitik Hazine Yayınları, 2006), pp. 35–36. For the text in English, see *Source Records of the Great War*, Vol. III.

[124] For the original text of the declaration, see *Ceride-i İlmiye*, vol. 1, no. 7 (Muharrem 1333/November 1914), p. 454. For the text in modern Turkish, see Hülagü, *Pan-İslamizm*, pp. 37–42. Its English translation can found in Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 174–177.

[125] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2*, pp. 750–751.

[126] "Dünkü İhtifâl-i Muhteşem," *İkdâm*, 2 Teşrinisani 1330/15 November 1914.

> institutions were decorated with our glorious flag… Under the spiritual influence of the imperial decree, every Muslim was running towards Fatih. Avenues and streets had become like fountains of enthusiasm by noon. The intensity of the crowd increased as one got nearer to Fatih.[127]

But a closer look at the descriptions of the event reveals that such spontaneity was a fiction. Spontaneity was certainly not absent, but the demonstration was an organized event that was planned beforehand in detail by a pro-war party initiative. There was an organizing committee that conducted the event from beginning to the end. It is no coincidence that the organizing committee of the demonstration reflected the very coalition that had taken shape on the eve of the war between official authorities and certain civil-society associations. The committee consisted of four people: Kemal Bey, a CUP delegate from Istanbul (also known as Kara Kemal, who later headed the Ministry of Supplies);[128] İsmet Bey, president of the National Defense League; Yağcızade Şefik Bey, president of the Navy League; and Mustafa Şükrü Bey, the president of the Muslim Merchants' Association (*Müslüman Tüccâr Cemiyeti*).[129] The organizing committee was almost a perfect combination of the pro-war political authority with its major allies in the realms of public sphere and economy.

A program was prepared by the organizing committee a day before the demonstration, and it was published in the major newspapers with an announcement inviting the public to join the meeting.[130] The program was in the form of a list describing not only the venue and timing of the meeting, but also its order of events. The program also entailed a certain course of action that would lead the crowd in a politically desired way. For example, it described that after the reading of the holy war decrees by *Fetvâ Emini* (head of the fatwa office under the *şeyhülislam*) Ali Haydar

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127 Ibid.

128 Kara Kemal was an important figure in the CUP during the war. He was close to Talat Pasha and played a leading role in the CUP's connection with civilian circles in society, especially with trade corporations. See İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, "Osmanlı İmparatoluğu'nun Birinci Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Ekonomik Düzenlemeleri içinde İaşe Nezareti ve Kara Kemal Bey'in Yeri," in İlhan Tekeli and Selim İlkin, *Cumhuriyetin Harcı, vol. 2: Köktenci Modernitenin Ekonomik Politikasının Gelişimi* (Istanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2004), pp. 1–44.

129 "Muazzam ve Muhteşem Bir İctimâ," *İkdâm*, 1 Teşrinisani 1330/14 November 1914; "Tezâhürât-ı Milliye," *Tanin*, 1 Teşrinisani 1330/14 November 1914. The newspaper *İkdâm* mentions a fifth person in the organizing committee, who was İzzet Bey, a delegate from the Association of All Trade Corporations (*Umum Esnâf Cemiyetleri*).

130 "Muazzam ve Muhteşem Bir İctimâ," *İkdâm*, 1 Teşrinisani 1330/14 November 1914; "Tezâhürât-ı Milliye," *Tanin*, 1 Teşrinisani 1330/14 November 1914.

Efendi to the public at the square of the Fatih mosque and the speeches following it, the crowd would march to the Porte, where a delegation representing all participants would express to the grand vizier that "the nation will always be in agreement with the government and be ready to offer sacrifice whenever needed." Then, the crowd would stop by the chamber of the holy relics in the Topkapı Palace where they would show respect to the sultan. The sultan would be there at that moment visiting the holy mantle (*hırka-i şerîf*) of the Prophet Muhammad. After this religious moment, the march would again turn to more worldly matters, with the crowd then headed to the embassies of Ottoman allies Germany and Austria-Hungary, where Doctor Nazım, a leading figure of the CUP and the Special Organization, would present his appreciation.[131] The demonstration would end at this point, but the crowd would splinter off into smaller groups which would continue to perform via small meetings of enthusiasm in different parts of the city (*icrâ-yı surûr ve şâd-mânî eyleyecekdir*).

While the press narrated the demonstration in the form of a spontaneous popular event, the imposed enthusiasm that characterized it did not escape the notice of some contemporary observers, including various official figures. For example, Kâzım Karabekir, a staff officer who later commented on the reasons for the Ottoman entry into the war in the form of memoirs mixed with personal political analysis, stated that when he got out of the War Ministry building in Bayezid to watch the public meeting taking place in Fatih and its environs, he could not sense any genuine enthusiasm "coming from the heart." He complained that he found the entire event organized as a "formal contrivance" (*usûlen tertiplenmiş*), which even lacked a reasonably large crowd.[132] A similar observation was also made by Liman von Sanders, who said that the organizers even distributed small amounts of money (a few piastres for each person) to available people such as porters (*hamallar*) to make them join the demonstration.[133]

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[131] There was an apparent irony here and no one noted (at least publicly) the contradiction of presenting thanks to Christian powers on the occasion of declaring a holy war. This point actually clearly illustrates how the concept of holy war had easily been absorbed by the logic of total war.

[132] Kâzım Karabekir, *Birinci Cihan Harbine Nasıl Girdik?*, vol. 2 (Istanbul: Emre Yayınları, 1994), p. 395.

[133] Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, second edition (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins Co. for the United States Naval Institute, 1928), p. 35.

Estimates on the number of participants vary from one source to another, from 5,000[134] to 50,000 participants.[135] But in any case, narratives of the event imply that it was more modest compared to the demonstrations held for the abolition of the capitulations. The crowd included various units of the armed forces, political leaders, Muslim religious leaders and religious students. More importantly, it is evident that many of the participants consisted of members of various Muslim trade corporations that were favored by the economic policies of the CUP government. Besides the groups of people who joined the meeting under the banners of the Navy League and the National Defense League,[136] which had a more general and diverse membership composition, the newspapers mention a long list of large and small trade associations that joined the meeting with their members. These included groups of butchers, bakers, grocers, clothiers, tailors, bargemen (*mavnacı*), carters, porters, et cetera.[137] The porters were a particularly prominent group on such occasions.[138] The stagnation of foreign trade led to large-scale unemployment, especially in the port cities of Istanbul and İzmir, and thousands of porters were laid off to be absorbed into the army after 2 August. They also acted "as Unionist militants" in the demonstrations held during the period of armed neutrality.[139]

This militancy produced various acts of nationalist violence as sequels to the demonstrations. Such acts of violence were yet another example of organized spontaneity. They targeted the symbols which were regarded as "unpatriotic" from the perspective of the demonstrators. Not coincidentally, they were regarded as unpatriotic by the CUP government, too. For example, when the officially-declared program of the demonstration was completed and participants were advised to wander through the city in small groups showing their enthusiasm, a group of people attacked and destroyed the windows of the Tokatlıyan Hotel located at Beyoğlu, which

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134 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2*, p. 757.

135 Ziya Şâkir [Soko], *Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?* (Istanbul: Anadolu Türk Kitap Deposu, 1944), pp. 99–101.

136 Ziya Şâkir mentions the prominent role played by the Navy League and its president, Yağcızâde Şefik, a merchant and also an Istanbul deputy. According to his account, Yağcızâde Şefik led and guided the crowd throughout the demonstration. See Ziya Şâkir, *Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?*, p. 101.

137 "Dünkü İhtifâl-i Muhteşem," *İkdâm*, 2 Teşrinisani 1330/15 November 1914.

138 The Porters' Trade Corporation (*Hamal Esnâf Cemiyeti*) was one of the largest of the Muslim trade corporations in Istanbul. It was established in 1910 with 1,828 founding members. Toprak, *İttihat-Terakki ve Devletçilik*, p. 186.

139 Ahmad, "Ottoman Armed Neutrality," p. 114.

was owned by an Armenian of Russian nationality.[140] A more organized act of violence, which occurred in the form of a small demonstration, targeted Yeşilköy/Aya Stefanos. Here the nationalist crowd completely destroyed the Russian church that had been built there in 1878 to commemorate the Russian victory in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–1878.[141] Such acts can be described as "rituals of intimidation and exclusion," which, as Roger Chickering observes in the context of the demonstrations held in Freiburg on the eve of the Great War, "set the domestic bounds of patriotic community, established the rules of political language that operated within it, and emphasized the claims of patriotic demonstrators to establish these rules."[142]

The declaration of holy war was also announced to the public through demonstrations in provincial centers across the empire. In fact, the provinces were officially required to organize public demonstrations such as the one in Istanbul. The Interior Ministry ordered all provincial administrations to have the holy war decrees read and explained to the public by highest religious authorities in "extraordinarily special celebrations" (*merâsim-i mahsûsa-yı fevkalâde ile*) to be held at the congregational mosque of each town and village. The circular also requested that all available means should be used to make local men join these meetings.[143]

As would be expected, news of these provincial demonstrations was reported in the press with exaggerated enthusiasm, and public support was described as completely spontaneous. The papers reported that in almost every meeting people promised the authorities that they were ready to provide any material or bodily contribution to the mobilization and that they were ready to make any kind of material and spiritual sacrifice that was needed for the war effort.[144] Some meetings also included

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[140] Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, p. 35; Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003), p. 117. As is expected, such news did not appear in the Ottoman press because of the censorship.

[141] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2*, p. 758.

[142] Roger Chickering, "'War Enthusiasm?': Public Opinion and the Outbreak of War in 1914," in Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War: The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp. 208–209.

[143] BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/10 March 1915, p. 1.

[144] "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 6 Teşrinisani 1330/ 19 November 1914; "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 7 Teşrinisani 1330/20 November 1914; "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 9 Teşrinisani 1330/22 November 1914; "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 10 Teşrinisani 1330/23 November 1914; "Tezâhürât-ı Vatanperverâne," *İkdâm*, 10 Teşrinisani 1330/22 November 1914.

remarkable participation by women, such as the one held in Tekfurdağı (Tekirdağ), where, it was reported, they promised to contribute to the war effort by voluntarily serving in the Ottoman Red Crescent.[145]

Local administrative authorities also reported on provincial demonstrations in telegrams to the Interior Ministry. Such reports, which usually consisted of a one-paragraph description of the event, included exaggerated statements of enthusiasm similar to those seen in the press. However, the official and imposed character of provincial demonstrations is more easily detected in these official documents; their contents were remarkably similar and included the reading of the holy war decrees to the public at the main mosque of the locality, followed by collective prayers for the victory of the Ottoman army and navy. Then, delegations from the crowd expressed their material and spiritual readiness to sacrifice for the holy war effort. Lastly, participants usually also marched to the main local administrative building and pronounced their loyalty to governmental authorities. Donations were also collected in some places for the war effort.[146]

Local administrative and military personnel were invariably expected to join the meetings, along with local notables and religious authorities. As part of the official local protocol, religious leaders of local non-Muslim communities also took part in these meetings, at least in visiting the local administrative authorities to express loyalty to the Ottoman state. Churches of the Ottoman Armenian and Greek communities in Bartın, a district of Bolu, even performed religious services and prayed for the victory of the Ottoman armed forces.[147] But while non-Muslim religious leaders' participation in the meetings was mentioned, no significant meaning was attached to their involvement. And compared to the enthusiastic language typically employed to describe the events, non-Muslim religious leaders' participation was reported in a formal and neutral language.[148]

Reports sent from provincial centers also reveal significant details about the organization of popular mobilization. It is evident that, similar to the situation in Istanbul, demonstrations in many provincial centers were organized by administrative authorities in close cooperation with local branches of semi-official voluntary associations such as the Navy League

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145 "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 9 Teşrinisani 1330/22 November 1914.

146 See BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/10 March 1915, pp. 1–83.

147 BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/10 March 1915, pp. 7–9.

148 For example, for the case of Aleppo, see "Tezâhürât-ı Vatanperverâne," *İkdâm*, 10 Teşrinisani 1330/23 November 1914.

and the National Defense League; the CUP government's main collaborators played an important role in organizing similar public demonstrations in the provinces. It is important to note that some of the telegrams to the Interior Ministry reporting on the demonstrations were sent by the chiefs of the local branches of the Navy League or the National Defense League, who signed the telegrams on behalf of the local people. For example, a report sent from Hendek, a sub-district (*nâhiye*) of İzmit, is quite representative in this sense. It was jointly signed by Ali, chief of the Hendek branch of the National Defense League and also mayor of the sub-district, Ömer Lütfü, chief of the local branch of the Navy League, and Ali Rıza, chief of the local branch of the Ottoman Red Crescent.[149] In the case of a report sent from Alaşehir, a district of Aydın, the chief of the local branch of the National Defense League, Ömer, signed the telegram along with mayor Nadir, mufti Veli and CUP secretary Mehmed Hulusi.[150] Furthermore, in some places such as Balya, a sub-district of Karesi, the local office of the National Defense League was one of the main locations of demonstration, where locals gathered and expressed enthusiasm for the holy war.[151]

One can argue that Ottoman authorities paid particular attention to demonstrations as a tool for popular mobilization because such demonstrations simultaneously served various purposes. Firstly, as a large public meeting that was theoretically open to every member of society, demonstrations offered a social milieu where state authority could join with mediating associations and ordinary people under a common ideological umbrella. It was a theatrical stage on which many parties of society physically came together for a common purpose. In this sense, a war demonstration was almost a perfect public event in which an organized propaganda attempt could intertwine with spontaneous popular enthusiasm. Secondly, whereas the demonstrations that held in the Ottoman public sphere on the eve of and at the beginning of the war were deliberately planned and organized, they could still be seen and presented as representing all Ottoman society in miniature. In this respect, social solidarity, commitment to a common goal and spontaneous popular enthusiasm were the main factors which official documents and newspaper accounts always underscored, as if these accounts accurately reflected the mood of the entirety of Ottoman society. The leveling effect of demonstrations

[149] BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/10 March 1915, p. 21.
[150] BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/10 March 1915, p. 52.
[151] BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/10 March 1915, p. 23.

was also important: coming together at a public meeting for a common goal gave the impression that class differences melted into thin air where patriotic issues were concerned. All these points were in themselves a major source of propaganda.

The Call to Arms and Mobilizing Discourses

Although the post-Balkan defeat stimulated a desire for revenge among the Muslim Ottoman public[152] and created a mobilizing rhetoric that generally referred to the sorrows of the past, during the period of armed neutrality, popular mobilization efforts ironically became more forward-looking as the danger of joining the war became more imminent. The abolition of the capitulations constituted a major step in this process. This move implied that the war situation was actually not that bad for the Ottomans. Of course, the emphasis on revenge never disappeared in the rhetoric directed at potential draftees.[153] Revenge for previous defeats at the hands of the Russian, Bulgarian and Greek forces, or revenge narrated as a request by grandfathers or fathers from the young generation, was a recurrent theme in popular literature published for mobilization propaganda on the eve and during the Great War.[154] On the other hand, the sense of sorrow and revenge for the past gradually became mixed with the hope of liberation on the eve of the war. The war increasingly came to be regarded as a quest for independence and salvation for the Ottomans. It was a moment to be seized. During the period of armed neutrality, one of the points that the press repeatedly propagated was that Muslims should not lose this opportunity to be free.[155] It was an opportunity for regeneration as an independent nation.[156] Perhaps this mood was best exemplified

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[152] Haluk Harun Duman, *Balkanlara Veda: Basın ve Edebiyatta Balkan Savaşı (1912–1913)* (Istanbul: Duyap, 2005), pp. 152–155.

[153] Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, p. 49. Köroğlu claims that the agitation for vengeance was an important theme of propaganda that facilitated the Ottoman public's acceptance of the entry into the Great War. Also see Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı*, p. 120.

[154] See, for example, Ömer Seyfeddin, "Beyaz Lâle," *Donanma*, no. 53–62, (14 Temmuz 1330/27 July 1914—22 Eylül 1330/5 October 1914), published in a series; E. T., "Mehmed Onbaşı," *Sabah*, 21 Ağustos 1331/3 September 1915; Enis Tahsin, "Son Tebessüm," *Sabah*, 8 Eylül 1331/21 September 1915; Ekrem Vecdet, "Senin İntikamın," *Harb Mecmuası*, vol. 2, no. 24 (Kanunievvel 1333/December 1917), pp. 381–384.

[155] Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, p. 71.

[156] Turkish nationalist writer Ömer Seyfeddin's story about a middle-aged, solitary and secluded Istanbul man succinctly depicts this approach to the war as a moment of

by Sultan Mehmed Reşad V's declaration to the Ottoman troops: "I feel convinced that from this struggle we shall emerge as an empire that made good the losses of the past and is once more glorious and powerful."[157]

In fact, this future-oriented perspective and the sense of hope characterized the discourse surrounding the call to arms after full mobilization was declared on 2 August and put into effect on 3 August 1914. The mobilization order requested all eligible men between the ages 20 and 45 to go to the nearest local recruitment office within three days to enlist for the armed forces.[158] While obeying the mobilization order was already compulsory and severe punishments were involved in cases of disobedience, the call to enlist was usually publicized within a discourse of a festival. Effective from 2 August, mobilization posters could be found on the walls of mosques and coffeehouses in provincial towns and villages.[159] These posters featured the motto, "Ottomans, to Arms!" (*Osmanlılar Silah Başına!*) which one editorial said, "[sounded] to Turks like a cheerful invitation to a wedding entertainment."[160] In other words, compulsory conscription was conducted under the rhetorical cover of voluntarism.

Religious discourse was perhaps the single major motif used to justify the call to arms. Islamic themes and symbols constituted a common language which the CUP could draw on when dealing with the masses. Islamic discourse offered a cognitive framework, which was actually the only common ground where the elitist nationalist perspective of the urban Young Turks could meet rural Muslim masses; Islamic discourse in its popular form was the only available language by which the two parties could understand each other. It was also the only language that could be used for the mobilization of non-Turkish Muslim peoples of the empire, such as the Arabs and the Kurds.

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regeneration. The man in the story, who was extremely pessimistic about the future of the country and frightened of becoming a colonial subject to the British and the French before the war, suddenly starts an entirely new life with full of hope after the victory at the Dardanelles. See Ömer Seyfeddin, "Çanakkale'den Sonra," *Yeni Mecmua*, vol. 1, no. 6 (16 Ağustos 1333/16 August 1917), pp. 119–120.

157 ("*Bu cihâddan mâzisinin zararlarını telâfi etmiş şanlı ve kavî bir devlet olarak çıkacağımıza eminim . . .*"), "Beyânnâme-i Hümayûn: 'Orduma, Donanmama' " (29 Teşrinievvel 1330/11 November 1914), republished in Hülagü, *Pan-İslamizm*, pp. 35–36.

158 *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6* (*1908–1920*), p. 225; Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 137; "Seferberlik İlânı," *İkdâm*, 21 Temmuz 1330/3 August 1914.

159 For two examples of Ottoman mobilization posters, see Haluk Oral, *Arıburnu 1915: Çanakkale Savaşı'ndan Belgesel Öyküler* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), pp. 2–4.

160 "Osmanlılar Silah Başına!," *İkdâm*, 29 Temmuz 1330/11 August 1914.

The declaration of holy war was one method of instrumentalizing Islam as a tool of international propaganda to appeal to Muslims worldwide, which was an official state policy from the beginning of the war. This issue, which is outside the scope of this study, has been relatively well studied and well documented.[161] There is a consensus among scholars that the Ottoman state's declaration of holy war in November 1914 was a political and pragmatic decision.[162] While the Ottomans attempted to carry out propaganda and intelligence activities among Muslim peoples abroad, such as in India and Iran, historians also generally agree that the appeal of jihad to gain loyalty to the Ottoman war effort remained at a quite low level throughout the war and it "failed to override the loyalties of temporal rule."[163] Moreover, recent research has demonstrated that the Ottoman secret service promulgating holy war propaganda "not only lacked a unified and coherent policy, but also was in many respects a dysfunctional organization."[164]

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[161] See, for example, Hülagü, *Pan-İslamizm*; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2*, pp. 1148–1264; Jacob M. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 93–126; Vahdet Keleşyılmaz, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa'nın Hindistan Misyonu, 1914–1918* (Ankara: Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi, 1999).

[162] Various signs which previously emerged among the Muslims in different parts of the world had created a great expectation in both Ottoman and German official circles that a call for holy war would trigger an extensive resistance among the world Muslims against the Entente powers. For example, the objection of Muslims in Kazan to the Russian administration in 1905, boycotts and armed resistance among Muslims in Tripolitania against the Italian invading forces, various examples of solidarity with the Ottoman state that came from the Muslims in India, etc., fostered such a Pan-Islamic expectation. The German propaganda machine took this particularly seriously, perhaps even more than the Ottoman government, and advised and urged the Ottomans to promote their war effort as a holy war against the infidel. See Hülagü, *Pan-İslamizm*, p. 26. On the German role in the declaration of the holy war, see C. Snouck Hurgronje, *The Holy War "Made in Germany"* (New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1915) [For the Turkish translation of this pamphlet, see Mete Tunçay (ed.), *Cihat ve Tehcir: 1915–1916 Yazıları* (Istanbul. Afa Yayınları, 1991, pp. 18–55)]; Tilman Lüdke, *Jihad Made in Germany: Ottoman and German Propaganda and Intelligence Operations in the First World War* (Münster: Lit, 2005).

[163] Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Pocket Books, 2006), p. 98. In 1914, of 270 million Muslims in the world in 1914, only about 30 million were governed by other Muslims. Almost 100 million were British subjects; 20 million were under French rule, most of them in North and Equatorial Africa; and another 20 million were incorporated in Russia's Asian empire. Ibid., p. 97.

[164] Touraj Atabaki, "Going East: The Ottomans' Secret Service Activities in Iran," in Touraj Atabaki (ed.), *Iran and the First World War: Battleground of the Great Powers* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 42. It is true that the Ottoman intelligence activities abroad were not successful in general, but this does not mean that they were totally ineffective. An exceptional case in this respect was the Singapore Mutiny in 1915, in the process of which

But the international aspect of the holy war propaganda and its ultimate failure should not overshadow the fact that the Ottoman mobilization effort also used Islamic discourse domestically. The CUP used Islamic themes and symbols to create a popular mobilizing discourse which would appeal to the domestic Muslim and Turkish-speaking population. Whether or not the pan-Islamic appeal exerted a considerable effect on domestic Muslim communities of the empire (such as the Arabs) is debatable, but it is obvious that Ottoman authorities used an Islamic language to mobilize the Anatolian Muslims who constituted the backbone of the Ottoman army.

The domestic dimension of the Ottoman declaration of holy war involved propaganda activities in Ottoman Turkish to increase domestic support for the war effort.[165] Pamphlets were published in Ottoman Turkish, justifying the call to arms as required by the duty to wage jihad. Such pamphlets often tried to base the Ottoman declaration of holy war within a wider Islamic framework and justified it by citing relevant verses from the Quran and traditions (hadith) of the Prophet Muhammad. The pamphlets then described military service and joining the war as a binding religious duty (*farz-ı ayn*). Two such propaganda pamphlets were published and distributed by the National Defense League; their writers were also members of the League.[166] It is worth noting that one of these, titled *Cihâd* (The Holy War), not only made the usual argument that joining the armed forces against the Christian allies was a binding religious duty, but it also offered an alternative for those who were not eligible for military service—they could contribute various services for the war effort on the home front.[167] This alternative was actually quite in line with the logic of total war, which demanded as much contribution from any member of

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the Ottomans tried to support the native Singaporean troops via the Ghadar Party in their uprising against the British. The effect of the Ottoman support was not overwhelming, but it was symbolically significant and taken seriously by the British. See Sho Kuwajima, *The Mutiny in Singapore: War, Anti-War and the War for India's Independence* (New Delhi: Rainbow Publishers, 2006), pp. 40–42, 51, 163.

[165] Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 187–188.

[166] Mehmed Esad, *Cihâd-ı Ekber* (İzmir: Ahenk Matbaası, 1330/1914); İsmail Faik, *Cihâd* (Istanbul: Koçunyan Matbaası, 1331/1915). The National Defense League also published the texts of the holy war and the other accompanying official declarations of November 1914 and distributed them free; the pamphlets were also distributed free. Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, p. 157.

[167] ("*Bütün Osmanlılara bu müttefiklerin mahv ve perişan edilmesi içün ya silaha sarılub bilfiil gazâya gitmek veyahud o suretle hidmet etmek farzdır.*"), *Cihâd*, p. 1.

the population as possible for the war effort.[168] Another pamphlet, which was anonymous and titled *Cihâd-ı Mukaddes Farzdır* (The Holy War is a Binding Religious Duty) went one step further (actually to an extreme) in this respect and claimed that when killing of the infidel was concerned, not only the battlefield but also the entire country would constitute a battlefield: "It is a binding religious duty to kill secretly or openly the infidels who reside wherever in your country as invaders."[169]

Secondly, in addition to the declaration of holy war, the popular usage of Islamic themes as a mobilizing discourse already constituted an important medium of interaction between the state and the domestic Muslim masses. Of course, such a popular Islamic discourse could often intertwine with the emphasis on holy war. But such a discourse also intertwined with nationalist tendencies of the CUP government.

Historians generally agree that the ideological disposition of the Ottoman state was already inclined towards Turkish nationalism after the Balkan War, and Şükrü Hanioğlu convincingly argues that the roots of the CUP's Turkism actually went back much earlier. The organization embraced Turkism long before the Balkan War and its imperial vision had always attributed dominance to the Turkish element. Even in employing the discourse of Ottomanism within the context of inter-ethnic alliances, the CUP sought "to sell Turkism as a form of Ottomanism."[170] There is no doubt that this nationalist disposition became increasingly pronounced

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[168] In fact, the Balkan War disaster had already taught the Ottomans that modern wars would have to be "total" and the home front would be as essential in supporting the war effort as the troops on the battlefield. From the early days of the mobilization onward, the National Defense League and others tried to explain the importance of the role that should have been played by civilians on the home front during the war, and urged the Ottoman public through newspapers and other written publications to support not only the troops on the battlefield but also their families left behind. See, for example, "Asker Aileleri Menfaatine," *İkdâm*, 8 Ağustos 1330/21 August 1914; "Seferberlikde Ahâlinin Vazifesi," *İkdâm*, 10 Eylül 1330/23 September 1914; "Müdâfaa-yı Milliye Cemiyeti," *İkdâm*, 16 Eylül 1330/29 September 1914; "Müdâfaa-i Milliyenin Faâliyeti," *Tanin*, 7 Teşrinievvel 1330/20 October 1914; "Asker Aileleri hakkında," *Tanin*, 15 Teşrinievvel 1330/28 October 1914; "Müdâfaa-i Milliye Ne Yapıyor?," *İkdâm*, 20 Teşrinisani 1330/3 December 1914; "Vezâif-i Vataniyeye Dâvet," *İkdâm*, 29 Mart 1331/11 April 1915.

[169] ("*Her nerede olursa olsun müstevli sıfatıyla vatanında bulunan kâfirlerin gizli ve aşikâr suretde katli farz-ı ayndır.*"), *Cihâd-ı Mukaddes Farzdır* (n.p., 1332/1916), p. 17.

[170] M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Turkism and the Young Turks, 1889–1908," in Hans-Lukas Kieser (ed.), *Turkey beyond Nationalism: Towards Post-Nationalist Identities* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2006), p. 15. Hanioğlu's comment is actually based on his monumental in-depth research on the evolution of the CUP. See his *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

during the Great War. However, what Hanioğlu and other scholars have left unanswered is the question of how this nationalist ideology resonated with the masses. For example, Hanioğlu tends to focus on an elitist understanding of the relationship between the state and society when he asserts that "the overwhelming majority of the Ottoman populace, caught up in their local identities and concerns, remained largely unmoved" by main ideological dispositions of the period.[171] The story was definitely much more complicated than this assertion suggests. Turkish nationalist discourse during the Great War always used a proto-nationalist[172] religious discourse in its attempt to mobilize the Muslim masses. And, a proto-nationalist Islamic discourse was the only discourse that could effectively be drawn on in mobilizing predominantly rural Ottoman Muslims. If a well-developed nationalist ideology theoretically flourishes during a process of industrialization that "engenders a mobile and culturally homogenous society,"[173] and if nationalist mobilization requires print capitalism to create an "imagined community,"[174] then only by employing a proto-nationalist religious discourse—i.e. Islam—could the Unionist version of Turkish nationalism mobilize the predominantly rural and illiterate Anatolian Muslim masses during the war.

As will be shown in the following chapters of this study, local identities and concerns did play an important role in shaping the attitude of local populations towards the state's mobilization policies. But this study also aims to show that this attitude was never monolithic; it would be highly misleading to assume that Ottoman Muslims always looked at the war through isolated and parochial windows. The potential of a proto-nationalist religious discourse to create a thread uniting local concerns along a common line should not be underestimated. Similarly, it should be taken seriously that the use of Islamic themes for mobilizing purposes potentially contributed to the creation of a common world of meaning, in which local Muslim people could situate their relationship with the war

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171 Hanioğlu, "Turkism and the Young Turks," p. 4.

172 I am using "proto-nationalism" in the sense Hobsbawm has used it: "In many parts of the world, states and national movements could mobilize certain variants of feelings of collective belonging which already existed and which could operate, as it were, potentially on the macro-political scale which could fit in with modern states and nations. I shall call these bonds 'proto-national'." See Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 46 and the rest of chapter 2.

173 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 73.

174 See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

effort and find an explanation for the sacrifices they were asked to make. Of course, it would be absurd to suggest that the illiterate Ottoman peasant regarded the call for arms as part of a larger patriotic and nationalist duty; but it would be equally wrong to assume that the world of meaning for a simple Muslim peasant merely consisted of his local identity and concerns.[175] Though an imagined community in its well-developed sense was certainly lacking, the use of Islamic themes for mobilizing purposes evoked an imagined community among Ottoman Muslims. This use also helped to develop a sense of "the other" that is necessary for any nationalist ideology and certainly served to foster the sentiments of hostility towards the enemy on the battlefield. It also served to foster hostility towards "the enemies within," i.e. the non-Muslim Ottoman people who were reluctant to join the mobilization effort, and facilitated popular support for aggressive nationalist policies of the CUP government during the war against Ottoman Armenians and Greeks.[176]

Popular uses of religion to help spread a martial, belligerent mentality and attitude in everyday life was a widespread phenomenon in European countries during the war,[177] and the use of Islamic themes by the Ottoman state to justify joining the war was no different. First of all, the justification of military service as a religious duty and obligation had already been a recurrent theme in Muslim-Turkish culture. However, it was popularized in a more systematic way during the Great War. For example, a dramatic increase occurred during the war in the number of religious manuals/pamphlets, which were usually published under the title of "religion book for the soldier" (*askere din kitabı*). Written in quite simple language, such pamphlets were directed at potential draftees and enlisted men, as well as at officers, explaining to them how and why military service was also a religious duty, why a good Muslim also needed to be a good soldier and vice versa.[178]

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[175] For a similar and interesting discussion in the case of the Russian mobilization in 1914, see Josh Sanborn, "The Mobilization of 1914 and the Question of the Russian Nation: A Reexamination," *Slavic Review*, vol. 59, no. 2. (Summer, 2000), pp. 267–289.

[176] For an example of using popular Islamic language to mobilize a local Muslim population against a local Greek population in the Aegean region (an example mentioned by a former Ottoman Greek) see Dido Sotiriou, *Farewell to Anatolia*, trans. Fred A. Reed (Athens: Kedros Publishers, 1991), p. 80.

[177] Gangolf Hübinger, "Religion and War in Imperial Germany," in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds.), *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 128.

[178] For an analysis of this popular literature from the late Ottoman period through republican Turkey, see İsmail Kara, "'Askere Din Dersleri': İyi Asker, İyi Müslüman Olur,"

One of such religious manuals simply states that "only those who do not withhold from sacrificing their lives and souls for their fatherland can go to heaven." And it continues to explain that a Muslim man would be interrogated in the next life (*âhiret*) about how well he performed his military service, just like he would be interrogated about his performance of prayer and fast.[179] Another one, which was written in an earlier phase of the war to justify military service and joining the holy war in religious terms, equates service for the fatherland to the true faith and claims that any Muslim who betrays his fatherland also betrays his religion.[180] Another one emphasizes that "military service (and joining the holy war) is the sixth pillar of Islam" and if it was not carried out well, the other pillars would be incomplete too.[181] Evading military service and the act of desertion were described in such manuals as one of the greatest sins that would be severely punished in the next life, and it was recurrently stressed that Muslims should go to war willingly and enthusiastically since this was among the practices (*sünnet*) of the Prophet Muhammad.[182]

The recurrent emphasis on martyrdom (*şehâdet*) presented death as a rare gift that only the privileged could receive. Dying in war was exalted in every speech, document and pamphlet aimed at mobilization; war was portrayed as an opportunity for a Muslim to find his way to heaven

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Toplumsal Tarih, no. 166 (October 2007), pp. 48–53. Kara aptly argues that justification of military service in religious terms did not disappear during the republican era, though the army went through a process of secularization.

[179] Üryanizâde Ali Vahid, *Askerin İlmihâli* (Istanbul: Ahmed İhsan ve Şürekası, 1333/1917), p. 13, 18. It seems that a comparative research on the uses of religion in belligerent countries (Muslim and Christian) to mobilize people during the Great War would reveal more similarities than expected: "Belligerent clergymen in the various countries assured their respective flocks that in fighting the enemy they were doing the Lord's work, and that with His assistance victory could not be far off. The general idea of suffering and of Christian sacrifice in particular, provided a readily accessible means of encouraging recruitment, promoting steadfastness, and, eventually, reconciling the grieving survivors in the lines and behind them to the ceaseless carnage." Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee (eds.), *Authority, Identity and the Social History of the Great War* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995), p. xiii.

[180] İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, *Gâzilere Armağan* (Istanbul: n.p., 1331/1915), p. 43.

[181] Ahmet Hamdi Akseki, *Askere Din Kitabı*, second edition (Istanbul: Ebüzziya Matbaası, 1945), p. 195.

[182] The Prophet Muhammad was mentioned in this discourse not only as a religious authority justifying military service by his sayings and doings, but also a great warrior himself, as an exemplar for all Muslims. On this point, see Gottfried Hagen, "The Prophet Muhammad as an Exemplar in War—Ottoman Views on the Eve of World War I," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 22 (Spring 2000), pp. 145–172.

through martyrdom.[183] The written and oral propaganda of the war years always emphasized the interconnectedness of the call to arms and martyrdom. The main monthly propaganda journal of the war years, *Harb Mecmuası* (The War Journal), had a permanent section, titled "the Living Dead" (*Yaşayan Ölüler*), which was devoted to the Ottoman soldiers who died on the battlefield.[184] Religious memorial services (*mevlid*) that were devoted to those who died on the battlefield began to be performed in mosques from the early days of the Ottoman war effort.[185] Monuments in honor of martyrs, such as the one that was built at Kireçtepe on the Gallipoli peninsula to honor the Ottoman soldiers who died during the battle of Kireçtepe in 15–16 August 1915, began to be erected as early as 1915.[186] Martyrdom would not only secure a place for the dead in heaven, but also bring prestige in this world, at least posthumously.

All these themes and symbols that exalted martyrdom as the ultimate sacrifice emphasized that the honor gained through martyrdom was actually open to any Muslim as long as he was willing to sacrifice his life voluntarily for the war cause. There was no privilege where voluntary death was concerned. Hence, the call-to-arms propaganda stressed that victory actually depended on the common soldier, and that a simple unknown peasant soldier could make a difference in the course of the war. Short stories about simple soldiers who performed heroic acts during the war came to prominence in mobilization propaganda on the eve of and during the war. While such stories might have been based on some facts and real figures, their narratives also involved a mythical aspect and certainly some exaggeration. Short stories and narratives about peasant soldier figures such as Sergeant İsmail from Bursa,[187] Corporal Nasuh from Eskişehir,[188]

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[183] In Ottoman-Turkish military discourse, the definition of martyrdom is quite wide and ambiguous. Dying during one's military service is usually sufficient for someone to be counted as a martyr. It is actually as much a cultural category as a religious one.

[184] The section included photos, brief biographies and dates of death of the dead soldiers (usually officers). As of the eleventh issue in July 1916 (Temmuz 1332), the title of the section was changed to "Our Blessed Martyrs" (*Mübârek Şehitlerimiz*), a title that had possibly more direct religious connotations.

[185] See, for example, "Mevlid-i Nebevi Kırâatı," *İkdâm*, 12 Teşrinisani 1330/25 November 1914. It is interesting to note that this *mevlid* (and many other similar ones) was organized by the National Defense League.

[186] Burhan Sayılır, *Çanakkale Savaşları ve Savaş Alanları Rehberi* (Ankara: Siyasal Kitabevi, 2007), pp. 156–157.

[187] "Bir Kahraman Asker: İsmail Çavuş," *Harb Mecmuası*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Kanunisani 1331/January 1916), p. 54.

[188] "Nasuh Onbaşı," *Harb Mecmuası*, vol. 1, no. 8 (Nisan 1332/April 1916), pp. 124–125.

Sergeant Kadiroğlu Mehmed from Çivril,[189] Sergeant Murad from Söğüt,[190] Sergeant Tahir from Antep[191] all recount extraordinary individual actions in combat. Common themes in such narratives include insistence by the soldier to continue fighting even when severely wounded, as well as volunteering for almost impossible missions across enemy lines. In all cases, the heroic act of the individual soldier brings a great advantage for the Ottoman armed forces. While such stories were about individual soldiers with specific names, these names were actually quite generic sounding and represented the common Muslim-Anatolian soldier.[192]

But did the emphasis on martyrdom and heroism suffice to produce consent on the part of potential draftees? Were these themes enough to convince people that they were being called to die in a "just war"? Did a peasant soldier not need a more relevant reason that would help him relate going to die in war to his values in his daily life? Modern wars in the age of nationalism were usually justified on the grounds that they were waged to protect the fatherland. Was there such an understanding of fatherland for an Ottoman peasant? Where exactly was the fatherland to be protected? How could any propaganda discourse describe the Ottoman fatherland to the peasant soldier when it was difficult for the literate urban nationalist to define it, as the borders of the empire continuously changed and its territories dwindled? Was there any chance that the pan-Turkist (Turanist) ambition to extend the empire towards Central Asian Turkic territories, an ideology which had followers in the CUP circles during the war,[193] could appeal to the masses, while it could only too briefly convince even nationalist-minded intellectuals such as Şevket Süreyya Aydemir[194] and officers such as Rahmi Apak,[195] whose Turanist dreams

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189 "Kadir Oğlu Mehmed Çavuş," *Harb Mecmuası*, vol. 1, no. 8 (Nisan 1332/April 1916), p. 126.

190 "Söğütlü Kahraman Topçu Tevfik Efendi ve Murad Çavuş," *Harb Mecmuası*, vol. 1, no. 12 (Ağustos 1332/August 1916), p. 190.

191 "Antepli Tahir Çavuş," *Harb Mecmuası*, vol. 2, no. 20 (Temmuz 1333/July 1917), pp. 317–320.

192 This genre was also popular in fiction, the most prominent writer of which was Ömer Seyfeddin and his series of stories called "the heroes" (*kahramanlar*). As an example, see "Kaç Yerinden," *Yeni Mecmua*, vol. 1, no. 9 (Eylül 1333/September 1917), pp. 178–180.

193 On pan-Turkism, see Jacop M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

194 See Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, fifteenth edition (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2004).

195 Rahmi Apak, *Yetmişlik Bir Subayın Hatıraları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988), p. 95.

were disabused by actual conditions after joining the war?[196] It is true that the emphasis on Islamic themes provided a common cognitive framework, but did not an enlisted man also need more this-worldly and immediate reasons to join the war?

In this sense, Ottoman mobilization propaganda also put special emphasis on the protection of the Ottomans' *nâmûs*.[197] This emphasis implied that a nation's honor was represented by its women's chastity, and the Ottomans' enemies in the war not only wanted to attack the religion of Islam, but they also threatened Ottoman women's *nâmûs*. Therefore, serving in the armed forces and fighting in the war would serve to protect everybody's honor. In this patriarchal-nationalist discourse, the fatherland was identified with one's family, or more specifically, with female members of one's family. The fatherland was a female relative of a potential draftee; every Ottoman man was supposed to protect his women, and in this way, his fatherland.[198] National defense was primarily understood as the defense of the women of the nation. The protection of the *nâmûs* of one's wife, mother or sister was dependent on his willingness to join the war. In convincing young Muslim Ottomans that compulsory military service was necessary, this was one of the recurrent points: "If Ahmed and Mehmed evade war, then the enemy gets Ayşe and Fatma."[199] A common

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[196] It can be said that the extent of pan-Turkist ideology in Ottoman society was similar to the situation with pan-Slavism in Russia, where it "was the business of only a small segment of the Russian intelligentsia, and official propaganda was little developed and rather weak. Neither can be regarded as a genuine expression of popular patriotism, for both were directed at the population rather than developing within it." Hubertus F. Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 3.

[197] It is difficult to translate *nâmûs* into English. It is usually translated as "honor," especially when it is used in a more general sense. But it always has a gendered meaning in popular usage in Turkish culture, and ordinary people usually tend to understand from the word *nâmûs* "a woman's virtue, chastity," even if it is not specifically used to refer to women.

[198] For an interesting example of identifying the fatherland with womanhood in the context of nationalist ideology in Egypt, see Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). For a similar example in the case of Iran, see Joanna de Groot, " 'Brothers of the Iranian Race': Manhood, Nationhood, and Modernity in Iran, c. 1870–1914," in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 137–156.

[199] ("*Ahmed Mehmed muharebeden kaçarsa Ayşeyi Fatmayı da düşman kapar.*"), Üryanizâde Ali Vahid, *Askerin İlmihâli*, p. 15. A similar kind of war motivation which stemmed from the fear of atrocities that would be inflicted upon one's women and children by the enemy was also effective in Britain and Germany on the eve of the war. In the British case, the propaganda that the German atrocities in Belgium would one day come to British soil

formulaic statement which was often used in both official documents and the press to describe fallen soldiers during the war was "becoming a martyr for the sake of religion, fatherland and *nâmûs*."[200]

In this discourse, being a soldier was considered the guardian of the nation's *nâmûs*. It was, in a sense, a rite of passage in a young boy's life. Reaching military age also meant becoming a man who was able to protect the *nâmûs* of all the women of the fatherland. This theme was also one of the frequent points that were emphasized in propaganda literature (especially short stories) during the war. The mothers and other female loved ones of potential draftees were always depicted as encouraging the boys to join the war to protect their *nâmûs*.[201] In case of failing to carry out this task, it was again the same women who scolded and scorned the failed men.[202] It was also a major theme of combat motivation on the battlefield.[203] Therefore, military service was presented not only as a responsibility to one's religion and fatherland, but also to one's own family.

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urged many people to volunteer for the army. In the German case, it was the fear of dangers from Russia (e.g., the "blood Tsar" and "Cossack hordes") that frequently appeared in exaggerated atrocity stories for propaganda purposes. See Alexander Watson, *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 49–51. A British Imperial Maritime League poster (January 1915) stated that "Every British soldier is the bodyguard of every woman and child." Quoted in Gregory, *The Last Great War*, p. 88. For a comparative analysis of the portrayal of the rape of women as a rape of mothers of the nation in Britain and France, also see Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 50–85.

[200] ("*Din, vatan, nâmûs uğrunda şehit . . .*"), see, for example, BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 79/34, 16 Safer 1333/3 January 1915; "Kurban Bayramı ve Harp," *Türk Yurdu*, vol. 4, no. 119 (29 Eylül 1332/12 October 1916) [*Türk Yurdu*, transliterated new edition (Ankara: Tutibay Yayınları, 1998), vol. 5, p. 217].

[201] See, for example, Salime Servet Seyfi, "Oğlumu Hududa Gönderdikten Sonra," *Yeni Mecmua* (*Çanakkale Nüsha-i Fevkaladesi*) (Special Issue, Mart 1331/March 1915), pp. 103–104.

[202] See, for example, Hasan Dündar, "Donmuş Kundak," *Türk Yurdu*, vol. 7, no. 160 (15 Temmuz 1334/15 July 1918) [transliterated edition, vol. 7, pp. 249–250]. In this story, a mother, whose newborn baby was frozen in winter during the retreat from enemy invasion, shockingly throws the dead baby at the retreating soldiers as a sign of insult (*bir hakaret sillesi olarak . . .*) for their inability to protect their families.

[203] For example, on the Dardanelles front, a division commander tried to motivate his soldiers for combat with the following words, which were quoted in the memoirs of a reserve officer served under his command: "Our mother and sisters sent us here so that we protect their *nâmûs* and chastity; our duty is to destroy the enemy who would dare to threaten our *nâmûs*" ("*Anamız, bacımız nâmûs ve iffetlerini beklemek için bizi buraya yollamıştır, vazfemiz nâmûsumuza el uzatacak düşmanları kahretmektir.*"), see *Cepheden Cepheye, Esaretten Esarete: Ürgüplü Mustafa Fevzi Taşer'in Hatıraları*, edited by Eftal Şükrü Batmaz (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2000), p. 5.

This familial pressure exerted a greater effect on potential draftees in the local context when the duty of military service was also subject to peer pressure. The Ottoman conscription system, like many other conscription systems, was based on recruiting eligible men as an age cohort. Therefore, in a village or provincial town context, getting enlisted was actually a collective experience which a man shared with his friends. It must have been highly difficult for a young man in a village to imagine not getting enlisted when all the other men whom he had grown up with were called to the colors. The mobilization procedure in 1914 also required all eligible men in a village to get ready at the same time, gathering at the village square and traveling as a group to the nearest town recruiting office under the leadership of the headman (*muhtar*) and prayer leader (*imam*) of the village.[204] Evading such a ceremony would mean complete ostracism for an eligible man of the same age cohort in the same village. It involved both social and moral pressure. The Ottoman military did not resort to such methods as creating "pals" battalions, which involved constituting a military unit composed of men from the same locality. Such battalions were effectively used in the British army during the war.[205] But peer pressure in the local context, mixed with religious and familial expectations for military service, was most likely to play a similar mobilizing effect on potential draftees in the Ottoman context.

The main components of the mobilizing discourses regarding the call to arms were constituted by propaganda which presented the entrance into the war as an opportunity for national regeneration, popular Islamic language which emphasized the necessity to join the holy war and defined military service as a binding religious duty, religious and cultural exaltation of death in combat as martyrdom, the heroism of the common soldier, and the need to protect the *nâmûs* of the nation. These themes which further resonated with the potential draftees' world of meaning through

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[204] For a literary account of such a scene of gathering and traveling of potential draftees from a village in Çorlu, see Aydemir, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, p. 63.

[205] "Pals" battalions in Britain were locally-raised units of men who knew each other at work or in their communities. This method was effective in creating peer pressure and provoking sentiments of loyalty among potential draftees. By this method, British authorities exploited community ties both to make military service more desirable and peer pressure more intense See Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, p. 53; Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, pp. 30–33. But, while there were no such things as "pals" battalions in the Ottoman army, there was a tendency to assign enlisted men from the same province or who spoke the same language (e.g., Arabic speakers) to same units. There were also some volunteer units, such as the Osmancık Volunteer Battalion, which were constituted on the basis of locality. (See Chapter 3).

familial and peer pressures contributed to the creation of a "war culture" in Ottoman society. War culture could be described as "the many varieties of representation through which" people of a belligerent country "understood the war and their commitment to winning it."[206] The existence of such war culture was significant, because the decision of an ordinary man to enlist for war and to continue to fight for years was neither merely a result of legal compulsion nor purely an outcome of a voluntary rational choice. Of course, compulsion and voluntarism played important roles at certain levels of shaping the attitude towards the mobilization, but even they were embedded in war culture. In this sense, it can be asserted that the Ottoman soldier's consent, and his resistance toward joining the war had an important cultural dimension as well.

The Importance of Oral Propaganda

There is no doubt that propaganda in the form of the printed word came to possess a power in 1914 which it had never before.[207] The effect of the printed word had been considerably enhanced by the proliferation of schools, which increased the literacy of societies, and by infrastructural developments such as the advent of the railway, which facilitated the circulation of written material. The Great War was also a "war of words": propaganda activities through the printed word acquired crucial importance; and governments, especially those of Britain, France, Germany and the USA, felt the need to use all available resources at their disposal to mobilize public opinion by creating effective propaganda mechanisms.[208] One of the most striking features of the Great War was that, "alongside the mobilization of men, munitions, and labour, alongside war against civilians, came the mobilization of minds."[209] However, while written propaganda had become crucial for mobilizing the masses on the eve of and during the war, lacking the necessary infrastructural developments for producing such written propaganda did not mean being completely unable to address and affect the masses. Oral methods of mass communication might have become outdated in the world of the printed word in

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[206] Leonard V. Smith, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, Annette Becker, *France and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 3, 98.

[207] Strachan, *To Arms*, p. 143.

[208] Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, pp. 1–5.

[209] J. M. Winter, "Propaganda and the Mobilization of Consent," in Hew Strachan (ed.), *World War I: A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 217–218.

1914, but speeches, sermons, preaches, songs, and even parades and public festivals remained functional means by which words and ideas permeated the consciousness of the illiterate. In fact, it can be argued that they were effective not only on the illiterate, but on the entire society.

Oral propaganda was very important in a country like the Ottoman Empire, where the levels of literacy and infrastructural development were quite low.[210] It is true that because of such shortfalls, there never was a functional and effective written propaganda mechanism in the Ottoman Empire during the Great War. As Erol Köroğlu has argued in his study on the Ottoman literary propaganda activities during the war, the Ottoman written propaganda effort remained very poor compared to those of the British, French and Germans. Moreover, Köroğlu has even claimed that given the level of infrastructural development in the Ottoman Empire in the war years, the Ottoman propaganda effort was "destined for failure."[211] But, while I tend to agree with Köroğlu on the necessary relationship between the levels of literacy and infrastructural development and the effectiveness of a written propaganda mechanism, I take issue with his tendency to generalize the failure of literary propaganda to argue that the entire propaganda effort failed. In fact, without evaluating the role of oral propaganda in the Ottoman propaganda effort, such an argument cannot be convincingly made. Of course, it is quite difficult to conduct research and find adequate documents about oral propaganda activities, but there are many traces that allow us to suggest that the Ottoman propaganda effort involved a considerable oral dimension. It was a multi-party effort in the local context, which included such mediatory figures as members of semi-official patriotic associations, local prayer leaders (*imam*s), and village and neighborhood headmen (*muhtar*s). Propaganda per se is not the main concern of this study, but I want to draw attention to the importance of oral propaganda by mentioning some cases below.

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[210] While there is no accurate date on the literacy rate in the Ottoman Empire, it is estimated that it never exceeded 10 percent between the years 1914 and 1918. See Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert," p. 230. And, as it can be expected, it must have been much lower among the rural population which constituted the main manpower of the military. The literacy rate was close to zero among the Ottoman troops. See *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 1: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Siyasi ve Askeri Hazırlıkları ve Harbe Girişi* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1970), p. 227. For a summary of the poor infrastructure in the Ottoman Empire on the eve and during the war, see Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, pp. 17–23.

[211] Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, p. 5.

For example, the Ottoman state propagated its declaration of general mobilization and the call to arms on 2 August 1914 by distributing published posters which were hung on the walls of public places. However, using published posters including written statements and militaristic images was not the only method which Ottoman authorities used to call people to arms after 2 August.[212] More "traditional" and oral methods were also widely used. In many places, the call to arms was announced by people wandering through streets shouting out the contents of the order in a simple musical rhythm accompanied by basic musical instruments such as the drum and clarion.[213] Announcing the calls to arms via criers with drums had been a traditional method used in previous wars, such as the Ottoman-Greek War of 1897 and the Balkan War.[214] It seems that this time it was conducted in a more planned fashion. The regulations for mobilization which were issued by the War Ministry in 1914 not only described how to circulate mobilization posters and where to hang them, they also included specifications about the use of criers and drummers to announce the order orally.[215] The oral method was employed in a organized manner, usually using two-person teams with a drum and a clarion, instead of only one drummer. The regulations also advised other auxiliary methods such as using fire signals and fireworks at proper spots of settlements to help announce the declaration of mobilization more widely.[216]

Using an oral and musical method to publicize the mobilization order not only helped circulate the news of the call to arms more effectively among a population with very low rates of literacy, it also turned the mobilization order into a spectacular event that would be remembered by all, from the educated man living in the capital to an illiterate peasant

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[212] In fact, posters of mobilization were a novelty for the Ottoman public in 1914, since this was the first time they were used. And some contemporary observers expressed that people initially found them "strange." Ziya Şâkir, *1914–1918 Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?*, p. 28.

[213] The oral announcements usually included statements that a general mobilization was ordered, that all men between the ages 20 and 45 were required to show up at recruiting offices within a week, and that eligible men also needed to bring with them enough food that would last for a week. Fahri Çakır, *Elli Yıl Önce Anadolu ve Şark Cephesi Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Çınar Matbaası, 1967), p. 9; "Seferberlik İlanı," *İkdâm*, 21 Temmuz 1330/3 August 1914. For an image of such an occasion, see Philip Gibbs and Bernard Grant, *Adventures of War with Cross and Crescent*, second edition (London: Methuen & Co., 1912), p. 66.

[214] Ziya Şâkir, *Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?*, p. 28.

[215] "1330 [1914] Senesi Seferberlik Talimâtnâmesi," ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1124, Dosya 3, Fihrist 3–4.

[216] "1330 [1914] Senesi Seferberlik Tertibâtı," ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3963, Dosya 1, Fihrist 5–9, 10, 11.

boy in a remote village.[217] From now on, the call to arms and the fact that a great war was imminent were incontestable facts of daily life.

The combination of oral and musical propaganda was best exemplified by marches. As already mentioned above, bands and marches often accompanied the public demonstrations held on the eve of the Great War. Official music in a Western style had already become an important symbol of Ottoman modernization during the nineteenth century. Newly composed marches, such as "The Hamidiye March" (composed by Callisto Guatelli for Sultan Abdülhamid II), were primarily used on diplomatic occasions to emphasize a "symbolic equality" with Western powers.[218] But after 1908, such marches were also extensively used domestically; they became a tool of interaction by which the state addressed the public. For the call to arms on the eve of the war, the Ottomans had a specific march, which was composed by İsmail Hakkı Bey. It was called "The Patriotic March: Calling to Arms."[219] However, the use of music for the call to arms was not confined to Western-style marches. There were also songs which were composed in a more "local" cultural style and which had more "national" lyrics. One example was the nationalist poet Mehmed Emin Yurdakul's poem, "A Voice from Anatolia or As We Go to War" (*Anadolu'dan Bir Ses veyahut Cenge Giderken*). While the poem had actually been written during the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897, it was set to music during the Great War in a popular song format and re-titled "The National Soldier's Song" (*Millî Asker Şarkısı*). It was often sung when draftees were departing their villages for military service.[220]

Oral propaganda and oral efforts at preparing society for war constituted an important part of the mobilization process on the eve of the Great War. Religious preachers and sermons were perhaps the most important

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[217] It is no coincidence that memoirs of soldiers about the war years usually vividly recall this detail. See, for example, Başkâtipzâde Ragıp Bey, *Tarih-i Hayatım: Tahsil-Harp-Esaret-Kurtuluş Anıları*, edited by M. Bülent Varlık (Ankara: Kebikeç Yayınları, 1996), p. 44; Şevket Rado (ed.), "Birinci Umumi Harpte ve Mütareke Günlerinde İstanbul, I," *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası*, vol. 1, no. 1 (February 1971), pp. 5–10.

[218] See Selim Deringil, "19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Resmi Müzik," *Defter*, no. 22 (Fall 1994), pp. 31–37.

[219] "*Marche Vatan* (*Askere Çağırır*)"; for an original record of this march, see *Osmanlı Marşları*, compiled by Muammer Karabey, compact disk, Kalan Müzik, 1999.

[220] Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı*, p. 287. A stanza of the poem reads: "I am a Turk whose religion and race are supreme | My bosom and essence are full of fire | A man becomes a man when he is the servant of his fatherland | A Turkish son never evades service, so I go!. ("*Ben Bir Türk'üm denim, cinsim uludur, / Sinem, özüm ateş ile doludur, / İnsan olan vatanının kuludur, / Türk evladı evde durmaz; giderim!*")

part of this process. There had been a considerable expansion in the use of religious preachers and sermons for political purposes during the Second Constitutional Era. These were considered important instruments for propagating ideas in a society with low rates of literacy where the reception of newspapers was far from satisfactory.[221] The noon sermons during Friday prayers in mosques throughout the empire emphasized the duty of every Muslim to sacrifice everything to rescue Islam from the attacks of the imperialists; the sermons that were delivered by *imam* at Friday prayers were filled with holy war rhetoric.[222]

It seems that many such propaganda activities through mosques had an organized character. At least in Istanbul, the National Defense League organized many such sermons for propaganda purposes at mosques on the eve of the war. These sermons were delivered in a series not only on Fridays but on other days of the week as well at major mosques in different neighborhoods of the city. The *imam*s were specifically appointed to "preach, advise and encourage" (*vaaz, nasihat ve teşvikât*) attendees. Moreover, at least one day a week was reserved for women.[223] The *imam*s who were selected for this task were members of a committee of the ulema (*heyet-i ilmiye*) that was constituted within the office of the *şeyhülislam* specifically for the purpose of "ensuring that the preaching and advising that have already been carried out in the mosques are done more regularly, and to make sure that religious functionaries properly notify the people about their responsibility and religious duty under the present conditions, also explaining to them the reasons for this responsibility and duty."[224] Such sermons were periodically repeated.[225]

The National Defense League also organized *mevlid*s at major mosques. Invitations to such religious services were publicized in newspapers. Their purpose was usually described as "praying for the permanent victory and

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221 İsmail Kara, *İslâmcıların Siyasî Görüşleri, vol 1: Hilafet ve Meşrutiyet*, second edition (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2001), p. 85.

222 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 2*, pp. 758, 1165.

223 "Vaaz ve Nasihat," *İkdâm*, 11 Eylül 1330/24 September 1914.

224 "Cuma Günkü Vaazlar," *İkdâm*, 15 Kanunisani 1330/28 January 1915.

225 Also see "Cuma Günkü Vaazlar," *İkdâm*, 21 Kanunisani 1330/3 February 1915; "Cuma Günkü Vaazlar," *İkdâm*, 4 Şubat 1330/17 February 1915.

success of our army and navy."[226] Similar religious services were also organized at mosques in provinces as well.[227]

Verbal communication was used for propaganda outside the mosque too. "Conferences" were organized by pro-CUP associations during the armed neutrality period in different parts of the country. Members of the CUP, parliamentary delegates and leading members of the semi-official associations, such as Yağcızâde Şefik Bey, president of the Navy League, joined these public conferences as speakers. A contemporary observer has described the goal of such conferences in his memoirs as "to prepare the nation and public opinion for war."[228]

Lastly, the Ottoman elite, who were aware of the difficulty of realizing written propaganda activities in a practically illiterate society, also resorted to alternative methods in order to overcome this difficulty. One such method involved requesting literate people to explain the contents and message of the written material to illiterate people. Propaganda pamphlets of the war years usually included statements of such requests on their front or back cover. For example, on the back cover of the pamphlet *Cihâd-ı Mukaddes Farzdır* we find the sentence: "May those who have learned about the contents of this communiqué convey it to those who have not."[229] Similarly, the pamphlet *Cihâd-ı Ekber*, which was published by the National Defense League, included a statement on its cover that read "May every Muslim read and have this read," but also a more detailed statement on the second page under the heading "A Great Request." The statement is cited in full below:

> A Great Request:
> Dear respected brother!
> Do not tear this book after you read it; give it to another fellow Muslim and also explain its meaning to your friends.
> Dear village teacher, you hard-working educator!
> Read this book in the village coffeehouse and also explain its meaning.
> Dear father!

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[226] ("*Ordu ve donanmamızın tevali-i nusret ve muvaffakiyeti içün dualar edilerek*…"), "Ayasofya'da Mevlid-i Nebevi," *İkdâm*, 1 Teşrinisani 1330/14 November 1914. For similar *mevlid*s which were organized by the National Defense League, see "Mevlid-i Nebevi Kırâatı," *İkdâm*, 11 Teşrinisani 1330/24 November 1914; "Mevlid-i Nebevi Kırâatı," *İkdâm*, 12 Teşrinisani 1330/25 November 1914; "Mevlid-i Nebevi Kırâatı," *İkdâm*, 4 Şubat 1330/17 February 1915.

[227] "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 10 Teşrinisani 1330/23 November 1914.

[228] Ali İhsan Sâbis, *Harb Hatıralarım: Birinci Dünya Harbi*, vol. 1, (Istanbul: Nehir Yayınları, 1990), p. 201.

[229] *Cihâd-ı Mukaddes Farzdır*, back cover.

> Read this book to your family, your children and your relatives. Do not for get that it is your duty to support the National Defense League.[230]

A few words should also be said about local traditional rituals which were performed at the village or small-town level on the occasion of sending soldiers off to military service. The Anatolian Muslim population had lived through a long history of military service, in the course of which such rituals evolved into almost established traditions in villages and small towns. They became a major part of Anatolian folklore. While they differed from one locality to the other in certain respects, their general structure was quite similar and usually included simple events such as departing soldiers visiting the elders of the locality, communal praying for the departing soldiers, gatherings in front of departing soldiers' houses with some musical entertainment, or soldiers leaving the village in a procession.[231] Such rituals certainly existed before the Great War.[232] But given the extent of the mobilization and duration of the Great War, their function became more relevant to publicize the call to arms and to make military service under war conditions more easily acceptable.

Such rituals apparently produced a "cultural pressure" on the local boys who reached the age of military service, as they turned the simple and seemingly individual event of going to do one's military service into a collective local ceremony in which every member of a particular locality could participate. This pressure facilitated the recruitment of potential draftees. Such rituals turned enlistment into a social behavior which was expected from the whole local community—reaching the age of military service and enlistment was no longer a private matter in this context. At a village or a small-town level, such information was actually "public"; everybody expected potential draftees to "do the right thing." That is, to undertake his military service like those in his cohort and all the males of that particular locality. In this local cultural setting, completing one's

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230 Mehmed Esad, *Cihâd-ı Ekber*, front cover, p. 1

231 Almost all modern folkloric studies on Anatolian folklore at the provincial level devote a remarkable space to such rituals, though they usually deal with them as if they were all the same in every historical period and they do not explore how they evolved over time. For two such studies, see Erman Artun, *Adana Halk Kültürü Araştırmaları* (Adana: Adana Büyükşehir Belediyesi Yayınları, 2000), pp. 84–99; Hülya Taş, *Bursa Folkloru: Bursa İli Gelenek ve Görenekleri Üzerine Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırma* (Bursa: Gaye Kitabevi, 2002), pp. 113–128.

232 And they definitely continued to exist after the Great War. Even in today's Turkey, ceremonies of sending off soldiers are quite popular, even in metropolitan urban settings, though their form has changed and they have acquired many new elements with time.

military service was regarded a major rite of passage for a young man. When this cultural pressure combined with the peer pressure at the local level, the decision to go to do one's military service became more "natural." Even before the legal and bureaucratic compulsion mechanisms, this cultural pressure made the potential draftee aware that there were no alternatives to completing his military service when the time came. Any thoughts about resisting the war were made practically impossible due to the pervasiveness of such rituals.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that attempts at mobilizing Ottoman public opinion for war were part of an organized process. This process had a background dating back to the Balkan War and even earlier, but it was also reshaped within the immediate conditions on the eve and at the outbreak of the Great War. This organized process also intertwined with the spontaneous enthusiasm of the people, which it molded to be absorbed by the mobilization effort. In this process, voluntary but semi-official associations such as the Navy League and the National Defense League, which were not only patronized by the CUP but also worked within the orbit of its policies, played a mediating role in the public sphere where nationalist and militarist policies met with social actors. Equally importantly, they also served to obstruct anti-war initiatives in the public sphere by their increasing dominance which, with the patronage of the CUP government and strict social regimenting regulations such as censorship, marginalized and muffled alternative and dissenting voices. It can be said that the enthusiasm for the call to arms in Ottoman society was far from being entirely spontaneous and widespread, but the result of an organized action by both the CUP government and pro-CUP, mostly middle-class and urban, social groups. This did not mean, however, that there were no traces of spontaneity in this process. In fact, the Balkan defeat trauma and the discourse of revenge had created fertile ground for radicalized popular sentiments that were ready to be harvested for popular mobilization. And, the abolition of capitulations during the armed neutrality period added a future-oriented aspect to these sentiments. But it was an organized collaboration between the government and the public sphere which tried to channel these sentiments into war mobilization. It has been shown that demonstration was a form of social action which was often resorted to as a tool of social mobilization and war propaganda. The demonstrations

that were held both when the capitulations were abolished and when the holy war was announced provided perfect miniature representations for the desired popular mobilization, in which people and the state met with the mediator associations for a common goal. This chapter has also argued that oral propaganda methods were widely used in this process and they contributed to other methods of mobilization in preparing society for war.

But could the fact that there was no organized voice against the war in the public sphere be really taken as evidence to argue that all Ottomans enthusiastically supported the decision? Though this chapter has not tried to answer this question directly, the above discussion includes enough points which should imply that no such generalizations can be made. When the mobilization called all eligible Ottomans to military service, did they willingly enlist? How did the call continue throughout the war? Did conscription procedures face any resistance from people during the war? Could the discourse of regeneration at the outbreak of the war always justify the call to arms during the war? How did the Ottomans respond to this call when the war became prolonged and increasingly wearisome? How did the state respond when it faced resistance from its people to the call to arms? The following chapters of this volume will seek answers to such questions and show that the call to arms involved a constant effort to convince people and to cope with resistance coming from them.

CHAPTER TWO

CONSCRIPTION UNDER TOTAL WAR CONDITIONS

The French Revolution's *levée en masse* was enacted by the *Convention nationale* on 23 August 1793 in response to the threat of a multi-front war with foreign powers simultaneous with rebellions at home by summoning all able-bodied men to defend the "nation." The levy was regarded as an action that would put into practice Rousseau's prescription in the Social Contract that "every citizen should be a soldier by duty, not by trade."[1] The mass levy ushered in a new system of universal male conscription in the image of an entire nation at arms. Whereas the French revolutionary mass levy was an *ad hoc* measure, conscription acquired a systematic form in the age of Napoleon.[2] It was finally the mid-nineteenth century Prussian model which gave the institution a more systematic, established, obligatory character and a structure for efficiently drafting large numbers of men.[3] Conscription not only increased the efficiency of armies but, perhaps more importantly, initiated new relations between state and society. It signalled an intrusion of the state into people's lives and created an area of contention between the state and society. Conscription can also be depicted as a battleground between "individual and local communities on the one hand and a distant impersonal state on the other."[4] While the universality and citizenship-based nature of conscription was sometimes abandoned for less egalitarian models such as lotteries, substitutions and replacements, and the burden was frequently shifted to the lower classes and the peasantry, military service in nineteenth-century Europe was envisioned as a way of creating a new form of loyalty towards the state,

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[1] Isser Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformation of the French Civic Order, 1789–1820s* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), p. 382.

[2] Isser Woloch, "Napoleonic Conscription: State Power and Civil Society," *Past and Present*, no. 111 (1986), pp. 110–122.

[3] On the reorganization of the conscription system in Prussia especially after the defeat of the Prussian army at Jena in 1806, see Thomas Hippler, *Citizens, Soldiers and National Armies: Military Service in France and Germany, 1789–1830* (London and New York. Routledge, 2008), pp. 163–189.

[4] Woloch, *The New Regime*, p. 380; Alan Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters: The Army and French Society during the Revolution and Empire* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. viii.

as a form of nationalist socialization, and a new system of drill and training to ensure military efficiency.[5] As such, universal conscription as both a means of creating an efficient military power and nationalist socialization occupied a primary place in all modernization projects in the nineteenth century, from Russia and Japan to the Ottoman Empire.

On the eve of the Great War, all the major belligerent powers had conscription systems, except for Britain, which switched from a volunteer system to an obligatory draft in 1916. The war re-shaped all existing conscription systems in one way or another. This chapter will focus on the Ottoman experience with conscription during the Great War. Although Ottoman conscription was inspired by European models and had started with the *Tanzimat* reforms of the nineteenth century, it had a unique history largely determined by its own internal dynamics and problems. As will be discussed below, due to deep-seated infrastructural problems, the Ottomans always had to amalgamate old imperial ways of recruitment with modern methods of conscription. This problem continued during the Great War, although the state became increasingly adept at merging old ways with the new in an efficient way and some problems became less challenging as a result of modernization efforts.

Moreover, while the Ottoman elite were aware of the universal conscription system's potential in contributing to the creation of an "Ottoman nation" out of a multi-religious and multi-ethnic population, the Ottoman conscription system had always remained predominantly a Muslim institution in practice. The state's distrust towards non-Muslim populations and the latter's reluctance to recruitment had given a discriminatory character to the Ottoman conscription system. This bias continued and, in fact, intensified into an increasingly aggressive Turkish nationalist partisanship during the war, despite the CUP government's pragmatic efforts to join all elements of Ottoman society in the mobilization effort.

This chapter will also argue that Ottoman conscription practice during the war established a new relationship between the state and society. State power permeated into deeper and uncharted levels of society due to the creation of new institutions and methods at the local level. But in this process of penetration, the state also encountered more directly and frequently the responses, demands and resistance of people, which

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[5] Lars Mjoset and Stephen Van Holde, "Killing for the State, Dying for the Nation: An Introductory Essay on the Life Cycle of Conscription into Europe's Armed Forces," in Lars Mjoset and Stephen Van Holde (eds.), *The Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces* (Amsterdam: Elsevier Science, 2002), pp. 9, 51.

in turn played an important role in re-shaping the Ottoman mobilization experience.

The Uneasy Evolution of the Ottoman Conscription System

The principle of universal male conscription was one of the major goals of the *Tanzimat* reforms which aimed to create an Ottoman citizenry. However, the implementation of conscription had never been complete, and it was never used successfully as an instrument of Ottoman nation-building.[6] This incompleteness had to do with two major problems. The first one was infrastructural: a system of universal conscription required a reliable census to determine where potential manpower could be found. Such a mechanism necessitated a sizeable growth in the state bureaucracy, which would have to include an efficient recruitment organization, the economic power to supply provisions to conscripts, and security forces and efficient sanctions to combat draft evasion and desertion. Furthermore, recruits from the countryside had to be educated and trained.[7] Nineteenth-century Ottoman modernization achieved progress in these respects, but never to an extent that could be characterized as a remarkable success.

Secondly, whereas the universality of conscription was accepted in principle, non-Muslim Ottomans remained outside of the actual system in practice. The Reform Decree (*Islahât Fermânı*) of 1856 extended the

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[6] The history of the Ottoman conscription system in the pre-Great War era has been relatively well studied. However, the available studies either focus almost entirely on the pre-Great War era, or pay only cursory attention to the Great War period. See, for example, Hakan Erdem, "Recruitment for the 'Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad' in the Arab Provinces, 1826–1828," in Israel Gershoni, Hakan Erdem and Ursula Woköck (eds.), *Histories of the Middle East: New Directions* (London: Lynne Reinner Publishers, 2002), pp. 189–206; Faruk Ayın, *Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tanzimat'tan Sonra Askere Alma Kanunları, (1839–1914)*, (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1994); Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye: Askerlik* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2008); Tobias Heinzelmann*, Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Genel Askerlik Yükümlülüğü, 1826–1856*, trans. Türkis Noyan (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2009); Ufuk Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni* (Istanbul: Simurg, 2000); Veysel Şimşek, "Ottoman Military Recruitment and the Recruit, 1826–1853" (MA thesis, Bilkent University, 2005; Gültekin Yıldız*, Neferin Adı Yok: Zorunlu Askerliğe Geçiş Sürecinde Osmanlı Devleti'nde Siyaset, Ordu ve Toplum, 1826–1839* (Istanbul: Kitabevi Yayınları, 2009); Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion: Conscription in the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Modern European History*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2007), pp. 264–286; Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918."

[7] Jan Lucassen and Erik Jan Zürcher, "Introduction: Conscription and Resistance. The Historical Context," in Zürcher (ed.), *Arming the State*, p. 10.

obligation of military service to non-Muslims but allowed for exemption upon payment of an exemption fee (*bedel-i nakdî*). Buying exemptions in this way became the norm for non-Muslims, and the fee replaced the *cizye*, the tax that the *Islamic law* (*Shari'a*) required of non-Muslims.[8] Therefore, non-Muslims avoided military service in practice until 1909.[9] In fact, even some of the most important reformist *Tanzimat* statesmen tended to show a disinclination towards drafting the non-Muslim Ottomans for active service. For example, the approach of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha (1822–1895), an important statesman, historian and jurist who occupied important bureaucratic positions during the *Tanzimat* era, is quite representative in this sense. At a governmental commission gathered after the Crimean War to discuss the need to extend the Ottoman conscription system to more elements in the empire, he stated that recruiting non-Muslims for active military service would actually produce more problems than it would solve. He argued that since the idea of "fatherland" (*vatan*) had not been developed, Islam was the main motive for mobilization in the Ottoman army. The pasha stressed that mixing different religions in the army would make it difficult to establish a solid base for the morale of troops. He also pointed to more practical problems that would emerge in the case of drafting different religious elements, such as the difficulty in providing enough religious facilities within the military for men of all religions to perform their religious services. But more importantly, although he did not express it overtly, we can sense a certain uneasiness and disturbance regarding his views of who should have the dominant status in the armed forces. As the pasha put it, "Could a Private Hasan obey a Captain Hristo whose order would send him to death in combat?"[10]

Moreover, universality did not mean that all able-bodied Muslim males of military age would be obliged to serve in the military as there was an extensive system of exemptions for Muslim Ottomans as well. Until more

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[8] Carter V. Findley, "Tanzimat," in Reşat Kasaba (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey, Vol. 4: Turkey in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 19.

[9] This does not mean that there were no non-Muslims in the Ottoman army before this date. There were non-Muslim Ottoman soldiers before, but they were almost entirely medical officers, who were mostly Armenians and Greeks holding the ranks of lieutenant and captain. Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 89.

[10] ("*Nefer Hasan kendüsünü ölüme sevk edecek yüzbaşı Hristo'ya bir dar vakitde itaat eyliyecek mi?*"), quoted in Suavi Aydın, "Toplumun Militarizasyonu: Zorunlu Askerlik Sisteminin ve Ulusal Orduların Yurttaş Yaratma Sürecindeki Rolü," in Ö. Heval Çınar and Coşkun Üsterci (eds.), *Çarklardaki Kum: Vicdani Red* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008), p. 29.

restrictive regulations were put into effect in 1909, 1914 and during the Great War, many people in the empire had the right to be exempt from military service. These included members of the ulema, medrese students, residents of Istanbul and the Hijaz province, high and even middle-ranking bureaucrats, and men who were the sole breadwinners (*muîn*) of their families. The system of exemptions through legal rights or exemption fees meant that the obligation of military service was never extended equally to all Ottoman subjects. Consequently, contrary to the early expectation that the universal conscription system would contribute to Ottoman equality and unity, the Ottoman army practically "remained an army of Anatolian Muslim peasants, in a sense foreshadowing the establishment of a Turkish nation-state in Anatolia after World War I."[11]

In fact, moves to make the conscription system more extensive in practice came only as late as 1909. The 1908 Revolution and the subsequent restoration of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876 ushered in an era of rethinking of constitutional rights and obligations, including conscription, on a wider basis. Discussions of the conscription system's alleged function of uniting different peoples and increasing loyalty to the existing state were resumed. For example, the pro-CUP editor of the daily *Tanin*, Hüseyin Cahid, wrote on 23 June 1909 that the most effective means for amalgamating peoples of different races, religions and sects living in the Ottoman Empire was "comradeship in arms" (*silah arkadaşlığı*).[12] New regulations began to take effect a year after the revolution. On 7 August 1909, the exemption-fee practice was abolished and military service was made compulsory for all Ottoman subjects.[13] In October 1909, the conscription of all eligible male Ottomans regardless of religion was ordered for the first time.[14]

At this time, the aura of the "equality" principle of the 1908 Revolution had not disappeared just yet. Therefore, the extension of military service to non-Muslim groups of the empire received a certain amount of approval, if not an enthusiastic embrace, from the representatives of non-Muslim communities as well. This approval also contained an expectation for the promotion of their status in Ottoman society. For example,

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[11] Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 91.

[12] *Tanin*, 10 Haziran 1325/23 June 1909, cited in Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, p. 128.

[13] "Anâsır-ı Gayrimüslimenin Kuraları hakkında Kanûn," 25 Temmuz 1325/7 August 1909, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 1, p. 420.

[14] Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 89.

Ohannes Vartkes (Serengülyan), an Armenian member of the Ottoman Parliament from Erzurum, said: "No Ottoman has the right to be exempted from military service . . . I ask for the recruitment of Muslims and non-Muslims alike . . . Military service is an obligation of honor."[15] Another influential Armenian political figure, Krikor Zohrab, a deputy of Istanbul, considered the equal military-service obligation as an important step towards the creation of a solid Ottoman citizenship and described it as "a matter of brotherhood."[16] Similarly, the Grand Rabbi of the Jewish community, Haim Nahum Efendi, who had had political ties with the Young Turks since the preparation for the revolution, openly supported the idea of obligatory military service for Ottoman Jews and worked to convince his congregation in this respect.[17] However, while non-Muslim Ottoman representatives accepted the idea in principle, they also requested that Ottoman authorities execute various reorganizations in the military to make life easier for prospective non-Muslim enlisted men. For example, the religious authorities of the Ottoman Greek and Armenian communities demanded that soldiers of their communities serve in separate and ethnically and religiously uniform units which would be commanded by Christian officers.[18] They also demanded that Christian priests should be introduced into the army to perform religious services for Christian units, that conversion should be forbidden during military service, and that special places for religious duties should be offered to Christian soldiers in their barracks.[19]

On the other hand, an equally important aspect was that the effort to the make the military service obligation more extensive was not confined to the non-Muslim communities. First of all, the Ottoman state tried to better integrate its Arab population into its military manpower, but a certain amount of ambivalence and distrust towards the Arabs also existed.[20] Moreover, as has been mentioned above, the Ottoman conscription system had always included a long list of exemptions for Muslims as well. The 1909 regulations also included measures to remove, or at least to

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[15] Quoted in Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion," pp. 278–279.

[16] Koptaş, "Meşrutiyet Döneminin Umut ve Umutsuzluk Sarkacında Ermeni Devrimci Partileri ve Krikor Zohrab," pp. 73–74.

[17] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, pp. 153–154.

[18] Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 89.

[19] Hacısalihoğlu, "Inclusion and Exclusion," p. 280; Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, pp. 142–143.

[20] On the relations between the Young Turk regime and the Arabs, see Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

restrict, certain exemptions for Muslims, which were regarded as unnecessary and unfair. And important steps were taken in this direction. For instance, one of the first things reconsidered was the exemption status of the medrese students. Attending a medrese had become a common and easy legal way to escape conscription, and had been extensively abused for this purpose.[21] It was decided in 1909 that students in the medreses who had not passed their exams on time were no longer exempt from military service.[22] The inhabitants of Istanbul also lost their exempt status. Moreover, the new military service law of 1909 also extended conscription to the residents of the provinces of Hijaz, Yemen, Tripolitania (Trablusgarp), Scutari (İşkodra), Hawran (a sub-province of Syria) and Basra, which previously had remained outside the conscription system due to their autonomous status.[23]

However, although the new military-service law of 1909 aimed to be more extensive and inclusive, it could neither overcome deep-seated setbacks in practice, nor produce a standardized set of regulations for creating an efficient recruitment organization within the military. First, a universal, modern conscription system was doomed to remain a utopia in certain regions of the empire, where the state suffered from major infrastructural problems in establishing its power and fulfilling basic functions (such as accurate demography) that was necessary to implement a workable recruitment system. Therefore, though it was declared that these were included in the system, this commitment remained on paper only, and the state was never able to realize the conscription process in such "distant" Arab provinces as the Hijaz, Yemen and Tripolitania, where its ability to penetrate society was very low. The Ottoman state would have to suspend the military-service obligation in these provinces from

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[21] Similar tactics of evading conscription existed in other countries as well, such as Italy: "While draft dodging and desertion were the most common ways of evading military service, conscripts also used other methods to elude the draft. To benefit from exemptions granted to seminarians, young men of draft age enrolled in religious seminars without having any intentions of pursuing ecclesiastical careers." Alexander Grab, "Conscription and Desertion in Napoleonic Italy, 1802–1814," in Donald Stoker, Frederick C. Schneid and Harold D. Blanton (eds.), *Conscription in the Napoleonic Era: A Revolution in Military Affairs* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 127.

[22] Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 89. This was, in fact, a measure that had been planned in 1892 by Adbülhamid II, but neglected for some pragmatic political reasons. See, Amit Bein, "Politics, Military Conscription, and Religious Education in the Late Ottoman Empire," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (2006), pp. 283–301.

[23] Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, p. 136.

the beginning. Instead of insisting on applying the standard procedure, the state chose to announce that the residents of these provinces would be welcomed if they wanted to join the army as "volunteers," for which local administrators were urged to encourage people.[24]

Secondly, although Ottoman authorities declared their commitment to remove the practice of exemption fees, and the law of 1909 abolished it on paper, it remained in use. As authorities sometimes confessed outright, the state would never dare abolish it entirely. Ottoman authorities seem to have been content with making only some modifications in the application of the exemption-fee law, since the money that they collected from exemption fees served to compensate for recurrent budget deficits and financial burdens. Therefore, as regards the exemption fee issue, a sort of "dual practice" appeared after 1909.[25] While it was not as common as it had been before, avoiding military service by paying a certain amount of money continued to be an alternative, especially for economically better-off strata of society.

Moreover, although the effort to extend the conscription system to all Ottomans was presented as a move to realize the idea of Ottoman equality, non-Muslim men of military age never accepted it with enthusiasm, despite official approval of it by their representatives. On the contrary, a remarkable resistance to obligatory military service on the part of Ottoman non-Muslims appeared in various ways. Draft-evasion and desertion began to be a common problem (See Chapter 5). New ways of evading service were also invented. For example, since the existence of the Capitulations offered many legal exemptions for foreign citizens residing in the Ottoman Empire, acquiring citizenship of a foreign country became a pseudo-legal tactic of escaping military service. For this purpose, many Ottoman Greeks got Greek citizenship and many Armenians acquired a Russian passport. Moreover, traveling to a foreign country long enough to evade military service was also another tactic frequently used by non-Muslim Ottomans to avoid service. The USA and Egypt were the favorite destinations of those who chose this option.[26]

Of course, there were non-Muslim Ottomans drafted in the Ottoman army for active service after 1909.[27] Not all non-Muslims showed resis-

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[24] Ibid., p. 136.

[25] Ibid., pp. 129–132.

[26] Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 89; Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, pp. 145–146.

[27] In fact, in specific fields and tasks and on certain occasions, non-Muslim Ottomans served in the Ottoman armed forces before 1909, as in the example of more than one

tance to the new law, and the available ways to avoid the military service were actually only open to economically well-off people who had enough money to pay the exemption fee or networks of relations in foreign countries which would help them travel there to evade service. There was no other legal way than to obey the obligation for those who did not have these. The Ottoman army included non-Muslim Ottomans during the Balkan War of 1912–13. But some problems persisted. For example, the abovementioned demands of non-Muslims to have religious facilities or to form religiously-ethnically homogenous units within the army were never adequately met. Secondly, their physical and mental training period before being sent to the front during the Balkan War was usually not sufficient. Therefore, the reluctance to fight and low morale of non-Muslim Ottoman soldiers during the Balkan War frequently struck outside observers first.[28]

In fact, reluctance to serve was observed as a general problem for the whole Ottoman army in the Balkan War, and official circles attributed it to the lack of a systematic propaganda emphasizing the necessity to fight in the war.[29] Nor was resistance to conscription a problem unique to non-Muslims after the 1909 regulations. Similar forms of resistance and discontent also appeared on the part of Muslim Ottomans who lost their exemption status. For example, the decision to draft those medrese students who failed to pass their exams in time made many people, not just the medrese students, quite unhappy, because there had been many fake medrese students, among them even illiterate peasants, who had abused this way to avoid military service.[30] Moreover, the move to draft men from the regions which had previously remained outside the recruitment system caused the emergence of acts of resistance in those regions. For example, after the 1909 regulations, the Ottoman state had to deal with

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thousand Ottoman Greeks serving in the navy as early as the 1830s. See Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, pp. 206–210. But such *ad hoc* practices never became standardized before 1909.

[28] Lev Troçki [Trotsky], *Balkan Savaşları*, pp. 190, 232–233.

[29] *Balkan Harbi (1912–1913), vol. 1: Harbin Sebepleri, Askeri Hazırlıklar ve Osmanlı Devletinin Harbe Girişi* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1970), p. 79.

[30] On this problem, a contemporary observer recorded: "A great panic emerged among those who evaded military service through a medrese connection. This medrese issue had been so much abused that even illiterate people, particularly peasants could escape from military service by becoming fake medrese students in an illegal way. The decision to abolish this exemption affected these people most." Halil Ataman, *Esaret Yılları*, ed. by Ferhat Ecer (Istanbul: Kardeşler Matbaası, 1990), p. 19. For another eyewitness account confirming this situation, see Necmi Seren, "Yılların Ötesinden: Okul, Askerlik ve Esirlik Hatıraları," in *Cephe ve Esaret Hatıraları*, edited by Yusuf Gedikli (Istanbul: Bilgeoğuz Yayınları, 2009), p. 146.

occasional rebellions against the draft, which came from various groups of Laz and Kurds in Anatolia, and Arabs in the Arab provinces.[31] Similar acts of resistance, mostly in the forms of draft-evasion and desertion, sometimes also appeared on the part of the Anatolian Muslim-Turkish population, the backbone of the Ottoman army. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, such forms of resistance constituted a serious problem during the Great War.

Finally, despite the attempts at reforming it with new legal regulations after 1909, the execution of the Ottoman conscription system in practice largely failed at mobilization during the Balkan War. Because of both infrastructural insufficiencies and lack of legal standardization, the mobilization of the Ottoman army never reached a satisfactory level. The failed mobilization on the home front significantly contributed to the humiliating defeat of the Ottoman army on the battlefield. A large literature consisting of usually short treatises emerged just after the defeat to make a general assessment of the situation and to understand what went wrong. In such treatises, various contemporary Ottoman observers ranging from high- and middle-ranking officers to middle-class Young Turk intellectuals insisted that insufficient and poorly planned recruitment had been among the major factors that brought about the defeat.[32]

Reforms after the Balkan Defeat

The humiliating defeat led Ottoman authorities to conclude that it was necessary to bring "a new spirit and enthusiasm" to the army, for which an overall reform and reorganization was needed.[33] Reforming the army was a primary agenda of the CUP government which established one-party rule after taking over the administration in a coup (*Babıâli Baskını*) on 23 January 1913. The coup not only initiated a new period during which radical military reforms were expedited, but it was also seen as "a prologue establishing the military as the political ruling group. In this capacity the officers were actively engaged in making major policy decisions and in

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[31] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, pp. 166–170.

[32] See, for example, A. [Ali İhsan Sâbis], *Balkan Harbinde Neden Münhezim Olduk?* (Istanbul: Kitabhane-i İslam ve Askeri, 1329/1913); Tüccârzâde İbrahim Hilmi, *Balkan Harbi'nde Askerî Mağlubiyetlerimizin Esbâbı* (Istanbul: Kitabhane-i İslam ve Askerî, 1329/1913); Selânikli Bahri, *Balkan Harbi'nde Garb Ordusu* (Istanbul: Çiftci Kitabhanesi, 1331/1915).

[33] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6* (*1908–1920*), p. 192.

cooperating, but on their own terms, with the politicians."[34] General Mahmud Şevket Pasha was appointed grand vizier and minister of war on the same date. After less than a month, the Regulation for the General Organization of the Military (*Teşkilât-ı Umûmiye-i Askeriye Nizâmnâmesi*) was issued on 14 February 1913 to execute organizational reforms concerning the army.[35] Mahmud Şevket Pasha's assassination on 11 June 1913 did not stop the reforms, which continued during the war ministry of Ahmed İzzet Pasha. But a major overhaul began to take place when Enver Pasha replaced Ahmed İzzet Pasha as the minister of war on 3 January 1914.[36]

This process also included a foreign contribution, when the Ottoman state signed a contract with the German military on 14 December 1913, after which the German Military Mission, under the leadership of Liman von Sanders, came to the Ottoman Empire to help reform the armed forces.[37] The German Military Mission not only provided help for the reorganization of the army, but also offered useful advice to revise the recruitment system and the mobilization plans according to the Prussian-German experience.[38] That the Mission was expected to help improve the Ottoman conscription system was agreed upon in the contract signed with the German military.[39] The German contribution to the revision and execution of Ottoman mobilization plans also continued after the secret treaty of alliance signed between the Ottoman and German states on 2 August 1914, and subsequently after the Ottoman entry into the war

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[34] M. Naim Turfan, *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. 286.

[35] For the complete text of the regulation, see *Osmanlı Ordu Teşkilatı* (Ankara: Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, 1999), pp. 147–161.

[36] Enver remained at this post through the end of the war, until 14 October 1918. In his capacity during this period he also served as the acting commanding general of the Ottoman army (the titular commander in chief was the sultan) and as the chief of the General Staff. Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. 4–5.

[37] Similar agreements were also made with other European countries in the same period. The Ottomans invited a British mission to help reform the navy and a French mission to improve the gendarmerie. But the British and French missions left the country when the Great War began. See *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, pp. 179–180.

[38] For a post-war account the German Military Mission by a German officer-historian who also served in the mission, see Carl Mühlman, *İmparatorluğun Sonu, 1914: Osmanlı Savaşa Neden ve Nasıl Girdi?* (*Die Berufung der deutschen Militärmission nach der Türkei 1913, das deutsh-türkische Bündnis 1914 und der Eintritt der Türkei in den Weltkrieg*), trans. Kadir Kon (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2009), pp. 13–55.

[39] "Alman Islâh Heyeti Sözleşmesi," in *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, Appendix 11, pp. 275–278; Jehuda L. Wallach, *Bir Askeri Yardımın Anatomisi: Türkiye'de Prusya-Alman Askeri Heyetleri, 1835–1919*, trans. Fahri Çeliker (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1977), p. 115; Mühlman, *1914*, p. 158.

on the German side.[40] German Colonel Fritz Bronsart von Schellendorf, who was the Second Assistant Chief of the Ottoman General Staff and worked in close collaboration with Enver Pasha, played an active role in re-shaping the Ottoman mobilization scheme by bringing advice on the German model.[41] As a result, it can be argued that the Ottoman conscription system during the Great War was influenced by the Prussian-German conscription experience while continuing to function according to its own past experience and current dynamics.

One of the first moves which were executed by the War Minister Enver Pasha targeted the high-ranking officer corps. About 1,300 elderly high-ranking army officers were involuntarily retired, whose performance during the Balkan War had been greatly questioned. They were regarded as unqualified for high command posts and an obstruction to the modernization effort. They were replaced by younger and pro-CUP officers.[42] But the main effort concentrated on reorganizing the internal structure of and revising the deployment of the army. In this respect, the Ottoman army was reconstituted, forming 13 corps' zones and 2 independent divisions' zones. While some modifications and additions would be made in wartime, this new structure constituted the main framework of the Ottoman armed forces during the Great War.[43]

The details of the restructuring process of the Ottoman army are outside the scope of this chapter. To sum up, it can be said that the main aim of the process was to create a highly efficient army structure which could easily and rapidly be put into a wartime situation when needed. It was assumed that preparation for war could be done without forming entirely new divisions but by simply reinforcing the available ones with additional troops.[44] What concerns us here is that the new structure of the army was closely related to and significantly depended on the recruitment system for its vitality and required a large number of additional troops within a short period of time. In other words, in order for the new army structure to be efficient, there needed to be an efficient conscription system.

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[40] Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (London: Pocket Books, 2006), p. 104.

[41] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 135.

[42] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 220; Erickson, *Defeat in Detail*, p. 340; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 9.

[43] Kaymakam Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı: İlânından beri mükellefiyeti askeriye ile alakâdâr neşr edilen kavânini ve bunların izâhâtini hâvî, her mükellefe ve mükelleflerle alakâdâr olanlara vaziyet-i askeriyelerini tayin için lâım bir kitabdır* (Istanbul: Kitabhane-i İslam ve Askeri, 1331/1915), p. 12.

[44] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, pp. 220–221.

Table 1. Disposition of the Ottoman armed forces, November 1914[45]

Armies and regions	Corps and zones
First Army in Thrace	I Corps (Istanbul) II Corps (Edirne) III Corps (Tekirdağ/Gallipoli) IV Corps (Bandırma/İzmir) 1st Cavalry Brigade (Edirne)
Second Army in Thrace (previously in Syria)	V Corps (İzmit/Ankara) VI Corps (Aleppo, then to Çatalca)
Third Army in the Caucasus/Eastern Anatolia	IX Corps (Erzurum) X Corps (Samsun/Sivas) XI Corps (Hasankale/Mamuretülaziz) XIII Corps (newly formed, moving to Third Army) Reserve Cavalry Divisions (4) Van Gendarmerie Division
Fourth Army in Syria	VIII Corps (Damascus/Jerusalem) XII Corps (Aleppo/Homs)
The Iraq Area Command in Mesopotamia	38th Division
Independent units in Arabia and Yemen	VII Corps (Yemen) 21st Independent Divison (Hijaz) 22nd Independent Division (Asir)
Fortified Area Command in İzmir	

The new structure required about 500,000 troops in total, while the number of the available troops in the army sank to around 200,000 in 1913 due to discharges after the Balkan War.[46] According to the calculations made in summer 1914, a total of 477,868 drafted men and 12,469 officers were needed to bring the army to full wartime readiness.[47] This remarkable and sudden increase could only be effected by an efficient, extensive recruitment system which could function effectively under actual mobilization conditions. For this, the existing conscription system, which had been characterized by many setbacks from the beginning and functioned unsatisfactorily during the Balkan War, needed to be revised and reformed. Moreover, a revision in the conscription system was needed because the manpower pool of the empire was considerably reshaped after the Balkan

[45] *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, pp. 233–234; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 43.
[46] Larcher, *La Guerre Turque dans la Guerre Mondiale*, p. 66.
[47] Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 7.

War. In addition to about 340,000 casualties in the Balkan War[48] and the subsequent loss of territories in the Balkans, the immigration of around 400,000 Muslim refugees[49] into the empire changed the demographic composition from which the military was to be fed.

Under these circumstances, a new law for military service was issued on 12 May 1914.[50] Considered in its entirety, the new law aimed to make radical changes in three major areas, which, it had been observed by contemporary authorities and observers, had inflicted deleterious consequences on the Ottoman military's performance in previous mobilizations.[51] First of all, by preparing a new law for conscription, the Ottoman authorities' main concern was to have an efficient recruitment mechanism for hastening any future mobilization and would easily meet the demands which would arise in its course. Moreover, the new law emphasized the importance of the training of draftees in modern warfare as much as it did their number. That is, its aim was not merely to draft as many men as possible when necessary, but also to provide those drafted with a necessary standard training in a defined period of time. Meeting this goal also involved a reorganization of the units dedicated to training.

Secondly, the new law aimed to tackle the problem of exemptions. As discussed above, the Ottoman conscription system had been characterized by a long list of exemptions from its beginning. The 1909 regulations contained reforms of exemptions, but they were not very successful in practice. The new law of 1914 strove to minimize exemptions, allowing only for really necessary ones. The law also aimed to extend the military-service obligation to more segments of society, including non-Muslims. While a discourse of Ottoman equality, which emphasized the need "to oblige everybody equally to defend the fatherland,"[52] accompanied this objective, the real aim was more pragmatic: getting the maximum number of draftees from the population. In accordance with the aim of extending

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[48] Erickson estimates that the number of total Ottoman casualties during the Balkan Wars was about 340,000, of which 50,000 were killed in action, 75,000 died of disease, 100,000 were wounded, and 115,000 were prisoners of war. See Erickson, *Defeat in Detail*, p. 329.

[49] MacCarthy, *Death and Exile*, p. 161.

[50] "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati" (The Temporary Law for Military Service), 29 Nisan 1330/12 May 1914, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, pp. 662–704.

[51] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, pp. 6–7. Also see Tarık Tevfik (ed.), *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûnu* (Istanbul: İkbal Kitabhanesi, 1330/1914).

[52] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 6.

the obligation, there was also the intention to abolish, or at least to restrict, the practice of exemption fees.

Thirdly, the reorganization of the Ottoman army created a need for additional officers, especially in middle- and low-ranking command posts. It was also estimated that this need would further increase in a prospective mobilization. To compensate, the new law tried to improve the recruitment of reserve officers by drafting the graduates of higher education institutions.

The possibility of a general mobilization became a reality only about three months after the announcement of the law, and it was at that point that the actual process of testing began for the above-mentioned objectives. Contrary to the initial general expectation of a short war, this fighting would actually last four long and wearisome years. As will be revealed below, the objectives formulated in 1914 were never achieved entirely during the war, just like the evolution of the conscription system since the *Tanzimat* could never be completed. However, this did not mean that the Ottoman mobilization effort in the Great War failed entirely, as it had to a great extent during the Balkan War. The Great War drove the process of reshaping Ottoman conscription practices. It was a process during which the objectives formulated at the beginning had to be constantly redefined and revised according to actual war conditions and the responses of those affected by them. Some objectives needed redefinition during the war, some had to be given up, and some entirely new ones emerged. It was a reshaping process for the mediating institutions which executed conscription at the social level, as well. Although the law for military service itself needed to be revised several times with various amendments as the need for manpower increased during the war, it remained in effect throughout the war without major changes.[53]

Conscription after the Declaration of Mobilization

The Ottoman general mobilization was declared on 2 August 1914, and the next day, 3 August, was declared the start of mobilization. The military order for mobilization required that all corps prepare for war.[54] When the

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[53] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 236.

[54] The mobilization order did not apply to the 7th Independent Corps in Arabia, the 21st Division in Asir and the 22nd Division in the Hijaz, where there was no established system of conscription. *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 225.

mobilization was declared, men born in 1891, 1892 and 1893 were already under arms. In addition, the mobilization program required drafting those born in the years 1875 through 1890 as the active reserve (*ihtiyât*)[55] men aged from 24 to 40. Then the men born in the years from 1868 through 1874, the territorial reserve (*müstahfiz*), men aged from 40 to 45, were also called up for service. In other words, when the mobilization was declared, eligible men aged 20 to 45 were required to join the armed forces.[56] But the initial age requirements for draft became insufficient to fill in the gaps in manpower in military units as the war continued and new arrangements were made in the following years. For example, the minimum draft age was lowered to 18 on 29 April 1915.[57] Then the maximum age for recruitment was increased to 50 on 20 March 1916.[58] Moreover, according to the regulations issued by the War Ministry for the implementation of the law, the duration of military service could also be extended indefinitely in the case of a mobilization until a special order was issued to determine when it would end.[59] In practice this meant that enlisted men would have to serve until the end of the war.[60]

The Ottoman General Staff believed that the empire had the potential to mobilize about two million men for service. This was about 10 percent of its total population, which was close to 23 million on the eve of the war.[61] According to one estimate, each age cohort consisted of about

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[55] According to the law for military service of 1914, there were 3 three terms of service for a draftee: beginning with the conscription, the first 2 years were for active army service (*nizâm*); then 16 years were for active reserve service (*ihtiyât*); and, finally, 7 more years for territorial reserve service (*müstahfiz*). The total period of service was 25 years. The two-year active army service was for the infantry; it varied for the gendarmerie and the navy; it was 3 years for the former, 5 years for the latter. However, according to the Article 6 of the law, active army services in all military classes could be extended in wartime, which actually happened during the Great War. "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 663.

[56] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 288; "45 Yaşına Kadar Olanların Hizmet-i Askeriye İle Mükellefiyetleri Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, p. 913.

[57] "16 Cemaziyelahir 1332 Tarihli Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatının 2, 3, 4, 5. Maddelerine Muaddel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, p. 589.

[58] "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriyenin 50 Yaşına kadar Temdîdi ve Teferruâtı hakkında Kanûn," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, p. 730.

[59] BOA, MV., 196/116, 9 Rebîulâhir 1333/24 February 1915.

[60] BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 15/24, 14 Şa'ban 1332/8 July 1914.

[61] Of these 23 million, around 17 million lived within the borders of present-day Turkey, more than 3 million in Syria and Palestine including Lebanon and Jordan, and about 2.5 million in present-day Iraq. Additionally, about 5.5 million lived in Yemen and Hijaz. See Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," p. 112. On the Ottoman population in 1914, also see Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, pp. 170–190; Vedat Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke*

90,000 men. The General Staff also calculated that about one million men were easily available for immediate recruitment in case of urgent need, and the mobile field army would have an effective strength of 460,000 drafted men and 14,500 officers. Additionally, there would be about 42,000 thousand men in mobile gendarmerie units. In total, the Ottoman Empire planned to deploy about 500,000 men in mobile operational units, and the remainder of mobilized troops would serve in fortress garrisons, coastal defenses and support the lines of communications and transportation.[62]

It is interesting that the initial stage of the Ottoman mobilization program, from 3 August to the expected date of completion on 25 September 1914, performed not at all badly in terms of gathering men. Due to the memory of catastrophic failure of the mobilization during the Balkan War and the fact that the post-Balkan War military reforms were quite fresh and untested, there were serious doubts that the Ottomans would be successful with another large-scale mobilization for war. Therefore, expectations were not high. But the numbers of recruited men surpassed all expectations soon after mobilization was declared.[63] This situation even drew the attention of foreign observers, as in the case of a British consular report from Edirne to Ambassador Louis Mallet in Istanbul on 12 September 1914, which stated that the mobilization effort in the province had been carried out "more rapidly and smoothly than was the case on the last occasion," namely during the Balkan War.[64] Another British consular report, from Tarabya (a Bosphorous neighborhood having where several European states' consulates had summer residences) dated 13 August 1914, noticed the same remarkable human dimension of the mobilization effort, but made a more careful and realistic observation about its lack of completeness in other respects: "although the existing Turkish army is said to be 'mobilised' this only applies to numbers of men and should not be accepted in the sense of the complete mobilisation of a European

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Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1994), p. 4.

62 *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, p. 182; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 7.

63 *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 288; *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol 1*, p. 226; *Ordre de Bataille of the Turkish Army*, corrected to August 16, 1915, Fifth Edition, Prepared at the Intelligence Department, General Staff, Cairo (Cairo: Government Press, 1915), p. 120; Baron Kress von Kressenstein, *Türklerle Beraber Süveyş Kanalına*, trans. Mazhar Besim Özalpsan (Istanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1943), p. 13; "Hükûmet-i Osmaniyenin Seferberliği," *İkdâm*, 14 Ağustos 1330/27 August 1914; "Seferberlik Esnasında," *Tanin*, 24 Eylül 1330/7 October 1914.

64 TNA: PRO FO 195–2456 (1914, Turkey, Pre-War).

army. For, horses, equipment, supplies and stores of all sorts are lacking, not to speak of the insufficiency of artillery."[65]

The response to the call to arms was obviously much better than it had been during the Balkan War. But it was not geographically uniform. It was better in western and central Anatolia and not so good in eastern Anatolia and the Arab provinces. The units in Yemen and Hijaz (almost the entire Arabian Peninsula) were never mobilized, and the need for men on the part of the XI, XII and XIII corps, which were stationed respectively in Mamuretülaziz (eastern Anatolia), Mosul and Baghdad, could not be fulfilled due to prevalence of draft evasion and desertion.[66]

While the availability of abundant drafted men initially caused much contentment among Ottoman authorities and even Sultan Mehmed Reşad V expressed gratitude on the "ardor and patriotism" coming from his people,[67] it paradoxically points to a sign of weakness in the Ottoman mobilization. The existing Ottoman military structure was not ready to absorb so many conscripts, as their number quickly exceeded the available capacity. Other than the problem of employing them in regular units which were already full, more serious problems arose, such as supplying them with enough food and clothes and providing them with necessary military equipment. The logistics of finding and also distributing enough supplies and materiel was a major and persistent problem of the Ottoman military throughout the war, and except for temporary mitigations, Ottoman authorities could never find a functional solution to it. The Ottoman army did not do well in terms of military material, and it also suffered terribly from poor service support.[68] Receiving masses of draftees within a short period of time placed enormous strain on the supplies of the Ottoman army.[69]

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[65] TNA: PRO FO 195–2459 (1914, Turkey, Pre-War).

[66] *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol 1*, p. 182.

[67] "İrâde-i Seniye Suretidir," *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 88 (August 1989), document no. 2124, pp. 3–4.

[68] The Ottoman army's supply and logistics problem during the First World War is still not well studied, despite its importance in understanding the Ottoman mobilization experience. This study will touch upon this problem from time to time, but its in-depth examination and grasping its details are outside the scope of this research. For a detailed account of the Ottoman army's logistics from an official military point of view written by the Turkish General Staff, see *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10: Birinci Dünya Harbi, İdari Faaliyetler ve Lojistik*. For a comprehensive study on this issue in the context of the Caucasus front, see Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesi'nin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*.

[69] *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol 1*, p. 226.

This crisis shows that the level of Ottoman preparedness and readiness for such a major mobilization was far from being satisfactory. Statistical records and calculations of the military were quite poor and even basic data were lacking, such as the total number of men potentially available for conscription, an estimated number of those who actually answered the call for service, the exact numbers of men the military units would require, and the amount of supplies needed for incoming drafted men.[70]

To cope with the military's inability to absorb large numbers of newly drafted men, Ottoman authorities resorted to two measures. Firstly, they formed depot battalions (*depo taburları*) to accommodate surplus drafted men, usually those over the age of 30.[71] The depot battalions would also serve as reinforcement units to supply regular units with men (and also animals) in case of a need; drafted men could thus be trained and kept ready for active service on the battlefield.[72] The depot battalions remained in use throughout the war. But even this measure did not suffice entirely. Therefore, as a second measure, older conscripts (mostly those over the age of 38 and untrained) among the surplus mobilized men were allowed by imperial decree to return home on the condition that they needed to be ready to rejoin the army at twenty-four hours' notice if necessary.[73]

Dealing with the problem supplying the newly enlisted men also entailed an improvised solution at the initial stage, though it was quite temporary and actually put the burden on the enlisted man himself. The mobilization order required that when departing for his military service, each conscript needed to bring staples such as bread, dried food stuff and sugar, sufficient to feed himself for five days.[74] Five days was the estimate of the time at the end of which an enlisted man would have arrived at his destined unit and begun receiving daily rations from the army. The enlisted men were also required to bring their own uniforms (at least appropriate clothes that could serve the function of uniforms) and good

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[70] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 289; Sâbis, *Harb Hatıralarım, vol. 1*, pp. 159–160.

[71] Larcher, *La Guerre Turque dans la Guerre Mondiale*, p. 66.

[72] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 289; Sâbis, *Harb Hatıralarım, vol. 1*, p. 160; *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol 1*, p. 224.

[73] "İrâde-i Seniye Suretidir," *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 88 (August 1989), document no. 2124, pp. 3–4.

[74] *1330* [*1914*] *Senesi Seferberlik Talîmâtnâmesi.*

shoes.[75] Evidently, local recruiting offices were not able to provide any supplies for newly enlisted men. The obligation of bringing enough food for five days was taken quite seriously by authorities and emphasized in every announcement of the mobilization order. Failing to do so would not only make a newly enlisted man suffer from hunger during his transfer to his unit, but it would also subject him to punishment.[76]

In a post-war military report dated 1921, a general evaluation of the Ottoman mobilization performance during the war, it is admitted that it was a mistake to call up all the active reserve and territorial reserve men for service right at the beginning of mobilization without adequate preparation to absorb them efficiently. Drafting these categories was also considered a mistake in an economical sense, since they were critically needed as economic labor force in agriculture.[77]

When we look at the numbers of recruits throughout the war, it becomes clearer that while the performance of the Ottoman Empire's conscription system could be regarded as not bad at the initial stage, this standard could not be maintained as the war became prolonged. The number of troops in the Ottoman army was 726,692 around the time when mobilization was declared (it was around 295,000 in 1913), and it climbed to 780,282 men by 25 September 1914. There were also about 100,000 conscripts in the non-combatant labor battalions (*amele taburları*), and additionally there were about 50,000 men in the depot battalions.[78]

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[75] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 160. The absence of uniforms and lack of standard clothing among Ottoman troops can be seen in photos of new Ottoman conscripts in the war years. For several examples of such photos, see *The Times History of the War*, vol. 3 (London: The Times Printing House Square, 1915), pp. 47, 50, 79. This important detail is usually missed in almost all recent Turkish movies about the First World War, which portray Ottoman troops in standardized, clean military uniforms from the first day they join the service. However, according to a report sent from the 17th Division commander in the Third Army Zone, more than half of the troops were still wearing civilian clothes even as late as mid-1915. See *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 1: Kafkas Cephesi, 3ncü Ordu Harekatı* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1993), Appendix 1.

[76] "Seferberlik İlânı," *İkdâm*, 21 Temmuz 1330/3 August 1914.

[77] "Tarih-i harb içün faideli bazı malumât," ATASE, BDH, Klasör 62, Dosya 309A, Fihrist 008-01.

[78] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 290; *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10*, p. 102; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 148.

According to the official Ottoman statistics, which are usually in the form of rounded numbers and reasonable estimates rather than empirical numbers, the total number of drafted men cumulatively increased to 1,478,176 by March 1915, and reached 1,943,720 by 14 July 1915. By March 1916 it increased to 2,493,000 and by March 1917 to 2,855,000.[79] In terms of individual yearly figures, the Ottoman General Staff's estimate of two million potential draftees always remained a distant possibility, while their more practical calculation of one million men easily available for mobilization was more or less realized, but only in 1915. The official Ottoman figures on the numbers of drafted men during the Great War, which were released in 1921, give the total numbers of men drafted as follows:

Table 2. Numbers of mobilized men in the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918[80]

Number of men already under arms when the war started (men whose dates of birth were 1891, 1892, 1893)	150,000
Number of men drafted during the war for active service (men whose dates of birth were 1894, 1895, 1896)	500,000
Number of men drafted during the war for active service (men whose date of birth was 1897)	100,000
Number of men drafted during the war for active service (men whose dates of birth were 1898, 1899)	180,000
Total number of men drafted for active service	930,000
Total number of active reserve (*ihtiyât*) and territorial reserve (*müstahfiz*) called up for service	1,920,000
Grand total of men mobilized	*2,850,000*

The recruitment performance of the Ottoman Empire steadily declined during the rest of the war and the Ottoman military had difficulty in keeping up with the attrition. At the Mudros Armistice of 30 October 1918, which ended the war for the Ottomans, the total number of men under arms in the Ottoman armed forces was about 560,000. See the following casualty figures which were officially issued by the War Ministry, also in 1921:

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[79] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol.10*, pp. 164–165; Shaw, The *Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 148.

[80] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 62, Dosya 309A, Fihrist 005. The same statistics were also published in the official military journal, *Askerî Mecmua*, no. 39–49 (May–June, 1338/1922), p. 88.

Table 3. Ottoman official casualty figures for the Great War, 1914–1918[81]

Dead	Died in combat	50,000
	Died after getting wounded	35,000
	Died from disease	240,000
	Total	325,000
Wounded deserters, pows, sick, missing		400,000
	(Ottoman official casualty statistics do not provide separate individual figures for these categories.)	1,565,000
	Total	2,290,000
Number of men under arms at the time of Armistice (30/10/1918)		560,000
	Grand total	2,850,000

On the other hand, the above figures do not present the whole picture, since they do not include the "volunteers" (including the Kurdish and Bedouin cavalry volunteers) who joined the Ottoman army during the war, whose total numbers, despite the lack of precise data on them, must have fluctuated around 80,000–100,000 (See Chapter 3).[82] So, grand total

[81] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 62, Dosya 309A, Fihrist 005. Obviously, these are rounded summary figures. The official military journal, *Askerî Mecmua*, published the same statistics, but also needed to explain that since the available statistical data and the compilation process were not complete at the date of publication, these figures could not be claimed as entirely accurate ("*çünkü vesâik noksan ve tedkikâtımız da nâtamamdır.*") See "Harbdeki İnsan Zâyiâtımız," *Askerî Mecmua*, no. 39–49 (May–June, 1338/1922), p. 88. It is clear that the number of combat dead (50,000) is quite low in this tabulation. And since then, though various—mostly incoherent—revisions were made, no definitive (and entirely satisfactory) tabulation of the Ottoman Great War casualty statistics have been issued by the Turkish General Staff's War History Department. It is always possible to find variations in various secondary sources. For example, Miralay (Colonel) Bâki, claiming that he also used the official casualty statistics compiled by the Turkish General Staff's War History Department (of which he was a deputy chief in the early 1930's), gives a fairly higher number for the total number of dead, which is 501,091. (This total number includes 112,473 combat dead). See Erkânıharp Miralay Bâki, *Yurt Müdafaası: Zabit ve Zabitlik*, third edition (Ankara: Köyhocası Matbaası, 1932), pp. 132–133. Recently, Edward Erickson has tried to reach a more detailed and consolidated tabulation by cross-examining all the available variations. See Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 243. However, his own statistical data can also be critically examined. For example, he gives a remarkably higher number for the total number of enlisted men left at the signing of the Mudros Armistice, which is 1,095,000. But his figure is probably the total number of all men who were theoretically under arms at this date. That is, his figure includes deserters and the missing.

[82] The total number of recruits in the Ottoman armed forces during the Great War also varies in secondary sources. For example, Ahmed Emin Yalman claimed that 2,998,321 men were enrolled in the army during the four years of war. See Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 252. A French officer-scholar M. Larcher, who claimed that he based his research

of those who joined the colors during the war can be rounded to approximately 3,000,000.[83]

The total number of men that the Ottoman Empire mobilized was close to 13 percent of its total population during the Great War. In fact, as can be seen in Table 4, this was not considerably lower than in other major European countries. It can be argued that the Ottomans did not do much worse than the other European powers during the war in terms of mobilizing men. Their situation can even seem a "success" relative to the poor performance of the Ottoman mobilization effort during the Balkan War.

However, general statistical figures should not overshadow the fact that the Ottoman effort to mobilize men for war suffered from some serious internal problems and insufficiencies. First of all, there was a remarkable lack of standardization with regard to the application of conscription. Some regions continued to remain outside of the Ottoman conscription

Table 4. Populations and total numbers of men mobilized in major European countries, 1914–1918[84]

Country	Population	Number of men mobilized	Percentage
Ottoman Empire	23,000,000	2,873,000	12.4
Germany	66,853,000	13,250,000	19.8
Austria-Hungary	51,390,000	7,800,000	15.1
France	39,600,000	8,410,000	21.2
Italy	35,845,000	5,615,000	15.6
Russia (–1917)	160,700,000	13,700,000	8.5

on the official Ottoman data, gave a figure of 2,850,000 men mobilized during the war. See Larcher, *La Guerre Turque dans la Guerre Mondiale*, p. 602. In Miralay Bâki's tabulation, it is given as 3,059,205. See Miralay Bâki, *Yurt Müdafaası*, p. 132. The most recent estimated total number is given by Edward Erickson as 2,873,000, which he has reached by cross-examining the existing statistical data published in the secondary literature. Erickson also breaks up the total figure into armed service classes: 2,608,000 in the army, 250,000 in the gendarmerie, 15,000 in the navy. See Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 243.

[83] It should also be added that there were, in total, about 25,000 German military personnel serving in the Ottoman armed forces during the four years of the war. See Wallach, *Bir Askeri Yardımın Anatomisi*, p. 248.

[84] *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 29, 15th edition, 1991, p. 987; Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 195; John Ellis and Michael Cox (eds.), *The World War I Databook: The Essential Facts and Figures for all the Combatants* (London: Aurum Press, 2001), p. 245; Sâbis, *Harb Hatıralarım, vol. 1*, pp. 69–70; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 243. There are slight variations in these statistical figures in different sources, but they are not to a significant extent.

system even when the system was reformed and reorganized in 1914. There were no recruiting offices in the zones of VII Corps in Yemen and in the zones of the 21st Independent Division in the Hijaz and the 22nd Independent Division in Asir. Their need for drafted men would be provided by other corps, mostly by the ones located in Anatolia. As mentioned above, VII Corps and the 21st and 22nd divisions were also excluded from the mobilization when it began on 2 August 1914. The inability of the Ottoman state to penetrate these regions and to form a modern demographic mechanism to make use of their human resources made the Ottoman conscription system dysfunctional both theoretically and practically in these regions from the beginning. In other words, the Arab-populated regions of the empire (excluding Syria and Iraq) were never integrated into the Ottoman conscription system. But this did not mean that the conscription system functioned smoothly in all of the other regions where the state announced that it had formed recruiting offices. For example, although the Kurdish-populated regions (mostly southeastern Anatolia and northern Iraq) were declared to have been within the conscription system, recruitment hardly worked in those areas where tribal structures were dominant and the state's demographic control mechanism was poor. As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, facing desperate infrastructural problems in those regions, the Ottoman state, instead of insisting on modern recruitment method on an individual basis, applied old imperial strategies such as offering concessions to tribal chiefs in the form of political status or money to get use of their manpower as voluntary tribal units similar to those formed in the era of Abdülhamid II.

On the other hand, it should also be noted here that the Ottoman state's criteria of exclusion and inclusion regarding conscription did not always depend only on its infrastructural capabilities. Political considerations played a role in shaping the state's preferences. For example, the Ottoman state's conscription policies in the Transjordan region (in the province of Syria) during the war excluded the districts of Salt and Karak (Ma'an) from conscription while including the district of 'Ajlun, regardless of their level of infrastructural development. The reason behind this arrangement was hesitancy on the part of the state, based on its memory of the extensive popular resistance to the Ottoman rule (especially its tax policies) in Karak in 1910 and fear that insistence on conscription would stir up new popular reactions which would be uncontrollable in wartime. Instead, the Ottoman state subjected these districts to economic mobilization rather than military service, and tried to get use of their labor force,

economy and agricultural products for the war effort.[85] Moreover, the mere existence of a relatively developed demographic mechanism also did not guarantee a successful recruitment. The reluctance of a politically-motivated local population towards conscription could also make quite difficult for the state to carry out an effective mobilization.[86]

The time it took for the Ottoman armed forces to get ready for war after the declaration of mobilization generally exceeded the planned timetable (See Table 5). Except for IV Corps, all corps needed more days than planned to complete their preparations. Some needed considerably more time than others, as in the cases of I Corps based in Istanbul and II Corps based in Edirne, though these regions were relatively more developed in terms of infrastructural power of the state. This shows that the existence of a power mechanism did not guarantee the implementation of mobilization within a desired period of time. It should also be reminded that the process of preparation also required making available military equipment, vehicles, animals and other necessary supplies, as well as drafting men; the delays were related to these factors as well. Regarding military equipment at the beginning of the war, the Ottoman armed forces were short of rifles, machine guns, field guns, and depended mainly on German and Austrian deliveries to fill these gaps.[87] And, despite the enactment of the law for the imposition of war taxes (*tekâlif-i harbiye*) on 27 June 1914, which included severe measures to confiscate all necessary means, vehicles and supplies in the hands of civilians at prices determined by the state, meeting such needs remained as a major challenge for Ottoman authorities throughout the war.[88] The Ottoman state constantly needed to

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[85] On the Ottoman policies in the Transjordan region during the Great War, see Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850–1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 218–240.

[86] Such was the case, for example, in the Hebron district in Palestine during the war. See Byron D. Cannon, "Local Demographic Patterns and Ottoman Military Conscription: A Preliminary Survey of the Hebron District in Palestine, 1914–1917," in Reeva S. Simon (ed.), *The Middle East and North Africa: Essays in Honor of J. C. Hurewitz* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), pp. 43–70.

[87] At the beginning of the war, the Ottoman armed forces were in need of 200 machine guns, more than 500 field guns, and about 200,000 Mauser rifles to complete their full preparation. See *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10*, p. 103; *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, pp. 190–191.

[88] "Tekâlif-i Harbiyenin Sûret-i Tarhı Hakkında Kanûn," 14 Temmuz 1330/27 June 1914, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, pp. 1011–1012; Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesi'nin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 37.

struggle with this issue during the war by passing new laws, introducing new institutions, and also dealing with the resistance coming from civilians whose possessions were confiscated.[89] It was a major issue where the state, politics and society intertwined; and the implementation process was undertaken by a joint effort of the CUP government, the military and local administrators.[90]

Table 5. Days planned to get Ottoman corps ready for war compared to actual days required to mobilize[91]

Corps and regional base of recruitment	Days planned	Actual days to mobilize
I Corps (Istanbul)	19	64
II Corps (Edirne)	15	40
III Corps (Tekirdağ, Gallipoli)	22	22
IV Corps (Balıkesir, İzmir)	27	27
V Corps (Ankara)	20	36
VI Corps (Aleppo)	Not available	Not available
VII Corps (Yemen)	Not available	Not available
VIII Corps (Damascus, Jerusalem)	26	36
IX Corps (Erzurum)	33	55
X Corps (Sivas, Samsun)	29	42
XI Corps (Hasankale, Mamuretülaziz)	30	42
XII Corps (Mosul)	23	31
XIII Corps (Baghdad)	Not available	Not available

[89] Since the Ottoman state was not able to establish a well-developed organizational structure for the application of war-tax imposition at the beginning of the war, lack of standardization from one region to another and the arbitrary decisions of local authorities fomented discontent. An effective control mechanism was also lacking, and this led to the problem of widespread black-market and speculation abuses in times of scarcity of goods, against which the state needed to take measures time and time again during the war, such as by establishing the Commission for the Prevention of Speculation (*Men-i İhtikâr Komisyonu*) in 1917. See Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi*, pp. 72–75. For a summary of the problems that emerged at the social level during the implementation of war tax impositions, see Cezmi Tezcan, "Tekâlif-i Harbiye ve Tekâlif-i Milliye Örneklerinde Savaş Dönemleri Mâli Politikaları" (Ph.d. dissertation, Ankara University, 2005), pp. 62–80.

[90] Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 103, 110, 150.

[91] *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, p. 231; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 41.

Implementing Conscription at the Local Level

The basic institutional units of the Ottoman conscription system at the local level were recruiting offices (*ahz-ı asker şubeleri*). The basic function of recruiting offices was to carry out the recruitment procedures in their localities, and their origin went as far back as the emergence of a modern conscription system in the Ottoman Empire. However, they were greatly reorganized and their powers were increased with the coming of the new law for military service of 12 May 1914.[92] And, more importantly, they went through a process of reshaping throughout the war years in response to the actual war conditions. Their function and efficiency intensified during the war, evolving into a social control mechanism. In fact, during the Great War, they were the most visible and efficient state organization at the local level, where the people encountered the state most directly and by which the state tried to permeate more deeply into society. In a sense, they functioned as manifestations of state power at the local level.

The post-Balkan defeat military reforms also affected the recruiting offices. They were reorganized and their procedures were revised by the Regulation for the General Organization of the Military of 1913.[93] As a first step, the organized reserve units system (*redif*), which had been established in the mid-nineteenth century based on the German *Landwehr* model as a regional reserve force, was abolished, since it had become dysfunctional over time and an obstruction to creating an efficient mobile army.[94] It was replaced by regular army units which would remain on active duty in peacetime too.[95] But a more important step concerned recruitment itself: the previous method of drafting men on a "national basis" (*usûl-ı millî*) was replaced by a new method of conscription on a

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92 BOA, DH.İD., 219/2, 25 Şevval 1332/16 September 1914.

93 *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6* (*1908–1920*) (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1971), pp. 199–224.

94 On the *redif* sytem, see Musa Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Döneminde Anadolu Kentlerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapıları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1991), pp. 61, 316; Musa Çadırcı, "Redif Askeri Teşkilatı," in Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye: Askerlik*, pp. 41–63.

95 "Under the new Ottoman system, many men remained as reserves, but they were called up as individuals, not as members of organized reserve units, and were entered into vacancies in the regular active army units when these were built up to full wartime strength in times of mobilization and war." Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 116.

regional basis (*usûl-ı mıntıkavî*).[96] That is to say, instead of regarding the whole country as a single manpower pool for all the corps, the country was now divided into separate manpower pools according to the corps' zones. In the new method, each recruitment region would provide drafted men only for the corps located in that particular region. The method of drafting men on a countrywide basis had suffered significant failure during the Balkan War.[97]

The major reason for this change of method was the infrastructural insufficiencies of the Ottoman state. It was hoped that recruitment on a regional basis, namely dealing with mobilizing men within separate specified zones, would diminish the setbacks caused by infrastructural problems such as lack of countrywide working demographic records, control mechanisms, an efficient system of transportation and communications.[98] The regional method of recruitment would not only make conscription procedures easier in peacetime, but it would also expedite the mobilization of a particular army corps by supplying it with drafted men from its own region.[99] In fact, the new method of regional recruitment seems to have been quite effective, considering the initial performance of the Ottoman mobilization in August 1914. But, though it remained as the desired method during the war and contributed to the mobility of the armed forces, various changes took place as the war progressed. The regional bases did not remain unchanged under actual war conditions, and drafted men were sent as individuals or in levies to whatever units needed them the most.[100]

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[96] Behic, *Mükelleftyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, pp. 11–12; *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, pp. 287–288.

[97] Behic, *Mükelleftyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 8.

[98] Although Abdülhamid II gave importance to building railways and telegraph lines, and the CUP government tried to continue this attempt, the Ottoman transportation and communication network remained poor in the war. The total area of the empire was about 2 million square kilometers, but it had fewer than 6,000 kilometers of railway lines. Eastern Anatolia did not have any railway lines, though it was an important war zone. Moreover, in 1914 railways did not yet link Anatolia to Syria and Mesopotamia. Tunnels in the Taurus Mountains in southern Anatolia were only completed in 1917. The existing roads were poor too, and transport was usually done by draught animals. For example, the march of the 37th Division from Baghdad to Erzurum lasted 65 days. The network of telegraph lines was relatively better, but it was still limited in terms of a modern communication system. Pamuk, "The Ottoman Economy in World War I," pp. 115–116; Mahmut Boğuşlu, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Savaşları* (Istanbul: Kastaş Yayınları, 1990), p. 44.

[99] Behic, *Mükelleftyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 13.

[100] Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 9.

Secondly, the reorganization of recruiting offices was based on the corps structure of the Ottoman army. Each recruitment zone was put under the control of the army corps located in that particular zone. Each army corps was divided into divisional recruiting-office sectors according to the number of divisions which that particular corps had. Then, each divisional recruiting office sector was divided into recruiting offices (recruiting office branches), which were the actual units that executed the conscription at local levels. They were established mainly in districts.[101] In consequence, the country was divided into 12 recruiting-office zones (*ahz-ı asker dâiresi*), the zones into 35 divisional recruiting-office sectors (*ahz-ı asker kalemi*), and the sectors into 362 recruiting-office branches (*ahz-ı asker şubesi*).[102]

The declaration of mobilization on 2 August 1914 assigned a critical role and significant amount of authority to the recruiting offices. They were the main units which were supposed to manage the human dimension of mobilization during the war. A recruiting office was a military institution in its structure, but in its actual working it drew upon civilian and religious authorities and notables in its locality. The actual conscription procedure in a locality (usually a district) was carried out not by the recruiting office branch alone, but under the supervision of a conscription council (*ahz-ı asker meclisi*) which was formed at the initiative of the recruiting office. According to the law for military service, the conscription council in a locality normally consisted of the most important civil official of that locality (who acted as the chairman of the council), the chief of the recruiting-office branch, the local mufti along with the heads of non-Muslim communities of the locality. The council also included the finance officer, and two members from among those elected to the municipal council (*belediye meclisi*) and the administrative council (*idâre meclisi*). The local census official was also required to be present when his opinion was needed concerning procedure.[103] The conscription council was to oversee the presence of all males of military age in its locality, their

[101] Article 10, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 663.

[102] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 210; Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 13. But, as has been mentioned before, the VII Corps in Yemen, and the divisions in the Hijaz and Asir, where there was no infrastructural base for conscription, were not included into this reorganization. For the complete list of recruiting offices in the Ottoman Empire in the Great War, see *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, appendix 8.

[103] Article 23, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 666; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 159.

medical examination, and the assignment of draftees to the army, navy and gendarmerie. Decisions such as who was medically unfit for military service, who was fit for armed and unarmed service, and who was assigned to which military category were to be made by the conscription council.

While the recruiting office undertook the permanent procedures of the conscription system and represented the military authority in its locality, the completion of the actual draft process was executed by the conscription council. In this way, the recruitment process included all authorities and important personages (military, civilian, religious, notable) in a particular locality. It can be argued that this "collectivity" of authorities in a local setting served to increase the legitimacy of the conscription system. By involving all key military, civilian and religious figures who were obeyed and respected in a particular locality, this process also functioned to make military service more unquestionable in the eye of the public. It can also be asserted that the inclusion of local religious representatives made the legal compulsion aspect of the process smoother and contributed to the justification of military service in religious terms.

During the war years, recruiting offices practically became the major authority at local levels, controlling social life. They not only supervised the calling-up process, but also acted as a law enforcement unit in collaboration with the gendarmerie to pursue and capture draft-evaders and deserters. All draftees who returned to their hometowns on leaves of absence had to regularly report to their recruiting offices. But perhaps more importantly, under war conditions, the recruiting offices were also assigned tasks concerning other aspects of life. For example, as the increasing lack of manpower affected agriculture negatively during the war, heads of recruiting offices were also held responsible, in collaboration with civil officials, for mobilizing the available undrafted people in their localities who were capable of working to cultivate the fields of those under arms.[104]

Moreover, the recruiting offices kept detailed demographic records of potential draftees in their localities during the war. Such records included more information than the religion or age of potential draftees. The available evidence published by the Turkish General Staff's official war history suggests that they also categorized people according to their ethnic origins. For example, the data provided by the recruiting offices throughout the empire on 14 April 1915 about the potential draftees who were born in

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[104] *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1*, p. 193.

Table 6. Numbers of Turkish and non-Turkish potential draftees (born in 1890–1893) on 14 April 1915[105]

Corps' zones	Turks	Non-Turks
I Corps (Istanbul)	7,542	855
II Corps (Edirne)	205	243
III Corps (Tekirdağ/Gallipoli)	2,662	1,170
IV Corps (Balıkesir/İzmir)	5,838	1,106
V Corps (Ankara)	3,000	–
VI Corps (Aleppo)	7,821	1,164

the years from 1890 to 1893 (1306–1309) divided them into two categories as "Turks" and "non-Turks" (*Türk ve Türk olmayan*). As given in Table 6, the data showed the numbers of Turks and non-Turks potential draftees according to the six army corps' zones.

This example suggests that the demographic records kept by the recruiting offices also had ethnic content. In fact, this situation was in line with the CUP government's general demographic policies during the Great War. As Fuat Dündar has argued, the CUP government became increasingly Turkist/nationalist during the war and wanted to document the population not only on the basis of religion, which the Ottoman demographic registers had traditionally already recorded, but also on the basis of ethnicity. These ethnically categorized demographic records served to guide the CUP government's policies of Turkification and Islamization of Anatolia ("an ethnicity engineering," in Dündar's words), which resorted to various methods such as forced migration, deportation and organized violence through armed bands against non-Muslim and non-Turkish communities, culminating in the deportation and destruction of the Anatolian Armenians in 1915.[106]

However, ethnic categorization of potential draftees might also have been done to serve a more practical purpose, though it was still related to the general nationalist mentality of the period which was characterized by an increasing distrust towards non-Turkish inhabitants of the empire. It has been frequently observed that even in the age of modern universal conscription, the Anatolian Muslim peasants always constituted the backbone of the Ottoman army, and of them most were Turkish by

[105] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10*, p. 207.
[106] Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi*, pp. 150–173.

ethnicity.[107] This situation continued throughout the Great War, though the recruitment effort tried use of all elements in the empire for pragmatic reasons. But, as will be discussed in more detail below, the distrust factor produced a dual category of military service in the Ottoman conscription system: "armed service" and "unarmed service." While the former was filled by trusted elements in the Empire (Turks and most Muslims), distrusted elements were assigned to the latter, which were mainly assigned to manual labor and construction projects. Religiously and ethnically categorized demographic records must have helped enable this discrimination.

The Muhtar

On the other hand, the execution of mobilization also depended on the key role of another civilian administrator at the village and neighborhood level. The conscription regulations that were put into effect in 1914 also increased the functions and authority of the village/neighborhood headmen (*muhtar*) during wartime. The *muhtar* became the manifestation of state authority at the most local level.[108] Recruiting offices carried out recruitment procedures at the district level, but it was the *muhtar* who actually supervised the recording and gathering of men called up for service. He was the authority responsible for demographic control in his village or neighborhood and for providing the basic data needed by the recruiting-office branch. The *muhtar* was also responsible for ensuring that the men in his village or neighborhood who were called up for service complied with this call and went to the recruiting office for enlistment. Moreover, the *muhtar* was the authority who provided documents of witness (*şehâdetnâme*) for those who were liable for conscription but requested exemption because of injuries or illnesses; it was only by having such documents that these people could be excused from appearing

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[107] Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. xv–xvi; Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 91. Hakan Erdem argues that the "domination" of the Turkish element in the Ottoman central army began during the military reforms of Mahmud II, and this element was preferred as the most trusted in the attempt to make the state more centralized and to subject, for example, "peripheral" Arab provinces to the centralization process. See Erdem, "Recruitment for the 'Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad.'"

[108] Despite the key administrative role the *muhtar* had played at the local level, there is still no detailed and in-depth study on the subject. For a historical survey of the evolution of the *muhtar* institution after the *Tanzimat*, see Musa Çadırcı, "Türkiye'de Muhtarlık Teşkilatının Kurulması Üzerine Bir Deneme," *Belleten*, vol. 34, no. 135 (1970), pp. 409–420; Musa Çadırcı, "Türkiye'de Muhtarlık Kurumunun Tarihi Gelişimi," *TODAİE Çağdaş Yerel Yönetimler*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1993), pp. 3–11.

before the conscription council.[109] The *muhtar* was the key civilian authority in announcing and implementing the mobilization order at the most local level and he was supposed to work in collaboration with the gendarmerie in ensuring that his neighbors complied with that order. Moreover, authorities also expected notables and influential people of a village and a neighborhood to help the *muhtar* in announcing the mobilization order and carrying out the recruitment procedure.[110] The function of the *muhtar* represented the blurring of the line between the civilian and military authorities when mobilization was concerned.

The *muhtar* was supposed to be the "gaze" of the state in its smallest administrative unit. For example, according to Article 100 of the law for military service, every village or neighborhood *muhtar* was held responsible for providing information to the recruiting office about strangers coming to his village or neighborhood.[111] The war tax impositions (*tekâlif-i harbiye*) procedure was depended on the key function of the *muhtar* at the village level. Orders for requisitioning were issued by the local military commander and sent on down through the chain of command to district governors (*kaymakam*s) and *muhtar*s who did the actual collecting.[112]

The Problem of Equality

The efforts that were made in 1914 to minimize exemptions and to extend the military service obligation to all elements of Ottoman society were interpreted by both contemporary observers and some recent historians as an effort to put the principle of Ottoman equality into practice, to realize the idea of Ottomanism. Some even claimed that these efforts finally actualized the Ottoman Constitution of 1876,[113] Article 17 of which had stipulated that all Ottomans, regardless of religion and sect, were equal in terms of legal rights and obligations before the law.[114] However, such a perspective of equality could not be found in the law for military service of 1914, nor in the mobilization regulations and practice. It is hard

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[109] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 160.

[110] ("*Eşrâf-ı mahallât ve ahâlî üzerinde nüfuzu olan eşhâs . . .*"), "330 senesi Seferberlik Tertibâtı," ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3963, Dosya 1, Fihrist 005-9, 10, 11.

[111] Article 100, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 693.

[112] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 288.

[113] For example, see *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 232.

[114] Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük (eds.), *Türk Anayasa Metinleri: Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüze*, revised third edition (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), p. 38.

to discern such a language of equality, let alone the practice, even in propaganda discourses accompanying the mobilization. Regarding the inclusion of different religious and ethnic elements of the empire into the conscription system and their treatment, the CUP's perspective and practice were discriminatory from the beginning, though the intensity of this discrimination was more cautious and ambiguous in 1914 and increased as the war progressed. That perspective was never based on equality and always characterized by deep distrust. What it was based on was rather an understanding of Ottoman unity which was built upon pragmatism. A pragmatic Ottoman perspective of unity should not be confused with an understanding of constitutional Ottoman equality. The latter was lacking in the war years and increasingly replaced by a nationalist imperial vision which tended to give priority and dominance to the Turkish-Muslim factor. Of course, the CUP's mobilization effort wished to include and use of all constituents of the empire. But this wish accompanied a tendency to thwart as much as possible any political expectations and demands of dialogue with the state which emerged on the part of the same constituents in return for their participation in the mobilization effort. The service of even the most distrusted elements could be accepted by the CUP government as long as that service took place in the way defined by the CUP government itself and as long as it did not produce any political expectations on the part of those serving. The CUP's perspective of mobilization desired to see a population the members of which would act as fellow players of the empire when they were needed to contribute to the mobilization effort and would at the same time unquestionably submit to the same mobilization process under the dominance of the CUP government's monist-nationalist power.

Inclusion and Exclusion

First of all, it should be said that, when it came to recruitment, some elements in Ottoman society were regarded as more unwelcome than others. By a decision of the Council of Ministers (*Meclis-i Vükelâ*) on 23 December 1914, the Yezidis, an ethnically Kurdish and religiously heterodox community living in northern Iraq and southeastern Anatolia, were entirely absolved of the military-service obligation. The decision declared that it would be "harmful to conscript the Yezidis in the Imperial Army," and required every eligible Yezidi men to pay a certain amount of money instead of fulfilling military service. This payment was defined not as an exemption fee (*bedel-i nakdî*), but as a "war donation" (*iâne-i harbiye*),

because only those who were legally obliged to serve in the military were entitled to pay an exemption fee.[115]

In fact, the Ottoman state had attempted to include the Yezidis into the conscription system several times in previous periods, but each time the Yezidis showed deep reluctance, justifying their resistance on religious grounds. While the Yezidis never considered themselves Muslims, the Ottoman state always tried to impose a Muslim identity upon them, regarding them only a "deviant" community whose false belief needed to be corrected. Therefore the state never recognized them as a separate religious community (*millet*) or even as a sect; they had been denied various exemptions from military service such as paying tax exemption, which were officially granted to non-Muslim communities in the empire.[116] A major attempt to bring the Yezidis into obligatory military service was made in 1872 when Midhat Pasha was the governor of Baghdad, but the Yezidis objected to this decision by preparing a petition signed by their religious leaders, claiming that military service was against their religious faith. In fact, underneath this religious faith excuse was the fear that if they were conscripted they thought they would be converted in the army, and lose their distinct and relatively autonomous lifestyle vis-à-vis the centralizing state power.[117] Their exemption from military service was lifted again in 1885 and another major attempt to draft them in the military came in 1891. This attempt was part of the Hamidian state's effort to integrate the Yezidis into the mainstream population and expose them to "the Ottomanized Şeriat," which involved converting them to Hanefi Islam.[118] However, this and similar attempts by the state in later years also faced the same kind of resistance by the Yezidi leaders.[119]

This traditional reluctance on the part of the Yezidis seems to have engendered a deep distrust on the part of the CUP government at the

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[115] ("*Yezidilerin ordu-yu hümayuna alınmalarının mahzurlu olacağı . . .*"), BOA, DH.ŞFR., 48/158, 8 Safer 1333/26 December 1914; Bayur, *Türk İnkılâbı Tarihi, vol. 3, part 1*, p. 435; Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, pp. 168–169.

[116] Edip Gölbaşı, "The Yezidis and the Ottoman State: Modern Power, Military Conscription, and Conversion Policies, 1830–1909" (MA thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2008), p. 3. The writer estimates that (p. 36) the total population of the Yezidis in the late the nineteenth and early twentieth century varied between 55,000 and 65,000. This estimate may be low, since there were also nomadic Yezidi groups.

[117] Ibid., pp. 79–80.

[118] Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 68–70.

[119] John S. Guest, *The Yezidis: A Study in Survival* (London and New York: KPI, 1987), pp. 117, 126–127, 133; Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, p. 70.

beginning of the Great War. As a result, this ethnic-religious community of the empire was entirely discarded from the Ottoman conscription system. However, it should also be noted that the practice apparently was not as strict as this decision implies. In a telegram from the Interior Ministry to the province of Mosul on 13 February 1915 about the implementation of the decision that excluded the Yezidis from the mobilization, it was said in a pragmatic tone that the complete exclusion of the Yezidis from the mobilization would constitute a bad example for other ethnic-religious groups. Therefore, it was proposed in the telegram that instead of a complete exclusion, the war-donation option should have only been given to those Yezidis who were older than the active-service age, namely those within the reserve categories. While the telegram did not describe exactly what procedure would be applied to those within the age of active service, it left the door open, in practice, to their recruitment in case of a need.[120]

In fact, while the decision to exclude the Yezidis from the mobilization can appear to have been an isolated case which had no permanent legal regulation and was carried out by an ad hoc verdict, it is still hard to say that the Ottoman legal perspective regarding conscription was based on the idea of equality. The Temporary Law for Military Service, which was issued on 12 May 1914 with a general aim to overcome the incomplete character of all conscription laws passed before and to make military service compulsory for all Ottoman subjects, included certain ambiguities that could in practice easily be interpreted in a discriminatory way. Article 34 of the law divided active military service into two categories as "armed service" (*silahlı hizmet*) and "unarmed service" (*silahsız hizmet*). In other words, while some drafted men would be regarded as "normal" soldiers who were able to bear arms, others would be denied arms and instead employed in units which would mostly fulfill menial tasks behind the front lines. However, while this division might seem to be a neutral procedure that could be found in any army, the Ottoman conscription law almost deliberately left two points ambiguous: first, it did not specify exactly who would be registered in the armed category and who in the unarmed. No clear criteria were stated in this regard. The law was much more specific on the procedures concerning medically unfit men who had physical problems or illnesses that could prevent them from carrying out active service. If a man of military age had a temporary disability or illness, which was to be decided after an examination by the

[120] ("*Bu muamele akvâm-ı saire nezdinde su'-i misal teşkil edeceğinden…*"), BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/262, 28 Rabiülevvel 1333/13 February 1915.

conscription council, he could be given one year postponement, at the end of which he would again need to show up at his recruiting office. If he had a permanent disability or physical problem that would make him entirely unable to carry out his service, he would be categorized as unfit for duty by the same examination procedure (articles 34, 48). But no such clear procedures were defined for the unarmed service category. There are some implications in explanatory texts about the law that the division might have essentially been based on physical condition of a drafted man, such as having a minor bodily problem which would prevent his fulfilling active combat service but which would not hinder his doing manual jobs. There are also implications that the assignment to unarmed service could be made according to the profession and artisanal skills of enlisted men, such as medical personnel being assigned to the medical corps and the literate assigned to scribal posts in military units.[121] But these were interpretations in commentaries and not in the law itself. Second, the law did not specify either what exactly unarmed service would be about. In practice, unarmed service became synonymous with hard labor and, more specifically, with labor battalions. It is interesting that, even descriptive booklets which were published in the first year of the war to provide brief and practical explanations for all eligible about the requirements of the Temporary Law for Military Service and mobilization procedures, did not clear these ambiguities.[122]

The Labor Battalions

Forming labor-based military units was not an entirely new phenomenon in the Ottoman army. There were similar battalions called "service battalions" (*hizmet taburları*) which had been formed during the Balkan War.[123] Nor was it unique to the Ottoman army. A large number of recruits from India were assigned to the labor and porter corps used in Iraq by the British army in its invasion of the region in the Great War. These labor units, which were pejoratively called "coolie" corps, also included prisoners.[124]

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[121] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, pp. 52, 188.

[122] See, for example, the above-cited works, Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*; Tarık Tevfik, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûnu*.

[123] Zekeriya Özdemir, "I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Amele Taburları" (MA thesis, Gazi Üniversitesi, 1994), p. 32.

[124] See Radhika Singha, "Finding Labor from India for the War in Iraq: The Jail Porter and Labor Corps, 1916–1920," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 49, no. 2 (April 2007), pp. 412–445.

Originally labor units in the Ottoman army were manned mainly by men too old or young to serve in the army, by wounded or injured soldiers who became unfit for combatant posts on the battlefield, and by older drafted men who were assigned to active reserve or territorial reserve units.[125] Elderly individual volunteers were also employed by the labor battalions.[126] But during the Great War, the labor battalions were manned overwhelmingly by non-Muslim Ottoman enlisted men regarded as "untrustworthy" to bear arms, regardless of age or physical condition. In this sense, the labor battalions not only functioned to carry out useful manual works, but they also acted as a means of controlling "unreliable" conscripts in the army.

By a decision of the Ottoman military authorities, non-Muslim drafted men were mostly assigned to the "unarmed service" category, even if they were physically fit for "armed service." Those who were registered in the unarmed category were almost entirely deployed in the labor battalions. This was so even before the Ottomans formally entered the war. In other words, distrust of and discrimination against non-Muslims were already evident on the eve of the war. In an order of the War Ministry issued on 3 August 1914, it was explicitly stated that "the labor battalions shall consist as far as possible of non-Muslims."[127] Similarly, in a telegram from the Interior Ministry to the provincial units on 11 August 1914, the decision of the War Ministry about assigning non-Muslim enlisted men to manual tasks in road construction was cited and then local administrators were requested to decide in coordination with local military commanders about on which roads these men would be put to work.[128]

The fact that the tendency to disarm non-Muslim drafted men and put them in labor battalions even before the Ottoman Empire entered the war can also be seen in foreign consulates' reports. For example, a British consular report from Erzurum on 14 October 1914 stated that "in the

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[125] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 341.

[126] Abdullah Fevzi Efendi, who was a medrese teacher in his mid-thirties from Konya, was such an example. He volunteered for the army when the Great War began and, according to his eyewitness account, he was initially employed in a labor battalion in the Istanbul region. But when more men were needed on the fronts (especially on the Dardanelles front) in 1915, those laborers who could be "useful" on the front were selected and transferred (including himself) to the Dardanelles. There he soon became a prayer leader of a battalion (*tabur imamı*). See Abdullah Fevzi Efendi, *Çanakkale Cephesinde Bir Müderris*, edited by Ali Osman Koçkuzu (Istanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 2010), p. 127.

[127] ("*Amele Taburlarının mümkün mertebe, en çok gayrimüslerinden teşkil edileceği . . .*"), cited in Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," p. 31.

[128] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 43/214, 28 Temmuz 1330/11 August 1914.

last two or three weeks many Armenian soldiers" in the region had been "permanently disarmed and put to spade work."[129] On the other hand, the masses of non-Muslim enlisted men in the labor battalions were enlarged at certain moments during the war. For example, after the defeat in Sarıkamış on the Caucasus front, where Ottoman authorities claimed that that the Armenians acted in collaboration with the Russians, the acting commander in chief, Enver Pasha, issued an order to all military units on 25 February 1915, instructing that "Armenians shall strictly not be employed in mobile armies, in mobile and stationary gendarmeries, or in any armed service."[130] Many Armenian recruits in the Ottoman army were assigned to the labor battalions after this order.

However, as in the case of many orders given and decisions made by Ottoman authorities during the war, the application of this order was characterized by incompleteness and exceptions; its implementation was not standard. Not only after this order, but also after the Armenian population was deported from Anatolia and exposed to mass killings, there were still Armenian soldiers serving under arms in various places. For example, there were Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army fighting with arms on the Sinai-Palestine front as late as spring 1916.[131] In fact, it can be argued that whereas the existence of such exceptions implies the limits of the Ottoman power in executing its decisions, it could also reflected the desire of that same power since it was congruent with Ottoman pragmatism during the war. If some elements of an ethnic-religious group could provide contribution for the Ottoman mobilization effort in the way defined by the Ottoman state, Ottoman authorities did not hesitate to utilize it even when they expressed open aggression towards that group in general. For example, since the Ottoman army suffered from insufficient medical personnel, no non-Muslim military doctors were assigned to the labor battalions; they were always kept in regular combat units.[132] While their personnel were overwhelmingly non-Muslim, many labor battalions themselves did not have military doctors.[133]

Not all non-Muslims in the labor battalions were Ottoman Greek and Armenian; there were also non-Muslims from smaller communities, such

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[129] TNA: PRO FO 195-2460 (1914, Turkey on the Eve of the War).

[130] Kamuran Gürün, *The Armenian File: The Myth of Innocence Exposed* (Nicosia: Rustem, 2001), p. 206.

[131] Zürcher, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Amele Taburları," p. 211.

[132] Cengiz Mutlu, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Amele Taburları, 1914–1918* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür Sanat Yayıncılık, 2007), p. 159.

[133] Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," pp. 120–121, 132, 135.

as the Assyrians (*Süryânî*), though they were much fewer.[134] Nor did the labor battalions include only non-Muslims. Muslim recruits were also employed in them. But these Muslim enlisted men were usually the ones who were too old or regarded as not entirely fit physically or useful for armed service. The labor battalions also included Muslims released from prisons to contribute to the mobilization effort.[135] Moreover, the deserters who were caught could also be assigned to the labor battalions as some sort of punishment.

The average age of Muslim men in the labor battalions was usually much higher than that of non-Muslims.[136] The labor battalions were usually commanded by retired army officers who were called back to service because of the war or by conscripted reserve officers (both groups were, of course, Muslim). Terms of service were not limited during the war, but draftees were generally kept in the labor battalions for a minimum of three years.[137] The main tasks undertaken by the labor battalions during the war consisted mainly of working on the construction and maintenance of roads and railroads, in the construction of fortified posts, the transportation of men and material to the fronts and helping carry out agricultural tasks.[138]

Separate labor battalions were organized in each army district of the empire and they were usually given the names of the locality where they were organized. But they were not static units, and they could be transferred to any region of the empire whenever needed.[139] There were 90 labor battalions at the time of mobilization, and each battalion was intended to include around 1,200 men. Totally, there were approximately 100,000 men employed in them in 1914.[140] There are no precise data available about the total number of men employed in the labor battalions during the four years of the war. However, while the recruitment proceeded much

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134 Ibid., p. 56.

135 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 341.

136 Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," pp. 32, 92.

137 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 342.

138 Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," p. 32. They were also used in many other menial tasks, such as the collection of garbage. The labor battalion in Palestine was assigned to this task, and the locals pejoratively called it as "the Garbage Battalion" (*taboor al zabbaleh*). See Salim Tabari (ed.), *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 101, 106–107.

139 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 345; Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," p. 31.

140 Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," pp. 21–22, 33.

more slowly after the initial stage of the mobilization and the battalions suffered from man shortages during the war,[141] it can be estimated that the total number fluctuated around or may have even exceeded 100,000, considering the fact that the War Ministry decided to form 50 more labor battalions in 1915.[142]

Table 7 gives a general idea about the composition of the labor battalions. According to such factors as locality, availability of men or requirement of the work, the total number of men and the ratios of different ethnic/religious groups in a particular labor battalion could be much higher or lower. But one constant characteristic of all of them throughout the empire was that the total number of non-Muslims employed in a labor battalion was always much higher than that of Muslims.[143]

Table 7. The labor battalions of the First Army (26 July 1915–28 August 1915)[144]

Name	Locality	Muslims	Greeks	Jews	Armenian	Total
In European part						
1st Lüleburgaz Labor Battalion	Lüleburgaz	181	2586	263	143	3173
1st Çorlu Labor Battalion	Ayazma	80	890	9	43	1022
3rd Çorlu Labor Battalion	Çorlu	681	1986	111	306	3084
Bolu Labor Battalion	Bahçeköy	182	198	2	872	1254
Makriköy Labor Battalion	–	525	1683	250	1652	4220
Makriköy Labor Battalion	Zincirlikuyu	216	482	18	345	1061
Pınarhisar Labor Detachment	Pınarhisar	8	535	13	7	563
Demirköy Labor Detachment	Demirköy	–	227	24	9	260
Demirköy Labor Detachment	Demirköy	–	160	–	–	160
In Asian part						
1st Adapazarı Labor Battalion	İzmit	128	481	8	782	1399
2nd Adapazarı Labor Battalion	İzmit	100	395	7	331	833
Sarıyer Labor Battalion	İzmit (Solaklar)	298	99	-	198	595
Makriköy Labor Battalion	İzmit	500	500	-	400	1400
İzmit Labor Battalion	İzmit	79	472	8	722	1281
3rd Adapazarı Labor Battalion	Sapanca	149	274	7	277	707
Balâ Labor Battalion	Samanderesi	1064	611	121	631	2427
Sülle Labor Battalion	Doğançay	200	350	–	600	1150
Karamürsel Labor Battalion	Değirmendere	220	–	430	–	650
Karamürsel Labor Battalion	Adapazarı	200	–	400	–	600

141 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 345.
142 Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," p. 63.
143 Ibid., pp. 49–55.
144 Ibid., pp. 48–49 (some calculation mistakes in the original source have been corrected here).

The labor battalions in the Ottoman army were characterized by notoriously poor living and working conditions. One of the major problems from which the labor battalions suffered throughout the war was poor accommodation, supplies and equipment.[145] For example, the Venezuelan soldier Rafael de Nogales, who served in the Ottoman army during the Great War as a soldier of fortune, reported in his memoirs that during a visit with an Ottoman officer-inspector to the road construction in Islahiye (a district of Adana) which was carried out by three or four labor battalions composing almost wholly Armenians and Ottoman Greeks in September 1915, he observed that many soldier-laborers severely suffered from and died of famine while their Ottoman officers stole the rations and salary allocated for them.[146] While poor food and clothing were actually a general problem in the Ottoman army on almost all fronts and constituted one of the main problems for desertions (see Chapter 5), the situation was much worse in the labor battalions. Moreover, the treatment of soldier-laborers in the labor battalions was generally bad. In addition, documents also report that some labor units were attacked by brigands in some regions, as in Nusaybin (a district of Diyarbekir) in 1917.[147] Such notorious aspects of the labor battalions, which became known from the experiences of early draftees and were circulated among communities from mouth to mouth,[148] intimidated potential draftees and created an extra motive among reluctant non-Muslims for evading military service.[149] Because of such problems, desertions from the labor battalions were frequent;[150] and though non-Muslims constituted the majority, Turkish soldiers-laborers also deserted.[151] Cases of desertions sometimes took a violent form and constituted a kind of minor rebellion in a battalion, as in the case of the labor battalion of Urfa, where Armenian soldiers-laborers

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[145] Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005), p. 229; Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," p. 127.

[146] Rafael de Nogales, *Four Years beneath the Crescent*, trans. Muna Lee (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1926), pp. 176–177.

[147] *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 84 (March 1984), document no. 1982, p. 63.

[148] Sotiriou, *Farewell to Anatolia*, pp. 70–71.

[149] For example, this point is wittily explained in the memoirs of an Ottoman Greek. See Haris Spataris, *"Biz İstanbullular Böyleyiz": Fener'den Anılar, 1906–1922*, trans. İro Kaplangı (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), p. 147.

[150] BOA, DH.EUM.6.ŞB., 44/32, 7 Şa'ban 1333/20 June 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.KLU., 6/39, 23 Safer 1333/10 January 1915; Mutlu, *Amele Taburları*, pp. 133–134.

[151] Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," p. 96.

attacked the battalion's captain and several other Muslim soldiers with pickaxes and shovels at the moment of their desertion.[152]

But a more disputed claim regarding the labor battalions has been that they became the killing grounds for Armenian conscripts after the decision to deport the Armenian population from Anatolia in 1915. For example, Vahakn Dadrian has mentioned the case that about two thousand Armenian soldiers, who were assigned to labor battalion duties, were "trapped and slaughtered on their way to a new assignment on the Baghdad Railroad," and Vehib Pasha, commander of the Third Army, launched an investigation about these killings, which led to a court-martial and some executions.[153] And, some contemporary missionary observers claimed that some labor battalions which consisted of Armenians were killed *en masse*, mostly by local gendarmes, as in the case of two battalions working in the Urfa region, where Jakob Künzler, a Swiss missionary, met with two Armenian survivors from the labor battalions who recounted such massacres.[154] While not all labor battalions were ethnically or religiously homogenous (as seen in Table 7), it seems that Armenians were overrepresented in casualties.[155]

As the manpower that was needed in the country's economy eroded due to several factors on the home front including lengthened recruitment, deaths resulting from diseases and forced migrations, the practice of forming labor units gradually acquired a social character as well. During the war years, the agricultural sector needed to be kept running to feed not only society in general, but perhaps primarily the troops in particular. The endurance of the Ottoman armed forces on the battlefield depended on a secure supply of food. Therefore, the CUP government decided to apply militaristic procedures in agriculture. For example, the Interior

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[152] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 55-A/11, 21 Şevval 1333/1 September 1915.

[153] Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1997), p. 325.

[154] Jacob Künzler, *In the Land of Blood and Tears: Experiences in Mesopotamia during the World War (1914–1918)* (Arlington, Mass.: Armenian Cultural Foundation, 2007), pp. 16–20.

[155] As facts and details about the labor battalions in the Ottoman Empire during the Great War are enriched by the emergence of new studies on this largely understudied subject, such disputes will surely be based on a more solid documentary base. This process also requires an increase of liberty in using the military archives in Turkey. The majority of the documents about the labor battalions are contained in (and "controlled" by) the archives of the Turkish General Staff (ATASE). So far the only study that has been made on the Ottoman labor battalions by using primary documents from these archives is a master's thesis written by Zekeriya Özdemir in 1994, which has been cited above. And, though it contains valuable materials, it is not an in-depth analysis.

Ministry demanded that a certain number of men be sent from the labor battalions to work in the fields in nearby villages in their regions, where there were not enough men available.[156]

The militaristic approach to agriculture applied to civilians as well. Even from the very beginning of the war onwards, the central authority tried to ensure all village people over the age of 14, men and women alike, were engaged in agricultural labor.[157] All men outside the military-service obligation for any reason and all women who were healthy enough for manual labor were required to work in the fields of their own villages or surrounding regions where manpower was needed.[158] For example, this method was widely resorted to in the Third Army zone, which covered northeastern Anatolia and the eastern Black Sea region.[159] The village council in each village, which was headed by the *muhtar*, but also consisted of the *imam* and the teacher of the village, was required to supervise the process of mobilizing the available workforce over the age of 14 for agricultural work.[160] The village councils were also entitled to demand gendarme forces to coerce those village people who were reluctant and resistant to participate in such tasks.[161] This agricultural work imposition acquired a legal character with the issuance of temporary and ratified laws in 1916 and 1917.[162]

From some relevant military documents, it is clear that this imposition sometimes particularly targeted the non-Muslim population of some regions, and it was conceived not only as a compensation of labor force in agriculture, but also a control mechanism over "suspicious" social groups. For example, the War Ministry issued an order in 1917 which required corps and military office commanders to ensure that in the regions where non-Muslim populations were dense, these people were to be either employed

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156 BOA, DH.İUM., E-18/16, 5 Şevval 1334/5 August 1916.

157 BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 54/26, 6 Zilhicce 1332/26 October 1914.

158 For an example in which the Interior Ministry particularly underlined this point to the Sivas governorship, see BOA, DH.ŞFR., 90/22, 26 Şevval 1336/4 August 1918.

159 Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesinin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 88.

160 Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 83–87. There are examples that this labor mobilization applied compulsive measures towards both men and women. See, for example, Işık Öğütçü (ed.), *Orhan Kemal'in Babası Abdülkadir Kemali Bey'in Anıları*, second edition (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2009), pp. 195–196.

161 Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesinin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 92.

162 "Mükellefiyet-i Zirâîye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," 5 Eylül 1332/18 September 1916, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, p. 1297; "Mükellefiyet-i Zirâîye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin Tatbikâtı Hakkında Nizâmnâme," 5 Eylül 1332/18 September 1916, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, pp. 1298–1302; "Mükellefiyet-i Zirâîye Kanûnu (tasdikan)," 3 Nisan 1333/3 April 1917, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, pp. 596–597.

in agriculture or construction, or put into military training without arms at specific times determined by authorities.[163] A subsequent order issued on 17 July 1917 cancelled (without mentioning any reasons) the decision to subject civilian non-Muslims to unarmed training in their localities by military authorities.[164] But, since the contrary was not stated, the other part of the order, namely employing them in agricultural or construction works, apparently remained in effect.

The general tendency to push as much manpower as available on the home front to work in agriculture also involved forming more specific work units, again on a militaristic model, such as "agricultural labor battalions." These battalions were supposed to function like "mobile" farming units which could be transferred to nearby farms where there was urgent need for labor. Since majority of the male population fit for work was already subject to conscription, women usually constituted the bulk of such civilian labor units.[165] For example, in the hinterland of the Fourth Army in Syria, "Women Labor Battalions" were formed under the leadership of the commander Cemal Pasha, which were transferred to Çukurova (Cilicia) to work in the fields which were emptied of workers especially after the Armenian population of the region was subjected to forced migration in 1915.[166] The state also tried to employ Ottoman Muslim women in urban centers in the industrial workforce. In Istanbul, the Woman Workers' Brigade was established in 1917 by the Society for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women, which was itself was formed in 1916 under the patronage of Enver Pasha and his wife Naciye Hanım to provide employment for Muslim women in need. But the practice of women workers' brigades was short-lived and rather functioned as a place for employment for several hundred poor Muslim women who were in need of money, food and shelter, instead of being a major component of the urban workforce.[167]

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[163] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5766, Dosya 7, Fihrist 003. This particular document is a communiqué (dated 28 Haziran 1333/1917) to the head of recruiting office under the XII corps command. From the notification section of the document it is seen that the same order was sent to the all army corps commands, heads of recruiting offices, the general inspectorate of depot battalions and the general command of gendarmerie.

[164] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5766, Dosya 7, Fihrist 005.

[165] For the correspondence and the regulations issued about forming women labor battalions, see Özdemir, "Amele Taburları," pp. 70–76.

[166] Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 97.

[167] See Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*. The author argues that urban women labor units were of only symbolic importance and acted to increase status and standard of living of some Muslim women, since the need for workforce in urban

Sometimes labor units were manned by convicts as a form of alternative punishment; their labor was more useful than locking them away. For example, in the Third Army zone of the Caucasus front in 1915, about 3,000 captured draft evaders and deserters were ordered by the army command to be sent to the provinces of Diyarbekir and Mamuretülaziz to work in agriculture and transportation.[168] Another common way of bolstering the agricultural workforce by using "outcasts" during the war was to assign captured POWs to large farms urgently in need of manpower, a method that was used especially in the major provinces of Istanbul, Hüdavendigâr/Bursa, Edirne, and in the districts surrounding these urban centers, such as İzmit and Çatalca.[169] It is understood from documents that many Russian POWs were employed in agricultural work this way.[170] Upon the demand of landowners, POWs were assigned to the farms on the condition that their shelter, provision and guardianship would be provided by the landowners. Landowners were required to report every week to their local administration and the military supply-station inspectorate (*menzil müfettişliği*) about the condition of the POWs assigned to them. In case of desertions, urgent reporting was required together with physical descriptions of the POWs.[171] Finally, regular troop units could also be employed in agricultural work in times of urgent need, if there was no pressing combat situation on the battlefield. For example, an order issued in November 1916 to the army commands required that where possible, regular troops should help with agricultural work in their zones.[172]

Of course, forming labor units by employing civilians was not the same thing as the labor battalions in the army. The latter was a component of the military service obligation, the duration of which was subject to the mobilization regulations during the war, which meant, in practice, that it continued as long as the war became prolonged. The labor battalions of the army were permanent military units during the war, where hard

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industries was not so desperate. But his argument must be limited to urban centers, since there was a considerable need for workforce in agriculture during the war years.

168 Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesinin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 89.

169 BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 34/25, 18 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/12 March 1917; Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 227, note 14.

170 BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 37/21, 25 Receb 1335/17 May 1917. Another interesting application in this respect was that Muslim POWs in the hands of the Germans were transferred to the Ottoman Empire to be employed in agriculture and factories, where labor was needed. See ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1835, Dosya 30, Fihrist 1-37.

171 BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 31/36, 21 Şa'ban 1335/12 June 1917.

172 Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesinin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 93; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 76/134, 24 Receb 1335/16 May 1917.

working conditions mingled with very poor supplies under a strict military hierarchy. Civilian labor units looked like rather local and temporary measures to cope with the workforce problem in agriculture. However, it should be emphasized that the process of their formation emanated from a similar military logic. They were the product of a militarist mentality which tried to put the whole society into a military discipline and treat it like an army. Mobilizing civilian manpower in a militaristic way to increase agricultural production can also be regarded as the sign of the total war perspective, in which the military wanted to control all sectors, including the economy, in its war effort.

The Problem of Exemptions

As emphasized above, the Ottoman conscription system was characterized by a large number of exemptions since its beginning. In addition to the general tendency of the Ottoman state to exclude non-Muslims from military service, which had only slowly and partially disappeared, a considerable number of Muslims also had exempt status. Moreover, some regions of the empire, such as Yemen, effectively remained outside of the conscription system because the state did not possess the necessary infrastructure to carry out recruitment. The existence of so many exemptions not only caused a feeling of unequal treatment in the population, but also fundamentally deprived the armed forces of a good deal of manpower. Apparently, this arrangement also produced corruption, since the possibility of getting exempted from military service resulted in unethical and criminal behavior on the part of many Muslims.[173]

One of the most emphasized purposes of enacting the new law for military service in 1914 was to end many exemptions which were regarded as unnecessary and thought to have undermined Ottoman military power. Ending exemptions was also a way "to bring the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, everybody under the same banner." In fact, as has been mentioned above, efforts in this direction had already begun after 1909, when medrese students who had not passed their exams in time, were no longer exempted from conscription. Ottoman authorities were more determined in 1914 to rescind every "unnecessary" exemption

[173] ("*İstisnâiyyet imtiyâzına mazhar olmak içün birçok halkı ahlâksızlığa, sahtekârlığa, yalancılığa, irtikâb ve irtişâ'ya sevk etmiştir*…"), Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzahı*, p. 10.

in the conscription system. Article 1 of the military service law of 1914 announced that only the members of the Ottoman imperial family would be unconditionally exempt from military service. However, while this policy was never abandoned during the war, it was reshaped and revised under the actual conditions of mobilization. Therefore, as some exemptions were abolished, others remained in use, and sometimes new exemptions were even introduced.

The Exemption Fee

First of all, the exemption fee posed a major problem of equality before the law. One of the aims of the new law for military service of 1914 was to abolish exemption fees. In fact, it had been an objective frequently declared in reorganization efforts since 1909. For all practical purposes, it remained in effect, because the Ottoman state could not dispense with this extra source of financial revenue. Whereas the state officially propagated a discourse of equality of all Ottomans before the law since 1909, it actually held back from abolish exemption fees because they served to alleviate its financial burdens. Moreover, practice of exemption could always be tolerated within the Ottoman conscription system because only the economically well-off segment of the Ottoman population was able to afford it. The exclusion of this minor portion of the population from conscription never significantly jeopardized the manpower potential of the Ottoman military, and since the majority of this segment of society consisted of non-Muslims, their active service in the armed forces was not regarded as particularly indispensable from the Ottoman government's point of view. This informal compromise was also welcomed by the Ottoman non-Muslims themselves, who did not have a long history of military service in the Ottoman Empire and were never particularly enthusiastic about the post-1909 revisions aiming to include them in the active-duty obligation.

This general approach can be said to have continued during the Great War, though some significant modifications were made. Parallel to the official discourse of 1909, it was announced in 1914 that the abolition of exemption fees was among the main targets of the new legal and organizational reforms regarding the conscription system.[174] But the points which

[174] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzahı*, p. 7.

this discourse emphasized to justify itself acquired different dimensions after the declaration of mobilization. While the language of Ottomanism, stressing the abolition of the exemption fee as a way of equating Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans through including them into the same military service obligation, vaguely continued, the discourse now also needed to address certain specific grievances in the public sphere concerning the unequal treatment of economic classes. The "National Economy" policies of the CUP government offered many economic opportunities and privileges to the Muslim-Turkish inhabitants of the empire, and, apparently, a considerable number of well-off Muslims had also begun to exercise the exemption-fee option by late 1914.[175] This phenomenon seems to have excited murmurs and complaint among the public that the conscription system favored the rich and the burden of defending the fatherland was laden on the shoulders of the poor. Therefore, in announcing their intention to abolish the exemption fee, Ottoman authorities emphasized that the rich and poor were equally obligated to serve in the armed forces: "Now the most refined and the wealthiest will defend their motherland in the same way as the poor peasant little Mehmeds . . . What an honor!"[176]

But neither the new law for military service nor the mobilization regulations could abolish the exemption fee practice entirely. The authorities confessed that, though abolishing the exemption fee had seriously been considered in the preparation process of the new law, it could not be fully implemented because of the financial needs of the state. Instead, exemptions were restricted as much as possible.[177] First of all, from then on, paying an exemption fee instead of actively serving in the armed forces did not mean that the payer would be exempted forever. Article 121 of the new law required that even if a person paid an exemption fee, he was required to report for six months of basic military training at the nearest infantry division's barracks. The law also stipulated that while the exemption-fee practice remained in effect, it would be available only in peacetime and nobody would be given this option in wartime.[178] Not only did the exemption fee practice continue after the mobilization was declared and during the war, but various restrictions on it were loosened. Initial statements

[175] On the "National Economy" policies in this period, see Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat, 1908–1918* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982).
[176] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 14.
[177] Ibid., p. 14.
[178] Ibid., p. 149.

that condemned the practice, such as the following, came into conflict with actual wartime conditions and were modified time and time again: "Resorting to the exemption fee in the time of mobilization would mean to sell one's duty of defending his motherland with money or to buy his life at a cheap price; both of these are quite illogical and unwise."[179]

For example, the new law governing the exemption fee, which was enacted on 6 March 1915, confirmed that the practice would continue during the war.[180] The practice never disappeared during the war and was legally renewed with some modifications.[181] The legal regulations that were made during the war confined exemptions only to those who were in the active reserve (*ihtiyât*) and territorial reserve (*müstahfiz*) categories. Those of active military-service age were not allowed to avail themselves of that option.

But even for those in the reserve categories, the procedure was not standard. There was discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims. While only untrained (*gayr-i muallem*)[182] Muslim reservists were allowed to take the exemption-fee option, all non-Muslims, whether trained (*muallem*) or untrained, could use it. All non-Muslim reservists who were assigned to unarmed service because of their physical condition were also allowed to use it. This discrimination sometimes became even more visible in practice. For example, a British consulate report from Aleppo on 31 August 1914 observed that Ottoman authorities "made no secret that they merely aimed at wringing exemption money from such of the Christians as could pay, and did not need them as soldiers."[183]

The Abolition of Exemptions and the Question of Supporting Families

One of the exemptions that the Ottoman state resolutely abolished with the new law in 1914 concerned the so-called *muînsiz*, who were previously exempted from active military service because they were the sole bread-

[179] Ibid., p. 150.

[180] "Bedel-i Nakdî Kanûnu," 21 Şubat 1330/6 March 1915, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, pp. 434–435.

[181] "Bedel-i Nakdî Kabulünün Temdîdi Hakkında Kanûn (tasdikan)," 26 Kanunisani 1331/8 February 1916, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, pp. 380–381.

[182] The term "trained" (*muallem*) was used to describe those reserves who got at least three months of military training during their active service or before; "untrained" (*gayr-i muallem*) described those who had less than three months of training.

[183] TNA: PRO FO 195-2460 (1914, Turkey on the Eve of War).

winners in their families.[184] Article 49 of the new military service law abolished their exemption status, and the Interior Ministry informed provincial administrations of the change.[185] However, since drafting families' sole breadwinners would cause severe financial hardships for them, which would then give rise to increased discontent on the home front towards the mobilization effort, the law provided for an allowance for such soldiers' families in need of support. According to the law, the allowance was to be 30 piastres (*kuruş*) a month, per person, to be paid by the government. But, while this new regulation looked like a reasonable substitution for exemption, the Ottoman state increasingly had great difficulty in taking care of soldiers' families in need of support after the mobilization was declared. As the war became prolonged, increasing numbers of families lost their breadwinners. As drafted men remained in service for years, died on the front, were wounded or became POWs, their families suffered. This problem became a major social issue throughout the empire within a short time after the Ottomans entered the war.

The issue was multifaceted. First of all, although the law promised an allowance, confusion emerged about the definition of breadwinner, occasioning several revisions in 1915 and 1916. As an increasing number of families demanded allowances from the government, and as payments became an unexpectedly huge financial burden on the state budget, the definition of breadwinner was narrowed. In order to alleviate the fiscal burden, the government needed to extend the category of "potential" breadwinners for a family other than the draftee. In some cases, relatives were defined as "substitute breadwinners" if they lived geographically close enough to the family in need. A father and, in some cases, a well-off mother was accepted as a breadwinner, if they lived in the same district as the family. A child, brother, grandfather or father-in-law could also be a breadwinner, if they lived in the same village or the same neighborhood. The list also included more potential candidates from relatives, if they lived in the same household.[186]

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[184] *Muîsiz* was a term used for a person who did not have anybody to look after his mother or his wife. For a summary account of the changing status of the *muîsiz* during the evolution of the Ottoman conscription system, see Nicole A.N.M. van Os, "Taking Care of Soldiers' Families: The Ottoman State and the *Muinsiz alle* [sic] *maaşı*," in Zürcher (ed.), *Arming the State*, pp. 95–110.

[185] BOA, DH.İD., 180/52, 10 Receb 1332/4 June 1914.

[186] Os, "Taking Care of Soldiers' Families," p. 98.

Secondly, the state had difficulty paying allowances regularly. The provincial administrators repeatedly demanded money from Istanbul to make these payments, and they complained that they were unable to pay the allowances on time. Families also frequently complained and demanded their allowances be paid. Such complaints sometimes took the form of violent action. For example, in Aydın in March 1916, "a group of soldiers' families attacked a bakery and beat up the official in charge of the allowances because they had received no money for three months"; the unrest was pacified when the government, fearing that it would spread to other regions, decided to send money for allowances to the province.[187] On the other hand, the purchasing power of the monthly payments dropped drastically against the skyrocketing cost of living in the Ottoman Empire during the war years. (See Table 8) The cost of living rose so dramatically in the Ottoman Empire compared to the European powers that only the case of Austria bears a similarity.

The worsening living conditions in the empire were characterized by ever-rising food prices and shortages. To mention a few examples, the price of one *okka*[188] of sugar was 3 piastres in July 1914, but it rose to 62 piastres in January 1917 and to 140 piastres in January 1918; while one *okka* of potatoes was sold at 1 piaster in July 1914, it was sold at 20 piastres in September 1917 and at 36 piastres in January 1918; the price of one *okka* of mutton was 7 piastres in July 1914, but it reached 28 piastres in

Table 8. The cost of living index in the Ottoman Empire and major European powers during the Great War (1914=100)[189]

	Ottoman Empire	Britain	France	Germany	Austria	Italy
1914	100	100	100	100	100	100
1915	130	123	118	125	158	109
1916	212	139	135	164	337	136
1917	846	175	159	245	672	195
1918	1,823	203	206	293	1,163	268
1919	1,424	221	259	401	2,492	273

[187] Ibid., p. 103.
[188] *Okka* was a weight measure, and one *okka* was equal to approximately 1,282 grams.
[189] Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, pp. 154–155.

January 1917 and 120 piastres in September 1918.[190] By the last year of the war, the discontent of soldiers' families reached an alarming level. A British intelligence report, dated 31 July 1918, claimed that a group of women in Istanbul demonstrated in front of the War Ministry to protest the bad living conditions caused by the war. "They stoned the building, breaking windows and crying 'Feed us or bring back our husbands or sons'." The report also stated that the mob could be pacified only when the authorities distributed food and money to them.[191]

Another way of providing support for soldiers' families was charity. Charitable campaigns for soldiers' families were a major part of the state-sponsored poor relief during the war.[192] These were organized mostly by semi-official voluntary organizations. As in the many aid campaigns for Ottoman troops during the war, the National Defense League was quite active in poor-relief charity. In a press declaration issued by the National Defense League to invite people to help soldiers' families, it was stated that in Islam holy war (*cihâd*) necessitated taking care of the families of fighters for the faith (*gâzi*s): "The duty to take care of soldiers' needy children and families in their villages is as religious and sacred as the duty to join the holy war enthusiastically to defend the religion and the nation." The declaration also said that even the richest states' budgets would require assistance from their peoples in such situations, and urged the Ottomans to aid the campaign in accordance with their own economic power.[193]

Some charity works for soldiers' families were organized by wives of high ranking state authorities. They established an organization called the Ladies Working to Help Soldiers' Families (*Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı*

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190 Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, pp. 147–148; Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 165.

191 TNA: PRO WO 157-735, April–August 1918.

192 On the poor relief activities during the war, see Safiye Kıranlar, "Savaş Yıllarında Türkiye'de Sosyal Yardım Faaliyetleri (1914–1923)" (Ph.d. dissertation, Istanbul University, 2005). Approaching poor relief not merely as a way of providing help for the needy but also as a means of legitimating political power and forming a demographic control mechanism gained momentum in the Ottoman Empire during the era of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), who built various relief organizations emphasizing his own personage. In this sense, as Kıranlar has observed, the CUP government's poor relief policies during the war years displayed a remarkable continuation, but with a difference that the latter tried to turn poor relief into an integrated function of the state as social policy in a more modern sense, legitimizing not the rule of a single figure but the whole state. On the poor relief in the era of Abdülhamid II, see *Özbek, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Sosyal Devlet*.

193 "Müdafâa-i Milliye Cemiyeti," *İkdâm*, 16 Eylül 1330/29 September 1914; "Asker Aileleri Menfaatine," *İkdâm*, 8 Ağustos 1330/21 August 1914.

Hanımlar). This charity organization was initiated in Istanbul by the wife of Liman von Sanders, the chief of the German Military Mission and the commander of the Ottoman First Army, and the wife of İsmail Canbulad, the director of the General Security Department. Various other pro-CUP authorities' wives also joined it, such as those of Bedri Bey, the police chief of Istanbul, Hikmet Bey, the chief of the press department, and Selim Sırrı Bey, the inspector of education. As high-ranking authorities' wives, both domestic and foreign, publicly worked to help poor women whose men were sacrificing their lives for the fatherland on the battlefield, the initiative also tried to express that the state had a compassionate attitude towards its people even in the hardest times. While the main stated aim of the initiative was providing help for soldiers' families in need, there is no doubt that it also contributed to the legitimation of the government in its war policies. Branches were established for this purpose in the major parts of Istanbul, where food and other supplies were distributed each month to the needy.

But who were "in need" was determined through an official procedure at the local level. Those women who wanted to get help from these branches on behalf of their families first needed to receive official documents from the *muhtar* or the *imam* of their neighborhoods, confirming that their men were in the armed forces and they were really in need of aid.[194] Similar charity works were also encouraged in the provinces.[195] Moreover, while it seems to have never become a widespread campaign in Ottoman society during the war, there was also some public effort to find employment for disabled war veterans, officers as well as drafted men, as a form of aid.[196]

Bureaucratic Exemptions

To keep its large bureaucratic machine running during the war, the Ottoman state needed to exempt its bureaucrats and officials at key posts from conscription. For this reason, according to Article 90 of the law for military service, even if their ages were in the reserve categories, people such as ministers, top officials, ambassadors, governors, judges and muftis

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194 "Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar," *İkdâm*, 29 Kanunievvel 1330/11 January 1915; "Asker Aileleri İçin," *İkdâm*, 15 Kanunisani 1330/28 January 1915.

195 "Asker Aileleri Hakkında," *Tanin*, 15 Teşrinievvel 1330/28 October 1914.

196 "Malül Zâbitan ve Efrâda Muâvenet," *İkdâm*, 24 Teşrinisani 1333/24 November 1333; "Gâzilerimiz İçin Bir Teşebbüs: Gâziler Nakliyat Anbarı," *İkdâm*, 24 Kanunievvel 1333/24 December 1917.

were not obliged to serve in the armed forces. But, more importantly, the state needed its middle- and lower-ranking civil servants and technical personnel to continue their works in wartime, as their job description now also included supervising the mobilization process in their localities, as well as fulfilling their routine works. People such as post-office clerks and telegraphers, bank clerks, railway workers and clerks, accountants, policemen, etc., were equally indispensable during the war. Article 91 of the same law included a long, detailed list of middle- and low-ranking civil servants from many departments, whose reserve-age incumbents would be exempted from military service even during the time of mobilization.[197] In fact, middle- and low-ranking officials could sometimes be particularly important for carrying out crucial tasks in the conduct of the war, and sometimes additional numbers of people were needed in various departments, as it is evident from some laws issued regarding such regulations.[198]

However, though their role was significant, civil servants increasingly came under the control of military authorities during the war. Martial law, which continued throughout the war, gave not only *de facto* but *de jure* authority to military commanders in local administration.[199] Although the mobilization decree gave the Interior Ministry the power to declare martial law, it was the War Ministry which controlled the actual military government.[200] This created a process in which state employees in the provinces, including the top local administrators, were required to obey military commanders. The War Ministry occasionally stressed this requirement in its correspondence to the Interior Ministry, upon which the latter would warn its local officials that they should have considered and carried out the measures and proposals coming the commanders.[201]

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[197] For the full lists of top-, middle- and low-ranking officials who were exempt from military service, see Articles 91 and 92 of the Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, pp. 688–692.

[198] See, for example, "Seferberlik Münâsebetiyle İlâveten İstihdâm Olunan Memûrîn Maâşâtı için 1332 Posta ve Telgraf ve Telefon Bütçesi'ne 2,000,000 Kuruş Tahsisât-ı Fevkalade İlâvesi Hakkında Kanûn (tasdikan)," 5 Kanunisani 1332/18 January 1917, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 9, p. 115.

[199] Köksal, "Divan-ı Harb-i Örfîler," pp. 24, 33–34. The martial law administration was only partly lifted in the later part of the war. It was lifted in some Anatolian provinces (Kastamonu, Konya, Ankara, Hüdavendigâr) and sub-provinces (Bolu, Kütahya, Eskişehir ve Afyonkarahisar), which were deemed secure and sufficiently away from the combat zones, on 19 December 1917.

[200] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I, vol. 1*, p. 175.

[201] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 55/157, 11 Şevval 1333/22 August 1915.

Recruitment became a top priority to which civilian officials were expected to be particularly attentive during the war. Civilian officials of the provinces were frequently warned by the center of their crucial function in ensuring that the draft procedure was carried out efficiently in their localities.[202] They were also required to supervise the execution of the war-tax impositions. They were even threatened that if the implementation of the mobilization process in their localities was not satisfactory, they would be punished.[203]

The law for military service also provided exemption for functionaries of all religions. According to Article 91, not only high- and middle-ranking religious representatives of all religious communities in the Empire, but also low-ranking ones were exempt, including priests, monks and deacons (who had a certificate) among Christians, rabbis and deputy rabbis among Jews. For Muslim low-ranking religious functionaries, the exemption list was a little more detailed. It was stipulated that for each mosque, one *imam*, one Quran reciter (*hâfız*), one call-to-prayer reciter (*müezzin*), and one caretaker (*kayyım*) would be spared the obligation of military service. It was also announced that, for those *imam*s without a certificate (*berâtsız*), only one could be exempted as a deputy *imam* for a mosque, if that mosque had no other *imam* with a certificate.

It can be said that the Ottoman state was not very strict in obliging religious functionaries to serve in the armed forces; the state could be relatively flexible in issuing exemptions in this respect, especially where Muslim functionaries were concerned. Of course, there were reasons for this. Obviously, this flexibility did not stem solely from concern for providing uninterrupted religious services for believers in wartime. Low-ranking religious functionaries, particularly village *imam*s, played a crucial role in mobilizing men for war. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, through his sermons and homilies, and with his prominence among the local community, the *imam* was the key figure in justifying military service as a sacred duty. He was the one whom local people took most seriously about the exaltation of martyrdom in war. As will be mentioned in Chapter 5, the *imam* was also influential in convincing draft evaders and deserters to re-join the armed forces. Therefore, since *imam*s were regarded as one of the main propagators and motivators of the Ottoman

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[202] For an early example of such warnings, see BOA, DH.ŞFR., 42/155, 6 Şa'ban 1332/30 Haziran 1914.

[203] BOA, DH.SYS., 123-1/1-7, 23 Zilhicce 1332/12 November 1914; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 60/116, 19 Rebîulahir 1334/24 February 1916.

mobilization at the grass-roots level, their exemption status ensured that enough number of them was available in every locality.

Exemptions of Certain Social Groups

Exemption status was given to certain social groups as well. Two main groups stood out in this respect. The first and the largest group were Muslim refugees and immigrants (*muhâcir*); the other was nomads who had been recently settled. As the Ottoman Empire successively lost territories after major defeats in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 and the Balkan War of 1912–13, hundreds of thousands Muslims from the Balkans and Caucasus immigrated into the empire. In fact, the law did not entitle the *muhâcir*s to a lifelong exemption status. It was a temporary offer and they were allowed to be exempt for six years after the date of their immigration.[204] Apparently, this exemption period was offered to expedite the process of their settlement and adaptation to the new social environment. However, the actual war conditions and the increasing need for manpower caused this "courtesy" of the state to disappear quickly. The six-year period of adaptation was modified during the war and reduced to three months as the manpower need became more pressing.[205] The *muhâcir*s were also encouraged to join the armed forces as volunteers.

The law for military service also exempted the settled nomadic tribes from conscription. Such tribes were mostly Kurdish and living in southern and eastern Anatolia. This exemption apparently was intended to provide an incentive for all nomadic tribes within the empire to settle, so that the state's control over them could be increased. But their exempt status was not absolute and lifelong either. Under war conditions, the Ottoman state tried to exploit the manpower of these tribes by enrolling them in volunteer forces. They were encouraged to join the Ottoman armed forces by forming their own, separate, voluntary cavalry regiments, which were, in a sense, a continuation of the Hamidiye Cavalry Regiments established by Abdülhamid II. (Both groups will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.)

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[204] Article 135, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 700.

[205] An amendment to the Temporary Law for Military Service on 5 April 1915 determined that if the War Ministry thought it necessary, all past and future male *muhâcir*s who were of military age, would be conscripted three months after the date they arrived in the empire. "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatine Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 23 Mart 1331/5 April 1915, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, no. 199, p. 546; BOA, DH.UMVM., 123/34, 30 Cemâziyelevvel 1333/15 April 1915.

Mobilizing "Citizen-Officers"

Another major aim of the reforms in the conscription system after the Balkan War was to construct a mechanism for train enough number of reserve officers as a precautionary measure against a prospective mobilization, because the peacetime availability of officers was much lower than planned wartime requirements. Ottoman authorities seriously considered that "it would be the low-ranking officers who would be most needed during mobilization because of extended wartime reorganization of the army and casualties."[206] Enver's early-1914 purge of about 1,300 army officers who were seen as an obstruction to modernization because of their age or incompetence further widened the gap in availability of officers. Moreover, the Ottoman military lacked an established corps of long-serving noncommissioned officers who could be useful in filling middle- and low-ranking command positions.[207] A reserve officer training system was also recommended by respected German generals who advised the Ottoman army, such as Colmar von der Goltz, as a way of strengthening the existing command system.[208]

The need for reserve officers began to be felt deeply when mobilization was declared only after a few months since the reforms had been undertaken. The organization and deployment of the Ottoman army for a multi-front war steadily required a considerable number of reserve officers to fill the necessary command posts. While the ratio of reserve officers in the Ottoman army was around 10 percent in 1914, it slightly exceeded 20 percent in 1916. Out of total 19,220 officers, 880 were reserve officers in 1914. The number of reserve officers increased to 2,055 in 1916, when the total number of officers was 19,058. Due to increasing casualties and declining rhythm of the mobilization by the last year of the war, the number of reserve officers eroded to 1,121 out of the total 21,144 officers in the Ottoman army.[209]

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[206] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 14.

[207] Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness in World War I*, p. 2; Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 9.

[208] Fon der Golç [Colmar von der Goltz], *Osmanlılar Muharebelerini Nasıl Kaybettiler? Şimdi Nasıl Telâfi ve Terakki Edebilirler?* (Istanbul: Sancakcıyan Matbaası, 1331/1915), p. 98.

[209] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10*, p. 615. This source gives two different figures for the number of reserve officers in the Ottoman army. The figure in page 615 is 1,725, while it is given as 1,121 in a tabulated calculation in page 700. I use the second one.

Table 9. The number of reserve officers in the Ottoman army, 1914–1918[210]

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total
Infantry	594	579	1642	1681	701	5197
Artillery	207	105	277	263	265	1117
Engineering	62	80	102	107	116	467
Communications	15	43	34	5	33	130
Transportation	2	1	–	7	6	16
Total	880	808	2055	2063	1121	6927

In fact, the Ottoman army's need for officers was so high during the war that even the pool of reserve officers did not suffice, and, therefore, it was decided that sergeants and top sergeants who displayed remarkable capabilities in their units would be promoted and employed as deputy officers. This practice continued through the end of the war.[211]

In fact, reserve officer was already a category in obligatory military service. The existing law governing reserve officers, which had been issued in 1910, was reenacted with slight modifications after the declaration of mobilization and announced to the public via newspapers.[212] The reserve-officer category was open to graduates of higher-education schools and graduates of medreses.[213] To encourage these graduates for military service, the recruitment of educated people as reserve officers was announced by authorities as "a special privilege bestowed upon those having knowledge and high position."[214] On the other hand, this discourse of encouragement only slightly concealed the heavy hand of compulsion. The need was so urgent and the regulations so strict that, the attitude of the state could easily become merciless. The War Ministry issued an order in the first week after the declaration of mobilization, which summoned all who were eligible for the reserve-officer category according to the law

[210] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10*, p. 700.

[211] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 331.

[212] "İhtiyât Zâbitanı Kanûnu," *İkdâm*, 27 Temmuz 1330/9 August 1914.

[213] For a full list of higher-education schools graduates who were eligible for being reserve officers, see Article 147, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 706. Since the War College (Harbiye Mektebi) was practically closed during the war years, its graduates from earlier classes were also included in the reserve-officer category and put though the same training procedure.

[214] Behic, *Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatinin İzâhı*, p. 15.

and threatened that those who did not show up within the required time would be subject to severe punishments including the death penalty.[215]

The draftees who would become reserve officers were gathered at training camps (*talimgâh*) in Istanbul. The first, main camp was located in the War College at Pangaltı. As the number of draftees increased, new training camps were formed at different Istanbul locales where intellectuals and professionals from various fields joined together, such as Maltepe, Yakacık, Pendik, Kızıltoprak, and Erenköy.[216] At these centers, draftees received a six-month basic training after which they were assigned to various military units as candidate officers (*zâbit nâmzedi*). After three months of active service in their units, the candidates were promoted to deputy officers (*zâbit vekili*).[217]

In fact, it can be argued that the drafting of educated people as reserve officers during the war had a wider social significance than contributing to the army's need for officers. Being a reserve officer was attributed more importance than merely fulfilling one's military service obligation. The participation of the most educated stratum of society in the war effort, filling important command positions in the army, would serve as an example for the whole society and serve to justify the war cause of the CUP government. This point was quite visible in the perspective of Hamdullah Suphi [Tanrıöver], a nationalist writer of the period and a leading figure of the nationalist Turkish Hearth Society. For him, the contribution of the urban educated Turkish man to the war effort was a source of pride equal to the contribution of the simple Anatolian peasant. In his view, the participation of educated people in the war was no less patriotic than that of Anatolian peasant boys. He claimed that educated people's service in the armed forces was to be particularly appreciated because their intellectual formation did not involve soldierly skills, while the peasants had already grown up listening to stories about their father's holy wars and martyrdoms and been "naturally" accustomed to soldiering.[218] Şevket Süreyya [Aydemir], a figure active in the etatist-nationalist circle called the *Kadro* movement during the 1930s, who himself was drafted as a reserve officer during the war and fought on the Caucasus front, attributed a more

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[215] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 423; "İhtiyât Zâbit Nâmzedlerine," *İkdâm*, 12 Eylül 1330/25 September 1914.

[216] Reserve officers' adaptation to and daily lives in these training camps are recounted in detail in a semi-documentary popular novel, written from the nationalist mindset of the 1930s. See Burhan Cahit [Morkaya], *İhtiyât Zâbiti* (Istanbul: Kanaat Kütüphanesi, 1933).

[217] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, pp. 423–424.

[218] Köroğlu, *Türk Edebiyatı ve Birinci Dünya Savaşı*, p. 198.

significant meaning to being a reserve officer during the war. He wrote after the war that drafting young educated people actually contributed to the nation-building process, as it presented an opportunity for them to meet the simple Anatolian peasant in his all aspects, who was "the true essence of the [Turkish] nation." For him, since there was nothing in common between the folk and the educated people before this moment, this meeting, which was "strengthened further by the comradeship of arms and blood during the National Struggle" in Anatolia after the Great War, was the first step towards the national unity attained in full in the republican era.[219]

But reserve officers were needed by the military for more practical purposes as well. In fact, the practical aspect was much more pressing under war conditions. The Ottoman military's need for technical personnel in various fields such as engineering, communications and transportation (see Table 9) could be met by conscripted civilian professionals and technical personnel. Besides filling low-ranking command posts, the reserve officers who had technical skills also took part in infrastructural-improvement works in the regions they were located, as in the case of Münim Mustafa, who helped stringing telephone lines to a nearby village when he was a deputy officer in Amman.[220]

Many literary men and intellectuals who would later gain fame, such as the historian Fuad [Köprülü], the writer Falih Rıfkı [Atay] and the politician-writer Şevket Süreyya, served in the Ottoman army during the Great War as reserve officers. In fact, many members of the educated stratum of Ottoman society got involved in the war this way. But not all of them shared the opinion of Şevket Süreyya, who attributed a formative significance to being a reserve officer in the war to the subsequent creation of a Turkish nation-state. In fact, some of them who recounted their experiences in their memoirs adopted more critical approaches towards the war. For example, the case of Süleyman Nuri, who came to question the meaning of the war as he fought on the Dardanelles and Caucasus fronts, provides us with a good example in this respect. As he explained in his memoirs, having seen the dire conditions on the front and witnessed the slaughter of thousands of men, he began to think that the war was already lost for the Ottomans. Feeling that the CUP government did not care about

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[219] Şevket Süreyya, *Suyu Arayan Adam*, p. 101.

[220] Münim Mustafa, *Cepheden Cepheye: İhtiyat Zabiti Bulunduğum Sırada Cihan Harbinde Kanal ve Çanakkale Cephelerine Ait Hatıralarım* (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1998), p. 19.

its own soldiers on the battlefield, he believed that once-applauded policies such as pan-Turkism were actually quite pointless. He complained that the Ottoman soldier was sent to death in vain because of thoughtless decisions by politicians and commanders. He reached the conclusion that the decision to join the war had not served not the interests of the country, but only those of the CUP government, of whose policies he was apparently already critical before joining the army.[221] In another example, Faik Tonguç, who served on the Caucasus front, has spoken of his disenchantment with the "myths" of soldierly virtues as he observed actual conditions of war on the battlefield, where the lives of ordinary soldiers were all but wasted and where he himself began to resort to inhumane methods which he had previously criticized, such as beating his soldiers as he lost his idealism.[222]

Others recounted their war experiences and observations without much comment, but also without filtering them. The published diaries and memoirs of Ottoman reserve officers present an invaluable source on the Ottoman mobilization experience during the Great War. The Ottoman peasant soldier was illiterate; therefore, unfortunately, his voice is lost to us because he did not record many things on paper. On the other hand, there exists a considerable amount of published material written by high-ranking Ottoman officers; but they either preferred to write an official history of war by omitting the details of daily life (both deliberately and unintentionally), or used the memoir as a tool to justify their own actions in the war. They do not tell us much about the actual war experience. Consequently, the words of reserve officers are indispensable to the historian's task, as the only available first-hand accounts of the war which provide insight into the broader Ottoman war experience.[223]

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[221] Süleyman Nuri, *Uyanan Esirler: Çanakkale Siperlerinden TKP Yönetimine* (Istanbul: Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, 2002), pp. 137–142.

[222] Faik Tonguç, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Bir Yedek Subayın Anıları*, second edition (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1999), pp. 71, 107–108.

[223] Other than the ones which have already been mentioned in this chapter above, for a few more examples of such diaries-memoirs of reserve officers published in modern Turkish in recent years, see Fuad Gücüyener, *Sina Çölü'nde Türk Ordusu* (Istanbul: Anadolu Türk Kitap Deposu, 1939); Mehmed Fasih, *Kanlısırt Günlüğü: Mehmed Fasih Bey'in Çanakkale Anıları*, ed. by Murat Çulcu, (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1997); Fahri Çakır, *Elli Yıl Önce Şark Cephesi Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Çınar Matbaası, 1967); *Kendi Kaleminden Teğmen Cemil Zeki* (*Yoldaş*), ed. by Engin Berber (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1994).

Conclusion

This chapter has described the Ottoman conscription practice in the context of the mobilization of the Great War. The Ottoman conscription system had gone through a comprehensive reform process after the Balkan defeat to create a more efficient draft system which could use the available human potential in accordance with the requirements of a large-scale war. A substantial part of this overhaul involved a reestablishment of the conscription system at the local level through district recruiting-office branches which worked in collaboration with local civilian authorities and local notables. As the "gaze" of state authority in the smallest administrative unit, the *muhtar* also played a key role in implementing the draft procedure at the village level.

However, despite the major attempt at reform and reorganization at the beginning of the war, various deficiencies which had characterized the Ottoman system since the *Tanzimat* could never be overcome entirely. The intention to create a geographically standard recruitment procedure and to extend the military service obligation to all segments of society remained incomplete, either due to the infrastructural weakness of state power or because of the CUP government's discriminatory perspective. Not all exemptions could be abolished either. For example, although official discourse condemned the exemption fee practice, the state never dared to lift it entirely because of its financial shortfalls. Moreover, despite the existence of a discourse of Ottoman unity, the Ottoman conscription system's treatment of different ethnic and religious communities of the Empire became more unequal during the war. In fact, the new laws and procedures for military service consolidated the already extant discriminatory aspects of the system. Although the CUP regime wanted to exploit non-Muslim and non-Turkish populations of the Empire for the war effort through rhetoric of Ottoman unity, this discourse was actually based on the primacy of the Turkish element in this unity; the nationalist perspective of the regime involved a considerable amount of distrust towards other groups, which resulted in such consequences as putting the bulk of non-Muslim enlisted men in the labor battalions. The reluctance of non-Muslim people to answer the call to arms also increased official distrust.

As the war necessitated more and more manpower on the battlefield, the actual war conditions frequently dictated changes to the conscription system. While the Ottoman state had to deal with such imperatives on the one hand, it tried to overcome the incompleteness of its system on

the other. Where the formal conscription system did not function sufficiently, the state still tried obtain potential manpower by amalgamating the Empire's old methods of recruitment with modern conscription methods and by creating alternative recruitment categories. Volunteers constituted such an alternative category, which not only helped the state mobilize those segments of its population that could not be conscripted formally due to infrastructural problems, but also provided the armed forces with additional manpower that could be used in "special" military missions. The next chapter will focus on volunteers.

CHAPTER THREE

VOLUNTEERISM AS A RELATIONSHIP OF POWER: VOLUNTEERS IN THE OTTOMAN ARMY

As a prolonged and multi-front conflict in the age of industrialized warfare, the Great War wrought incredible destruction on the male populations of the belligerent countries, including the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, because of the poor infrastructure of the Ottoman state, universal conscription could not be uniformly applied throughout the Empire. The mechanism of manpower mobilization worked at a reasonable level in the Anatolian provinces where the foundations of "the citizen-mobilizing state" had partially taken root after the *Tanzimat* reforms. However, the state had difficulty conscripting recruits in the regions where those foundations were weak, especially in areas populated by Kurdish and Arab tribal groups.

Except for a brief period at the outset of the mobilization, when the number of enlisted men sufficed to fill in the ranks of the armed forces, the Ottoman armed forces were constantly in need of men to reinforce their ranks. Such requirements for reinforcements stemmed not only from combat losses, but also from inefficiencies in the formal conscription system. A common and highly widespread solution to this problem was to make use of volunteers in the armed forces. In fact, use of volunteers under the generic name of "irregulars" (*başıbozuk*) in various branches of the armed forces was not a novel practice for the Ottoman military. Irregular units had been formed during several previous wars of the modern era,[1] including the Crimean War of 1853–56,[2] the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78[3]

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[1] *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 3, part 6*, p. 239.

[2] See Candan Badem, *The Ottoman Crimean War (1853–1856)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 377–393.

[3] See James J. Reid, *Crisis of the Ottoman Empire: Prelude of Collapse, 1839–1878* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2000).

During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, the Ottoman state also encouraged non-Muslim volunteers to join voluntary armed units called the *Asâkir-i Muâvine* (auxiliary troops). As many as 3,000 non-Muslim volunteers joined these forces in the Balkan territories of the empire during the war. The state used their participation to show the European powers that Ottoman Muslims and non-Muslims could unite under the same banner in the event of war. See Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, pp. 115–117.

and the Balkan War of 1912–13.[4] Legal regulations concerning volunteers in the armed forces had become an integrated part of Ottoman laws on military service since 1846.[5] But the practice became significantly more organized and complex during the Great War.

It should also be noted here that the co-existence of different (old and new) forms of military recruitment was not unique to the Ottoman case. It remained to be a widespread tendency in various army structures across the world in the age of conscription.[6] In particular, the resort to volunteers seems to be a common method used by various armies for various reasons from the Napoleonic Wars and the American Civil War to the Great War.[7]

Ottoman military authorities tried to identify legal criteria for defining volunteers. In this respect, they asserted that only those men who were exempt from conscription could apply to volunteer for service in irregular units. Moreover, any application for an irregular unit was required to be submitted to recruiting offices.[8] But the reality of Ottoman military volunteerism was more complex than these legal measures would indicate. First of all, potential volunteers who were not already obliged to enlist were quite numerous and diverse, and the state's relationship with these individuals was shaped by certain preferences and expectations. Second, since the Ottoman state's poor infrastructure prevented it from recruiting everyone who was already obliged to enlist especially in peripheral regions, volunteerism served to compensate for the deficiencies of the state's conscription system. In this sense, volunteerism represented the restoration of military obligations. Third, the use of volunteers provided the state with a flexible manpower pool which would be used to undertake "informal" military missions such as guerilla attacks into enemy

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[4] BOA, DH.SYS., 112–15/21–1, 9 Zilkâde 1330/20 October 1912; BOA, DH.SYS., 112–15/21–2, 2 Zilhicce 1330/12 November 1912; BOA, DH.SYS., 112–15/21–3, 2 Muharrem 1331/12 December 1912; BOA, DH.SYS., 112–15/21–4, 2 Muharrem 1331/12 December 1912.

[5] See Ayın, *Tanzimat'tan Sonra Askeralma Kanunları*; Musa Çadırcı, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Askere Almada Kura Usulüne Geçilmesi (1846 Tarihli Askerlik Kanunu)," in Çadırcı, *Tanzimat Sürecinde Türkiye: Askerlik*, p. 87.

[6] For example, John Lynn makes a similar argument the evolution of recruitment types in the modern West. See John A. Lynn, "The Evolution of Army Style in Modern West, 800–2000," *The International History Review*, vol. 18, no. 3 (August 1996), pp. 505–545.

[7] On the use of volunteers in various armies in the modern era, see Christine G. Krüger and Sonja Levsen (eds.), *War Volunteering in Modern Times: From the French Revolution to the Second World War* (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011).

[8] BOA, DH. ŞFR., 49/193, 17 Rebîulevvel 1333/2 February 1915; BOA, DH.HMŞ., 23/115, 7 Rebîulâhir 1333/22 February 1915; ATASE; BDH, Klasör 3978, Dosya 11, Fihrist 2–13.

territory, actions of violent oppression towards "disloyal" civilians on the home front, or operations aimed at achieving demographic homogenization in Anatolia. Such actions were either difficult or illegal for formal military units. The extra-legality of many of these actions helps explain the state's enthusiastic enlistment of prisoners in irregular units.

This chapter will survey volunteers in the Ottoman armed forces during the Great War. I argue that the practice of recruiting volunteers in the military was not a neutral procedure that was open to the participation of all. Military volunteerism involved a relationship of power between the state authority and certain groups in society. It was a power relationship in which the state tried to impose its own rules and expressed its own preferences towards potential volunteers. Even when the call for volunteers was declared to the entire public at times of urgent need for manpower, the state had already a clear vision of which segments of the population would be more reliable and useful. In this sense, the acceptance of volunteers was a selective strategy by which the CUP-dominated state authority not only tried to reinforce the military manpower from its own perspective of reliability and usefulness, but also to strengthen its bond of legitimacy with the social groups that provided the highest popular support for its war policies. Volunteering for the Ottoman military during the war meant accepting the state's own terms, which had a marginalizing effect on non-supportive groups in society. On the other hand, volunteers were not passive subjects in this relationship. Volunteerism was a way of being regarded as "loyal" by the state and acquiring the right to express certain expectations. As will be discussed below, in the cases of prisoners, refugees and immigrants, tribes and dervish lodges, volunteers gained a certain amount of negotiation leverage vis-à-vis the state. Thus, in cooperation with the state, they were able to enhance their status in society or increase their own power in their particular localities or realms of action.[9]

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[9] This chapter focuses on the groups of volunteers which were large enough to constitute a social category in the sense that they shared certain distinctive characteristics. Other than these, the Ottoman armed forces had individual volunteers, who, such as students at certain schools, belonged to exempt populations. See, for example, ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3978, Dosya 11, Fihrist 002–17; İsmail Çolak, *Çanakkale'nin Kahraman Mekteplileri* (Istanbul: Lamure Yayınları, 2006). There were also some "volunteer" units composed of Muslim POWs, the main example of which was The Tatar Battalion, which included Muslim Tatars from the Russian army, who were captured by the Germans. See Nadir Devlet, "I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlılar Safında Çarpışan Tatar Taburu," in *Osmanlı, vol. 2: Siyaset*, edited by Güler Eren, Kemal Çiçek and Cem Oğuz (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 1999), pp. 575–577; Vahdet Keleşyılmaz, "Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa ve Cermen Esir Kamplarındaki

Prisoner-Volunteers

Prisoners constituted a major source of volunteers in the Ottoman Empire throughout the war. This population provided a potential pool of voluntary fighters for the armed bands (*çeteler*) which were organized by the Ottoman secret paramilitary intelligence unit, known as the Special Organization (*Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa*). Founded by Enver Pasha just before the war, the Special Organization was based on the model of Balkan paramilitary groups (especially the Bulgarian IMRO) which Enver had observed as he fought the Balkan insurgents before and during the Balkan War of 1912–1913. The Special Organization not only assumed a major role in spreading propaganda on the Ottoman holy war (*cihâd*) among Muslim populations in India, Russia, Iran and Egypt, but it also engaged in guerilla warfare on several fronts throughout the war. The combination of both experiences of irregular warfare during the Tripolitania War of 1911 and the Balkan War of 1912–13 and the legacy of Abdülhamid II's spy network formed the basis of the Special Organization during the Great War. It was financed mainly by the secret fund (*tahsisât-ı mestûre*) of the War Ministry. The Special Organization sometimes also received monetary support from the National Defense League.[10] Philip H. Stoddard has described the major aims of the organization as maintenance of internal security and assurance of "the continued domination of the Turkish-speaking minority which was considered essential to the preservation of the state, and to prevent any further erosion of Ottoman territory."[11]

Tatarlar," *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, vol. VI, no. 21 (1998), pp. 65–80. Such cases of volunteers are outside the scope of this study.

[10] Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 3, p. 343.

[11] Philip H. Stoddard, "The Ottoman Government and the Arabs, 1911 to 1918: A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa" (Ph.d. dissertation, Princeton University, 1963), pp. 3–4 [it has been published in Turkish as a book: *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa: Osmanlı Hükümeti ve Araplar 1911–1918: Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Üzerine Bir Ön Çalışma*, trans. Tansel Demirel (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1994)]. This is still the most significant study on the Special Organization, about which there are few primary sources available. For memoirs/observations about the organization during the war by the aide-de-camp of Talat Pasha, see Arif Cemil, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, ed. by Metin Martı, second edition (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, n.d.). (This book is the reprint of the author' memoirs which were previously published serially in the daily *Vakit* in 1934). For memoirs of a high-ranking member of the organization, see Eşref Kuşçubaşı, *Hayber'de Türk Cengi: Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Arabistan, Sina ve Kuzey Afrika Müdürü Eşref Bey'in Hayber Anıları*, ed. by Philip H. Stoddard and H. Basri Danışman (Istanbul, Arba Yayınları, 1997). For some recent studies on the Special Organization, see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, vol. 3, pp. 339–359; Taner Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu: İttihat ve Terakki'den Kurtuluş Savaşı'na* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), pp. 161–312 [for the English translation of this study, see Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*,

The first guerilla activities of the Special Organization occurred along the Ottoman-Russian border in the Caucasus region two months before formal Ottoman entry into the war. The objective was manifold: the organization tried to arouse anti-Russian feelings among Muslims on both sides of the border, but especially in the formerly Ottoman provinces of Batumi, Kars and Ardahan, which had been occupied by the Russians since the aftermath of the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877–1878.[12] It organized guerilla attacks on Russian soil both to weaken Russian military capabilities in the region and to intimidate the Christian population. The Special Organization also planned guerilla offensives to help the Ottoman army as an auxiliary force during the war.

The unit also intimidated the local non-Muslim Ottoman population in the region, particularly the Armenians, on the pretext that the organization acted as a counterinsurgency force against disloyal elements of the Armenian population, some of whom, by evading the draft or deserting the army, formed their own armed bands and voluntarily joined the Russian army.[13] But, this mission of the Special Organization, as will be discussed below, assumed the form of direct abuses, attacks and massacres of civilian Armenians during their forced migration in 1915.[14]

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trans. Paul Bessemer (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006)]; Hamit Pehlivanlı, "Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa: Türk Modern İstihbaratçılığının Başlangıcı mı?," *Osmanlı, vol. 6: Teşkilat,* ed. by Kemal Çiçek and Cem Oğuz (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınevi, 1999), pp. 285–294; Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e,* second edition (Ankara: Aslı Yayınları, 2004); Cemil Koçak, "Belgesel Bir Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa Öyküsü," *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 3 (Spring 2006), pp. 171–214; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, pp. 353–456; An in-depth analysis of the Special Organization is outside the scope of this book.

[12] Michael A. Reynolds, "The Ottoman-Russian Struggle for Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, 1908–1918: Identity, Ideology and the Geopolitics of World Power" (Ph.d. dissertation, Princeton University, 2003), pp. 216–223.

[13] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 1, p. 354. On the Armenian volunteers, see General Gabriel Gorganian, "Armenian Participation in World War I on the Caucasian Front," *The Armenian Review*, vol. 20, no. 3–79 (Autumn 1967), pp. 3–21. Also see Antranik Çelebyan, *Antranik Paşa*, trans. Mariam Arpi and Nairi Arek (Istanbul: Pêrî Yayınları, 2003), pp. 170–171. It was reported in an Ottoman document on 21 May 1915 that the Armenian armed band leader Antranik had raised a force of 1,200 volunteers (*fedâî*) and joined the Russian forces. See *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 85 (October 1985), document no. 2006, p. 55. There are also examples showing that some Ottoman Jews and Greeks voluntarily joined the Entente powers. For an example of the case Ottoman Jews volunteering for the French army, see BOA, HR.SYS., 2403/7, 20 September 1914. For two examples of the case of Ottoman Greeks volunteering for the British and Greek armies, see BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb., 5/19, 14 Cemâziyelâhir 1333/29 April 1915 and BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb., 8/61, 4 Zilkade 1333/13 September 1915.

[14] Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Turkey in the World War*, p. 220; Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu.* pp. 227–239; Taner Akçam, *"Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuştur": Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Savaş Yıllarında Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar,* third edition (Istanbul:

To carry out the above-mentioned missions, the Special Organization formed armed bands of volunteer fighters who acted under its command. In August 1914, the organization sent a delegation to the Russian border region, which included some of its high-ranking members such as Bahaeddin Şâkir, Hilmi, Ruşeni, Rıza and Ömer Naci. These members made Erzurum the center of their activities, but also formed branches in Trabzon and Van.[15] The delegation held a meeting at Bayburt and decided that all the branches of the Special Organization in Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus would operate under the name of the Caucasus Revolutionary Committee (*Kafkas İhtilâl Cemiyeti*), which would be directed by Bahaeddin Şâkir.[16] Each branch was supposed to work to organize armed bands and local militia forces. In a letter sent on 5 September 1914, Süleyman Askerî Bey, who was the chief of the Special Organization at this time, explained to Bahaeddin Şâkir that the aim of forming these bands was

> to sabotage the Russian forces by destroying important railroad bridges, telegraph and telephone lines, and other means of communication by establishing and strengthening bands to act in different places, raising revolts, attacking supply, ammunition, and food caravans, threatening borders, attacking weak enemy detachments, disrupting shipments, and the like. Such bands would also attack the rear elements of the enemy armies.[17]

In order to stir up the local Muslims in the Caucasus to support the Ottoman war cause, the organization prepared propaganda leaflets and distributed them among the Muslims in the region. A quotation from such a leaflet succinctly represents the objective and mentality of the armed bands formed by the Special Organization at the beginning of the war:

> When will we, if not now, benefit from the disaster which Russia is suffering from? How much longer will we continue to bear the tortures of this bloody state? . . . Now it is incumbent upon you to provide any kind of sacrifices which would harm the enemy and facilitate the victory of our holy fighters (*mücâhid*) . . . O you people of the faith! Now our dawn is breaking. We will hear our martyrs rise from their graves in their bloody shrouds and shout 'revenge, revenge!'[18]

İletişim Yayınları, 2008), pp. 168–180; Stefanos Yerasimos, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Ermeni Sorunu* (Ankara: Türkiye Bilimler Akademisi Forumu, 2002), p. 16.

[15] Reynolds, "The Ottoman-Russian Struggle," pp. 217–218.

[16] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, pp. 430–431.

[17] Arif Cemil, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, pp. 39–42; Quoted and translated in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, pp. 420–421 (But Shaw seems to confuse it with the report sent by Bahaeddin Şâkir to Istanbul about his activities.)

[18] Arif Cemil, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, p. 33.

Though no precise statistical data are available, the Special Organization is said to have raised as many as 30,000 fighters at its height, most of whom consisted of prisoner- volunteers.[19] In March 1915, among the 54,615 combatant personnel of the Third Army on the Caucasus front, the armed bands of Rıza Bey and Bahaeddin Şâkir Bey, both of which served under the command of the same army in the same region, respectively consisted of 3,642 and 1,120 volunteers.[20]

However, since the declaration of mobilization on 2 August 1914 required all able-bodied men between the ages of 20 to 45 to enlist for service,[21] it was not easy for the Special Organization to find enough men to form armed bands that would be capable of undertaking guerilla warfare missions. Moreover, this problem became even more difficult as the Ottoman army suffered severe shortages of manpower due to the large number of men who had been wounded, fallen ill, or deserted. As a result of these shortages, new amendments were introduced to the Temporary Law for Military Service on 29 April 1915 and 7 May 1917, which specified that men between the ages of 17 and 45, who had been exempted or had not been called for one reason or another, were now subject to military service.[22] Therefore, especially late in the summer of 1914 and at the initial stages of the war, namely, at a time when the Special Organization urgently needed volunteers for its missions along the Russian border, prisons came to be regarded as an attractive solution to this problem, since their able-bodied male criminals were quite ready and willing to take part in armed operations in return for freedom. The solution was taken quite seriously and put into practice rapidly by a legal decision issued by Ottoman authorities. This was done despite severe objections from statesmen such as Ahmed Rıza Bey, who was a member of the Upper House (*Âyân Meclisi*) of the Ottoman Parliament.[23]

The Special Organization also worked to form local militia forces along the Russian border and on the eastern Black Sea coast by recruiting volunteers from local Muslim populations. Apparently the organization received considerable popular support in this process, at least in regions such as Arhavi, a sub-district of Trabzon (today a district of Artvin), where

[19] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, 1, p. 373.
[20] Sâbis, *Harb Hatıralarım*, vol. 2, p. 363.
[21] "45 yaşına kadar olanların hizmet-i askeriye ile mükellefiyetleri hakkında kanûn-ı muvakkat," 21 Haziran 1330/3 August 1914, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, p. 912.
[22] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 156.
[23] Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler*, 3, p. 351.

village *muhtar*s helped Rıza Bey recruit local young boys.[24] However, while there are a few examples of locally recruited volunteer bands which were used as offensive forces,[25] such bands functioned largely for defensive purposes on the home front and remained largely attached to their own locales.[26] The core part of the Special Organization's missions was carried out by prisoner-volunteers, who were better fit to intimidate civilians and undertake offensive guerilla operations, since they were more mobile, usually had previous experience with weapons and were more inclined to violence.

In fact, the Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914 allowed the conscription of prisoners who had committed minor crimes and who were sentenced to imprisonment for less than one year. The law also permitted conscripting suspects whose legal prosecutions were incomplete at the time of mobilization on the condition that their cases would be resumed after the demobilization.[27] However, after 2 August 1914, this practice apparently went far beyond these limits, as the eligible pool of prisoners who could volunteer for the armed bands of the Special Organization included men who had been condemned to death for crimes such

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[24] Sadık Sarısaman, "Trabzon Mıntıkası Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Heyet-i İdaresinin Faaliyetleri ve Gürcü Lejyonu," *XIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi: Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, vol. 3, part 1, p. 12.

[25] A major example in this respect is the Osmancık Volunteer Battalion, which was formed by 700–800 volunteers from Osmancık, a district of the Ankara province at this time. The battalion was originally intended to be sent on a special mission to the Russian shores of the Black Sea, but that plan was abandoned. It was instead sent to the Baghdad region in November 1914 under the leadership of Süleyman Askerî, a leader of the Special Organization, to fight against the British army in Iraq. For more information on the Osmancık Volunteer Battalion, see, *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 118 (July 2004, document no. 11, 32, 34, pp. 27, 108, 114. Also see Orhan Koloğlu, "Küt-ül-Amara Zaferine Rağmen Irak Nasıl Kaybedildi?," *Popüler Tarih*, no. 32 (April 2003), pp. 50–55; Cevdet Saraçer, *Osmancık: Tarihsel Doku İçinde Unutulan Bir Kent* (Istanbul: Dört Renk, 1999), pp. 94–109; Hamza Osman Erkan, *Bir Avuç Kahraman* (Istanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi, 1946), pp. 6–15; C. C. R. Murphy, "The Turkish Army in the Great War," *The Journal of Royal United Service Institution*, no. 65 (February/November, 1920), p. 93.

[26] Several books on local histories of the towns in the Black Sea region mention such militia bands, each of which usually included 100 to 300 men recruited under the leadership of a notable of a town. For a few examples, see Muzaffer Lermioğlu, *Akçaabat-Akçaabat Tarihi ve Birinci Genel Savaş-Hicret Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Kardeşler Basımevi, 1949), pp. 198–201; M. Adil Özder (ed.), *Artvin ve Çevresi: 1828–1921 Savaşları* (Ankara: Ay Matbaası, 1971); Haşim Albayrak, *I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Doğu Karadeniz Muharebesi ve Of Direnişi*, (Istanbul: Babıali Kitaplığı, 2007). Locally raised volunteers also constituted a symbol of patriotism and enthusiasm that could be exploited by authorities for propaganda. News about such local volunteers was presented in newspapers as an exemplary act to be followed everywhere. See, for example, "Gönüllü Alayları," *İkdâm*, 27 Kanunievvel 1330/9 January 1915.

[27] Article 88, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 687.

as murder, desertion from the army, robbery and even banditry.[28] This situation contravened conventional post-*Tanzimat* restrictions on volunteers in the armed forces since all laws for military service required that volunteers be both physically and morally fit for service.[29] The Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914 was in theory no exception in this respect, as it added the condition that local officials should confirm that potential volunteers were of sound repute and that they had not been involved in any degrading crimes.[30] Instead of this insistence on morality, authorities now tended to insist that volunteers simply be "brave, physically fit and trustworthy in carrying out duties assigned to them."[31] Additionally, authorities abandoned the previous condition which stipulated that enlistment would postpone a volunteer's sentence; if they performed useful and effective service in fighting, prisoner-volunteers could be pardoned entirely.[32]

The available evidence shows that prisoners enthusiastically embraced offers of release and amnesty in return for voluntary military service. Many prisoners applied to become volunteers to fight in the armed bands of the Special Organization. As soon as official announcements were made that prisoner-volunteers would be accepted for guerilla fighting,[33] prisoners began to send telegrams to the Interior and War ministries, expressing their wish to be released to volunteer for the armed forces. Such telegrams, examples of which exist in abundance in the Ottoman archives, were usually written and signed by a prisoner spokesman on behalf of all prisoners in a particular prison. The text of almost all of these telegrams contains formulaic patriotic expressions, which emphasize such points as "all prisoners wish to participate in the holy war against the infidel enemies" or "we too want to die for our fatherland."[34]

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[28] Sarısaman, "Trabzon Mıntıkası Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Heyet-i İdaresinin Faaliyetleri ve Gürcü Lejyonu," p. 11; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 375.

[29] See Ayın, *Tanzimat'tan Sonra Askere Alma Kanunları.*

[30] Article 73, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 683. Osman Köksal, "Osmanlı Devleti'nde Asker Almada Son Durum: 29 Nisan 1330 Tarihli Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanunu ve Başlıca Hükümleri," *Askeri Tarih Bülteni*, no. 29 (August 1990), p. 78.

[31] BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 79/8, 21 Muharrem 1333/9 December 1914.

[32] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/245, 11 Muharrem 1333/29 November 1914.

[33] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 46/134, 12 Zilhicce 1332/1 November 1914.

[34] For a few examples, see BOA, DH.ŞFR., 48/93, 3 Safer 1333/21 December 1914, from Diyarbekir; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/420, 22 Muharrem 1333/10 December 1914, from Baghdad; BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 24/29, 28 Zilkâde 1334/26 September 1916, from Urfa; BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 20/52, 12 Şa'ban 1334/14 June 1916, from Yozgat; BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 24/22, 22 Zilkâde 1334/20 September 1916, from Isparta; BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 33/7, 9 Şa'ban 1335/31 May 1917, from Muğla; BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 33/25, 26 Şa'ban 1335/17 June 1917, from Siverek.

The number of applications from provincial prisons was at such a high level that military authorities, while they seemed quite content with this situation, needed to establish certain procedures and also restrictions for the acceptance of prisoners as volunteers.[35] First of all, medical examinations to determine whether a volunteer was physically fit for military service were required in all cases.[36] Elderly, sick and disabled prisoners were not eligible. Secondly, "political prisoners" were not regarded as appropriate for voluntary military service, even if they were physically or morally fit.[37] Although documents do not specify what exactly it meant to be a "political prisoner" in the war years, it is quite likely that after 1913, this concept applied first and foremost to anti-CUP dissidents or opponents of the CUP government's policies. Moreover, even a slight public criticism of the CUP government could be enough for a person to be sent to an Anatolian town as a political exile, if not becoming a prisoner *per se*. Whereas there are examples that some "political exiles" could from time to time be released to join the army during the war,[38] the exiles who were more overt dissidents of the CUP, such as the journalist Refii Cevat [Ulunay], were never given this option.[39]

Ottoman authorities also gave priority to those prisoner-volunteers who they considered immediately useful in guerilla fighting. Particularly for the Caucasus region, volunteers who were familiar with the geography, local people and languages were preferred and this preference was clearly stated in the relevant documents. Criminals who engaged in smuggling and banditry were also among the most desirable, since it was thought that such activities made them most familiar with the territory in which they would serve.[40] Bandits of the eastern Black Sea region in particular were urged to join the armed bands of the Special Organization with the promise of amnesty. In this way the authorities hoped to attain several objectives: incorporation of bandits in the volunteer units would not only curb banditry in the region (a goal which the security forces could never

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35 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 48/28, 28 Muharrem 1333/16 December 1914.

36 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 48/27, 28 Muharrem 1333/16 December 1914.

37 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 44/134, 8 Şevval 1332/30 August 1914; BOA, DH. ŞFR., 48/27, 28 Muharrem 1333/16 December 1914.

38 Refik Halid Karay, who himself was a political exile in Sinop when the war started, has said in his memoirs that many of the exiles in Sinop were pardoned and the younger ones were drafted in the army. See Refik Halid Karay, *Bir Ömür Boyunca*, second edition (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1996), p. 40.

39 Refii Cevat Ulunay, *Menfalar/Menfiler: Sürgün Hatıraları* (Istanbul: Arma Yayınları, 1999), pp. 212–213.

40 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/96, 96–1, 2 Muharrem 1333/20 November 1914.

achieve entirely), but armed guerilla forces would benefit from their familiarity with the territory.[41] Some documents even contain specific names of the people to be released from prisons to be employed in the armed bands. For example, a decision of the Council of Ministers made on 1 December 1914 stated that the prisoners Mihaliçli Kazım, Kurtdereli Mehmed, Çerkes Dereli Saadet, Keçi Dereli Receb, Kazık Salih Hüseyin, Manyaslı Hüseyin and Darıcalı Kâzım were to be released (and their sentences were to be postponed) to be employed in the armed bands as volunteers that would be sent to the Caucasus.[42] Similarly, the Interior Ministry sent a telegram to the governor of Bitlis on 8 November 1914, asking specifically to release the prisoners Çerkes Eşref and Çerkes Allahverdi from the provincial prison for the same purpose.[43]

The authorities also preferred "influential prisoners" (*nüfuz sahibi mahbûs*) who would be able to form their own armed bands. A telegram that was sent by the Interior Ministry to the provinces of Van, Mosul, Bitlis, Erzurum and Diyarbekir on 9 September 1914 asked the governors of these provinces to search for such "influential prisoners" in their provincial prisons, who would be released for this specific purpose.[44] The fact that this telegram was sent to the eastern and southeastern Anatolian provinces where tribal structures were strong suggests that "influential prisoners" here might actually refer to important local persons who could recruit voluntary fighters by using their tribal connections. Another telegram sent from the Interior Ministry on 18 November 1914 to the governors of Erzurum, Bitlis, Basra, Baghdad, Aleppo, Diyarbekir, Mamüretülaziz, Mosul, Van, Urfa, and Zor seems to prove this point as it directly states that it would be appropriate to pardon those prisoners whose release would produce a positive effect on their tribes.[45]

Preferences and priorities in accepting volunteers from prisons kept this practice within certain limits and it did not extend to all prisoners. The Interior Ministry warned its local administrators that a prisoner would be released as a volunteer only when it became really necessary.[46] However, such restrictions and the priorities given to certain prisoners seem to have caused resentment among those prisoners who were aware of the practice

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[41] Arif Cemil, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa,* p. 84.

[42] BOA, MV., 195/28, 13 Muharrem 1333/1 December 1914.

[43] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 46/251, 19 Zilhicce 1332/8 November 1914. Note that the Circassians usually stand out in such lists.

[44] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 44/224, 18 Şevval 1332/9 September 1914.

[45] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/70, 29 Zilhicce 1332/18 November 1914.

[46] BOA, DH. EUM.MTK., 79/66, 30 Rebîulevvel 1333/15 February 1915.

but had not been considered for voluntary service. Many telegrams were sent to the authorities from such prisoners, protesting this situation and petitioning the relevant authorities to reconsider their bid for volunteerism. One such telegram was sent by a prisoner named Hacı İbrahim from the Malatya prison, speaking on behalf of all prisoners. After complaining that they were not released like fellow inmates in other prisons who were now employed in the armed forces as voluntary fighters or in the fields as farm laborers, Hacı İbrahim remorsefully stated that they were also "the sons of the same fatherland . . . who happened to be prisoners only because of ignorance (*cehâlet*);" he stated that regardless of the mistakes they had made in the past, they were now "ready for self-correction and to sacrifice their lives for the fatherland and nation."[47] Another letter was sent from the prison of Karahisar-ı Sâhib (Afyon) by a prisoner named Osman. He complained that even prisoners who had been sentenced to death or life imprisonment were released from other prisons and sent to the front, while they were "devoid of this honorable duty;" he petitioned "in the name of justice" for all the prisoners in his prison to be released to join the armed forces.[48]

How can we interpret this willingness of Ottoman prisoners to volunteer for war? Was it sincere patriotism, or an opportunistic bid for freedom in the guise of an overstated enthusiasm for the war? Of course, among many applications for voluntary military service, there might have been some sincerely patriotic volunteers who wanted to contribute to the country's armed forces. But it is also quite obvious that becoming a volunteer in this respect was actually a response to the state's call and, therefore, an occasion for prisoners—legally "outcasts" in society due to punishment by the authority—to restore their rights and status in the eyes of society and the state. After all, freedom on the battlefield must have been much more desirable than captivity in prison for a long period, where living conditions during the war were actually not better than those on the battlefield.[49] Voluntary service could also be a shortcut to amnesty,

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47 BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 31/65, 3 Safer 1336/18 November 1917.

48 BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 17/10, 20 Cemâziyelevvel 1334/25 March 1916.

49 See Fatmagül Demirel, "Kastamonu Hapishanesi," in Lütfü Seymen (ed.), *"Üsküdar'a Kadar" Kastamonu* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008), pp. 299–305. For a general study on the process of reforming the prisons in the late Ottoman Empire, see Kent Fielding Schull, "Penal Institutions, Nation-State Construction, and Modernity in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908–1919" (Ph.d. dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 2007). Regarding the Great War period, the writer evaluates the process almost entirely through legal regulations and projects concerning the prison reform. Therefore, he neither com-

which was promised by the state with the condition of usefulness on the part of volunteers.[50] Moreover, another incentive offered by the state was that the duration of a prisoner's voluntary service in the armed bands could be officially counted towards that person's actual military service obligation.[51] Another factor that might have increased the willingness of prisoners to volunteer might have been the fact that the state wanted them to serve in irregular armed bands, not to be employed in regular military divisions and subject to strict discipline. This would grant them a certain amount of autonomy of action, which could be used and abused for personal interests. As will be discussed below, some armed band leaders and members tried to carve out personal spheres of power and gain material benefits from their missions.

Indeed, some contemporary observers testified that there were many people willing to join armed bands as voluntary fighters with the hope of gaining material benefit.[52] At the very least, enlistment in an armed band could secure a free subsistence throughout the war years, since the provisions of such armed bands (at least those on the Caucasus front) were to be provided by the local population in the form of "donations" (*iâne*).[53] In addition, volunteers also received supplies and food from the army units to which they were attached.[54] Collecting provisions from local people in the form of donations was an officially imposed decision with which local administrators were bound to comply.[55] This situation gave the members of armed bands the *de facto* right to act as if they were war tax collectors and pressure civilians for provisions. They were also virtually entitled to

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ments on the practice of prisoner-volunteers during the war nor discusses how it fit in the CUP government's perspective of penal institutions, which, the writer argues, functioned as "a laboratory" for the CUP's "vision of a progressive, civilized, scientific and thoroughly modern imperial society" (p. 113). More balanced research on the Ottoman prisons, which pays more attention to the problems and *ad hoc* applications in practice, and that undertakes a more critical analysis of the CUP government's approach to the prisons and prisoners (at least during the Great War), would certainly necessitate the revision of this argument.

50 In fact, amnesties in the Ottoman Empire could sometimes be issued without expecting much from prisoners. For example, upon the sultan's "return to good health" (*iâde-i âfiyet*), the Ottoman state issued amnesty on 1 July 1915 for the prisoners who had completed two-thirds of their sentence. "Zât-ı Şevketmeâb Hazret-i Hilâfetpenâhinin İâde-i Âfiyetleri Münasebetiyle Müddet-i Cezâiyelerinin Sülsanını İkmâl Eden Mahkûminin Afv-ı Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 18 Haziran 1331/1 July 1915, *Düstûr*, 2, vol. 7, no. 262, p. 631.

51 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/440, 24 Muharrem 1333/12 December 1914.

52 Arif Cemil, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, p. 118.

53 Ibid., pp. 85–86; "Gönüllü Alayları," *İkdâm*, 27 Kanunievvel 1330/9 January 1915.

54 Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 365.

55 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 61/88, 1334.R.18 (23 February 1916).

accumulate "booty" during their raids in enemy territory, mostly in the form of livestock.[56]

Such practices sometimes encouraged arbitrary actions on the part of the armed bands. Poorly defined duties and weak formal control mechanisms facilitated the accumulation of significant personal power on the part of certain armed band leaders. For instance, Topal Osman (Osman the Lame) represents a good example of a voluntary armed band leader who established a remarkable modicum of autonomy and power for himself. From Giresun, a district of Trabzon, Osman volunteered for the Ottoman army during the Balkan War (his leg was wounded during the war, hence the nickname "the lame"). He also served in the Special Organization during the Great War by forming a band of volunteers. Osman mainly carried out guerilla attacks against the Russians on the Caucasus front. Of the 150 volunteers whom he recruited for this mission, almost all were prisoners from Trabzon.[57] He also enlisted volunteers from various villages near his hometown through a festive recruitment campaign in which he wandered among villages with a group of drum and horn players and announced the call to voluntary service to musical accompaniment.[58] Osman also carried out other missions, such as pursuing and capturing draft evaders and deserters in the Black Sea region.[59] The draft evaders and deserters whom he pursued were mostly Ottoman Greeks, some of whom also formed their own armed bands to resist domestic security forces and attack villagers in the region.[60]

However, it seems that although his assignment was to help military authorities on the battlefield and the home front, Topal Osman ignored and circumvented orders, and in certain instances even interfered with local administrators and abused civilians. For example, local civilian officials in the Black Sea region, such as the governor of Trabzon Cemal Azmi, complained that Topal Osman's band was out of control and had interrupted government affairs in the region. Civilian officials even petitioned the Third Army headquarters and requested that Topal Osman's band

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[56] Arif Cemil, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa,* pp. 48, 59.

[57] Ömer Sami Coşar, *Atatürk'ün Muhafızı Topal Osman* (*Osman Ağa*) (Istanbul: Harman Yayınları, 1971), pp. 5–7.

[58] Cemal Şener, *Topal Osman Olayı,* tenth edition (Istanbul: Etik Yayınları, 2004), p. 125.

[59] Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Millî Kurtuluş Tarihi, 1838'den 1995'e*, vol. 3, fifth edition (Istanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1983), pp. 1187–1201.

[60] Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e,* p. 116.

be dissolved or sent away from Giresun. The Third Army headquarters took these complaints seriously and summoned Topal Osman to the Sivas court-martial to be interrogated; Topal Osman was subsequently kept under arrest for a few months.[61]

In fact, such cases of arbitrary action and lack of discipline not only constituted a source of tension between volunteers and authorities, but also raised suspicion on the part of military commanders regarding the efficacy of volunteers. Maintaining its control over volunteers was a key factor for the Ottoman state to accept the continuation of the practice. The available cases show that even the most terrible murderers and robbers could be accepted as volunteers so long as the decision was taken by the state which would continue to control the actions of such volunteers. Voluntary military service could provide criminals with a means of escape from captivity, arrest or legal prosecution, but the awareness and approval of the state were always needed. From the state's perspective, volunteerism was valuable as far as it was directed by the state itself. In the cases where it began to be out of its control, the state could try to void any voluntary mission regardless of its usefulness.

The case of Hazinedârzâde Ekrem Bey from Canik, a sub-province of Trabzon, helps clarify this point. Accused of murder, Ekrem Bey apparently almost avoided sentencing since he led a volunteer band in the war. But a telegram sent by the Interior Ministry to the governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Canik on 18 January 1915 required that legal prosecution be carried out, since the Ministry of Justice had not informed the Interior Ministry of Ekrem Bey's participation in the war and deployment on the front.[62] In another case, the Ministry of Justice ordered the governor of Mosul to "re-capture and imprison" the prisoner-volunteers from the Süleymaniye prison, who had been released to join the army by local officials without the final official approval of the Ministry of Justice. The action was not only declared illegal, but the governorship of Mosul was also required to explain the circumstances under which local officials had originally permitted it.[63] The Ottoman state did not tolerate any re-interpretation or alternative action concerning the release of prisoners for voluntary service

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[61] Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e,* pp. 119–120. On the irresponsible activities of Topal Osman as an armed band leader, see also Arif Cemil, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, pp. 168–175.

[62] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/59, 2 Rebîulevvel 1333/18 January 1915.

[63] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 64/118, 20 Receb 1334/23 May 1916.

that would go beyond the limits that it had drawn. Therefore, the Interior Ministry reacted immediately when it learned that some prisoner-volunteers in Siirt, a district of Bitlis, were released by the district governor and, instead of joining armed bands as volunteers, went to their village to encourage local people to volunteer for the army. In a telegram to the Bitlis province, the Interior Ministry declared that this action was outside the accepted official practice of releasing prisoners for voluntary service. The ministry further stated that the action was also intolerable because it could harm public order as local people would react negatively to seeing former criminals wandering freely among them.[64]

On the other hand, when a volunteer proved to be useless on the battlefield, the authorities did not hesitate to dismiss him. Halil Bey from Artvin was one example of a prisoner who joined the armed forces on the Caucasus front as a voluntary band leader, but was dismissed because of "cowardice" in fighting.[65]

While prisoner-volunteers were mostly employed in the armed bands that were formed by the Special Organization for informal missions, there are also examples of prisoners who joined regular armed units on the battlefield, as in the case of some prisoners serving long-term sentences, who were employed in auxiliary services on the Dardanelles front.[66]

Immigrant and Refugee Volunteers

Immigrants and refugees (*muhâcir*) constituted another major source of volunteers for both the Special Organization and regular military units. The Muslims who were forced to emigrate because of military invasion or political oppression in various territories of Russia and the Balkans had helped reshaped the demographic composition of the Ottoman Empire since the late nineteenth century. As far as the obligation of military service was concerned, the *muhâcir*s in the Ottoman lands had to fulfill the requirements of the Ottoman conscription system to acquire full Ottoman citizenship status. Moreover, a decree was issued in August 1914, which

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[64] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/92, 5 Rebîulevvel 1333/21 January 1915; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 53/264, 24 Receb 1333/7 June 1915.

[65] He was also accused of collecting money and jewelry by force from civilians in Artvin and sent to court martial. BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/91, 5 Rebîulevvel 1333/21 January 1915; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/240, 24 Rebîulevvel 1333/9 February 1915.

[66] Emin Çöl, *Bir Erin Anıları: Çanakkale-Sina Savaşları*, ed. by Celal Kazdağlı (Istanbul: Nöbetçi Yayınları, 2009), p. 53.

required all men who took Ottoman citizenship to accept conscription into the Ottoman army in return for their right to be accepted as *muhâcir*s and settled on Ottoman lands.[67]

However, the Ottoman state tended to provide a certain degree of flexibility to these newcomers in order to make their process of settlement and adaptation easier. For instance, instead of subjecting the newcomers to military obligations immediately, the state exempted them from service for a certain period in order to facilitate their adaptation to their new homes. The Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914 determined that all past and future *muhâcir*s would be subjected to the military service procedure after six years from the date of their arrival.[68] This meant that, at a time when almost all able-bodied males of the empire were already conscripted in the military, the male population of *muhâcir*s provided an attractive source of energetic volunteer fighters for the Ottoman armed forces during the war. Although the above-mentioned six-year period of adaptation was modified during the war and reduced to three months as the need for manpower became more pressing,[69] many *muhâcir*s of military age actually remained undrafted because of infrastructural problems related to demographic records and the mobility of these new subjects.[70] But in any case, where conscription efforts failed, the call to voluntary service attempted to compensate that shortcoming.

There were also other and perhaps more significant factors that made *muhâcir*s the most desirable volunteers preferred of Ottoman authorities, especially by the Special Organization. For example, volunteering for the Special Organization's armed bands in the Caucasus provided *muhâcir*s

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[67] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 157.

[68] Article 135, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," p. 700.

[69] An amendment that was made to the Temporary Law for Military Service on 5 April 1915 determined that if the War Ministry considered it necessary, males of all past and future *muhâcir*s who were of military age would be conscripted three months after the date they arrived in the empire. "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatine Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 23 Mart 1331/5 April 1915, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, p. 546.

[70] Although the Ottoman state promulgated a new Census Law on 27 August 1914 requiring all former residents and newcomers to be registered in the census registers set up in districts and villages, which actually specifically targeted *muhâcir*s, the regulation was not fully enforced, either because of infrastructural deficiencies in the Ottoman bureaucracy or because many *muhâcir*s tried to avoid registration in order not to be conscripted and taxed. Therefore, in late 1916, the head of the Department of Tribes and Refugees (*Aşâir ve Muhâcirîn Müdürlüğü*), Şükrü Bey, stated: "Up to now we have not been able to find a census document which gives any sort of definite figure of how many *muhacirs* have come to the Ottoman Empire and how many have been settled," quoted in Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 577.

who fled from Russia with an opportunity to fight against the former oppressor; it was a chance to exact "revenge" and to regain their former homes. While *muhâcir*s were aware of the difficulty (perhaps even the impossibility) of attaining this goal, volunteering for the Ottoman armed forces against Russia had other potential advantages: it was a rather effective way of strengthening their right to new homes in their new country. Volunteering would confirm their rights to be granted land and status in the Ottoman territory, and expedite their integration into Ottoman society. Volunteering opened up new channels for *muhâcir*s to engage in dialogue with the Ottoman state—a dialogue which would further establish their legitimate residency in the Ottoman Empire and increase their status.

The Ottoman state's appeal to *muhâcir* populations to mobilize volunteers was shaped by the specific conditions and objectives of military campaigns on a particular front. As far as the Caucasus front was concerned, for example, former Muslim residents of the Caucasus and the Laz people of the eastern Black Sea region were most preferred. Thus, the Ottomans tried to mobilize the Circassian *muhâcir*s (i.e., the North Caucasian immigrants and refugees) who had settled in the Anatolian provinces and in Syria during the previous decades.[71] These *muhâcir*s would be useful in two ways: firstly, they were familiar with the mountainous geographical conditions of the region and, secondly, "they had come into the empire because they been driven out of their homes by the Russians, so they were particularly interested in joining the Ottoman forces that were attempting to regain control of the lands that they had been forced to leave."[72] The sentiment of revenge was a major motivating factor in their mobilization.[73]

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[71] BOA, DH.EUM.EMN., 89/14, 6 Ramazan 1332/29 July 1914.

[72] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 157.

[73] Revenge was indeed one of the major motives in the discourse of popular mobilization after the Balkan War. Although there is no in-depth study on the efficacy of this revenge discourse in the recruitment of *muhâcir*s, there is a tendency in Ottoman-Turkish historiography to assume that revenge represented a principal motivation of the *muhâcir* population. However, as has been mentioned above, a future-oriented motivation for a better integration into the new land could be as much (if not more) influential for them. On the other hand, there are still some examples which imply that some *muhâcir*s could be mobilized by the discourse of revenge. For example, Dido Sotiriou mentions that the *muhâcir*s who had been forced to flee from Greece worked to provoke hatred among the Muslim population in the Aegean region against Ottoman Greek villagers. See Sotiriou, *Farewell to Anatolia*, pp. 80–81.

In fact, making use of *muhâcir*s for militaristic purposes was not an entirely new strategy for the Ottoman state. Abdülhamid II, for example, relied on the Circassian refugees in various fields of state administration and the military because they were considered a "trustworthy" Muslim group. The Circassian refugees themselves were also quite willing to enter such a relationship with the Ottoman state, since military service not only provided an immediate and practical way of promoting their status in a new society, but also represented a solid career opportunity. There is evidence that many Circassian refugees submitted petitions to the Ottoman state to be enrolled in "voluntary and chargeable" military service as early as the 1860s. The popular (and also official) perception of their cultural traits which were regarded as prone to militaristic skills also contributed to their enrollment in armed services.[74] They were not only increasingly employed in the ranks of the Ottoman army and gendarmerie, but also used as irregular forces for domestic security purposes against internal threats to the sultan's authority. The Circassians continued to provide militaristic services to the Ottoman state during the CUP-dominated Young Turk regime after 1908. In fact, their relationship with the state during this period strengthened.[75] They also became actively involved in the Special Organization during the Great War. Therefore, it is no coincidence that some of the most famous, active and high-ranking members of the Special Organization were Circassians, such as Eşref Kuşçubaşı[76] and Yakub Cemil,[77] who were most active in the Arab provinces and in the Caucasus. Close ties within the members of Circassian refugee communities in Anatolia was another factor that made Circassian volunteers an attractive source of recruits for Ottoman authorities. As Ryan Gingeras has observed, "to recruit a local Circassian notable, paramilitary leader or even a criminal would correspondingly mean the recruitment, and loyalty,

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[74] Georgy Chochiev, "Some Aspects of Social Adaptation of the North Caucasian Immigrants in the Ottoman Empire in the Second Half of the XIXth Century (on the Immigrants' Applications to Authorities)," paper presented to the 15th Turkish Congress of History (September 2006, Ankara), p. 7 (The Turkish translation of this essay with appended transcriptions of Ottoman documents was published in *Kebikeç*, no. 23 (2007), pp. 407–456).

[75] On the relationship of the Ottoman state with the Circassian refugees, see Arsen Avagyan, *Osmanlı İmparatoluğu ve Kemalist Türkiye'nin Devlet-İktidar Sisteminde Çerkesler*, trans. Ludmilla Denisenko (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2004), pp. 95–153.

[76] See his own account, Eşref Kuşçubaşı, *Hayber'de Türk Cengi.*

[77] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 55–A/95, 25 Şevval 1333/5 September 1915.

of untold members of armed men, and perhaps the entirety of their native communities or neighborhoods."[78]

Volunteering was for the most part an answer to the call of the state, not a mere voluntary decision taken by the volunteer. The Ottoman state sometimes made open announcements that it was in need of men, who were familiar with the territory, local people and languages of the Caucasus. The state sometimes even specified that the Circassians and the Laz were preferable for this mission and urged local administrators to recruit as many Circassian and Laz volunteers as possible, including those in prison.[79]

It should be noted that Ottoman local administrators played the key role in mobilizing volunteers for the Ottoman army. As the primary agents of the state in the provinces, they were in dialogue with local populations and communicated the state's call to voluntary service to local people. In this sense, their role in mobilizing volunteers was as important for the Ottoman military as their function of supervising the standard process of conscription. The efforts of some local administrators in this direction show that they acted not only as mediators but also as organizers. Their efforts also suggest how the Ottoman state's preference towards *muhâcir* recruitment was realized during the war. For example, the governor of Ankara, Mazhar Bey, reported on 10 December 1914 that "he was in the process of enlisting about 30,000 volunteers consisting of Circassians, Kurdish tribesmen, local Turks, and *muhâcir*s from the Caucasus and Southeastern Europe, who were anxious to serve in the Ottoman armed forces. He was organizing them into a unit which he would send to eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus after a few weeks of military training."[80] Similarly, the governor (*mutasarrıf*) of Kal'a-i Sultaniye (Çanakkale) "enrolled almost one hundred *muhâcir*s who had come across Anatolia from Daghistan and other places in the Caucasus."[81] The governor of İzmir also organized a

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[78] Ryan Gingeras, "Last Rites for a 'Pure Bandit': Clandestine Service, Historiography and the Origins of the Turkish 'Deep State'," *Past and Present*, no. 206 (February 2010), p. 162.

[79] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/196, 8 Muharrem 1333/26 November 1914; BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 79/8, 21 Muharrem 1333/9 December 1914. Also see Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913–1918)*, second edition (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2002), p. 131; Ziya Şâkir, *Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?*, p. 50.

[80] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 378.

[81] Ibid., p. 379.

volunteer force of some 100 men, who were mostly Laz, Muslim Georgian and Abkhaz *muhâcir*s who immigrated into the region from Batumi.[82]

Some *muhâcir*s undertook the role of organizing volunteer units on their own and led their own armed bands, which usually contained fellow members of the same ethnic group. Sheikh Şâmilzâde Kâmil of Daghistan, for example, gathered some 300 volunteers in Bursa to join the fight on the Caucasus front, most probably from among his fellow countrymen who had immigrated there.[83] Circassian Hüseyin Bey was another example, who recruited some 200 volunteers in Korkudeli, a district of Teke, to form a band of cavalrymen that the Ottoman military thought would be useful for the military operations for domestic security purposes in the Teke region and its environs.[84] Moreover, in search of volunteers who were familiar with the Caucasus region, the Ottoman state also sought the cooperation of Christian Georgian nationalists against Russia.[85]

The Muslim Georgian refugees in the Ottoman Empire, who mostly immigrated from Russian-occupied Batoum and settled in the central and eastern Black Sea region, were also active in organizing volunteer bands to fight for the Ottoman army. The band of Çürüksulu Ziya Bey, which consisted of some 300 men recruited from the region between Ordu and Samsun, was composed of Muslim Georgian *muhâcir*s in the empire. The band leader Ziya Bey was a son of Çürüksulu Ali Pasha who acted as the state official (*iskân memuru*) responsible for settling Muslim Georgians in the Black Sea region. He was also the virtual leader of the Muslim Georgian population in the empire, a role that passed to his son Ziya Bey after his death in 1911.[86] Ziya Bey's brother, Fuat Bey, also organized a band of volunteers consisting of Muslim Georgians in the same region. These

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[82] Pehlivanlı, "Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa," p. 291.

[83] ATASE, BDH, Dosya 2181, Klasör 1.

[84] ATSE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 4–23 (26 Kanûn-i evvel 1332/8 January 1917).

[85] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 47/96, 96–1, 2 Muharrem 1333/20 November 1914. On the cooperation of the Ottomans with the Georgian nationalists, also see Arif Cemil, *Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa*, p. 41; Vahdet Keleşyılmaz, "Kafkas Harekatının Perde Arkası," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, vol. 16, no. 47 (July 2000), pp. 367–392. Sarısaman, "Trabzon Mıntıkası Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Heyet-i İdaresinin Faaliyetleri ve Gürcü Lejyonu," pp. 22–26.

[86] Oktay Özel, "Muhacirler, Yerliler ve Gayrimüslimler: Osmanlı'nın Son Devrinde Orta Karadeniz'de Toplumsal Uyumun Sınırları Üzerine Bazı Gözlemler," *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 5 (Spring 2007), p. 107.

volunteer forces helped the Ottoman military defend the Black Sea coast and engaged the Russians on the Caucasus.[87]

Tribal Volunteers

The new conscription system of the Ottoman Empire obliged each male subject of the empire to serve in the army for a determined period, but making this a legal responsibility was much easier than implementing it in reality. Infrastructural deficiencies of the empire made it quite difficult in some parts of the country to keep comprehensive demographic records, to carry out regular censuses, to establish an efficient local administration at the village or small town levels, and to establish a functional security force to enforce law.[88] It can be said that the Ottoman conscription system barely functioned in peripheral regions where tribal and nomadic lifestyles still flourished, and modernizing reforms barely touched daily life. This was the case in various parts of the eastern and southeastern Anatolian provinces, which were mostly populated by Muslim Kurds (and also in various parts of the Ottoman Middle East where Arab-Bedouin tribes lived).[89] However, at least as far as the mobilization of military manpower was concerned, this situation did not necessarily mean that populations of these regions remained completely isolated from the system. Where the

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[87] Oktay Özel, "Çürüksulu Ali Paşa ve Ailesi Üzerine Biyografik Notlar," *Kebikeç*, no. 16 (2003), pp. 121–123.

[88] Ottoman recruiting offices in such provinces were often warned by the center about such deficiencies in demographic records and were urged to take extra practical measures to overcome them. For correspondence containing such warnings in the Mosul-Kirkuk region, see, ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5766, Dosya 6, Fihrist 020.

[89] Recruiting volunteers in the Ottoman Middle-East was not confined to the Bedouin elements. It was actually a wider practice which had political implications. The issue of Arab volunteers in the Ottoman armed forces can be studied (in a separate in-depth study) within the wider context of political relations between the CUP government and important local Arab political figures. Although these relations tended to become tense in the second half of the war, various Arab notables/political figures actually formed volunteer units at the beginning of the war to join the Ottoman armed forces as a sign of loyalty to the Ottoman government. An important example in this respect is the volunteer unit formed in the Hijaz by Abdullah, the son of Sharif Huseyin, the emir of Mecca. See Kral Abdullah, *Biz Osmanlı'ya Neden İsyan Ettik?*, third edition, trans. Halit Özkan (Istanbul: Klasik Yayınları, 2006), pp. 81–82. Another example was Shakib Arslan's volunteers from the Druze. See Kayalı, *Arab and Young Turks*, p. 189. There were other examples too, and the official history of the war also emphasizes the political importance of such volunteers units, as well as their manpower contribution. See *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 4, part 1: Sina-Filistin Cephesi, Harbin Başlangıcından İkinci Gazze Muharebeleri Sonuna Kadar* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1979), p. 174.

methods of the centralizing modern state failed, the Ottomans applied "old" imperial strategies; but they did this in a revised form influenced by the mentality of modernization. Where individual-based universal conscription failed, the state tried to apply a method used in *ancien regime* armies, in which "soldiers constituted a corporate group and as such owed military service to the state."[90]

The Ottoman state had designed a method during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) to use tribal manpower for military purposes. This method had created tribal military units as of 1890 in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, which were called the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments (*Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları*). This was an irregular militia composed of select Kurdish tribes that was based on the Russian Cossack model. The basis of joining this militia was, at least in principle, voluntary. Besides its intended function as being an auxiliary force in the region acting on behalf of the Ottoman state, the Hamidiye was also a part of a larger socio-political project aimed at creating a special bond of unity between the center and the Kurds.[91] In Robert Olson's words, "it would tie the empire more firmly to its Muslim roots and provide a defense against Russia and the Armenians, both increasingly aggressive after 1878, and the Kurds could be used as a balance against the urban notables and the provincial governments."[92] The more direct aims of the Hamidiye project were defined by Martin van Bruinessen as "suppression of Armenian separatist activities and a better control over the Kurds."[93]

The Young Turk regime did not abandon this goal after 1908 and these tribal regiments continued to exist, although slight modifications were

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[90] Mjoset and van Holde, "Killing for the State, Dying for the Nation," p. 30.

[91] Janet Klein, "Power in the Periphery: The Hamidiye Light Cavalry and the Struggle over Ottoman Kurdistan, 1890–1914" (Ph.d. dissertation, Princeton University, 2002), p. 6. For an earlier account of the Hamidiye forces within the context of Abdülhamid II's centralist policies, see Bayram Kodaman, "Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları: II. Abdülhamid ve Doğu Anadolu Aşiretleri," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi*, no. 32 (1979), pp. 427–480. Also see Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains*, pp. 68–93; Selim Deringil, "From Ottoman to Turk: Self-Image and Social Engineering in Turkey," in Dru C. Gladney (ed.), *Making Majorities: Constituting the Nation in Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Fiji, Turkey, and the United States* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 217–226; Stephen Duguid, "The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Policy in Eastern Anatolia," *Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 9 (1973), pp. 130–155. Also see Osman Aytar, *Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna* (Istanbul: Medya Güneşi Yayınları, 1992), pp. 53–150.

[92] Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Rebellion, 1880–1925* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), p. 8.

[93] Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992), p. 186.

made in 1910, including changing their names to the Tribal Light Cavalry Regiments (*Aşiret Hafif Süvari Alayları*).[94] This change was part of a larger project that aimed to turn these regiments into auxiliary military forces to be used in modern guerilla warfare.[95] The 1910 regulations also stipulated that only members of nomadic tribes could join the tribal regiments, abolishing the existing ones formed by sedentary tribes, which would now be regarded in the same light as settled populations for recruitment purposes.[96] However, the Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914 exempted those (ex-) nomadic tribes which were settled (*aşâir-i seyyâreden iskân olunanlar*), from military service.[97] But legal exemption from military service did not mean not serving at all in the armed forces, as these tribes had been a main target of the state's encouragement effort to mobilize voluntary forces during the war.

The irregular tribal regiments took on new roles when the Ottoman Empire entered the Great War. They were now expected not only to continue to repress domestic threats against the Ottoman interests in their region, but they were also deployed on various fronts (especially in the Third Army on the Caucasus against the Russians,[98] and also on the Mesopotamia front)[99] as auxiliary forces to support the Ottoman army.[100] Robert Olson has estimated that in 1914 the total number of volunteers in tribal regiments was around 50,000.[101] On the Caucasus front, British military intelligence estimated that from 20,000 to 30,000 tribal cavalry volunteers were in the field against Russia at the earlier stages of the war.[102]

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[94] They were also called during the Great War "the Reserve Cavalry Regiments" (*İhtiyât Süvari Alayları*) or sometimes just "militia forces" (*milis kuvvetleri*). Klein, "Power in the Periphery," pp. 7, 9.

[95] Kodaman, "Hamidiye Hafif Süvari Alayları," p. 477.

[96] Klein, "Power in the Periphery," pp. 221–222.

[97] Article 135, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," *Düstûr*, 2, vol. 6, p. 700.

[98] S. Selçuk Günay. "I. Dünya Harbi'nin Başlangıcında Rus Saldırısı Karşısında İhtiyat (Hamidiye) Süvari Alayları," in *Türkler*, vol. 13, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Yayınları, 2002, pp. 331–335; Mehmet Evsile, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Kafkas Cephesi'nde Aşiret Mensuplarından Oluşturulan Milis Birlikleri," *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, vol. XII, no. 36 (November 1996), pp. 911–926.

[99] On the use of tribal irregular forces on this front, see Orhan Avcı, *Irak'ta Türk Ordusu, 1914–1918* (Istanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 2004), pp. 33–40.

[100] They "also became identified with the mass murder and deportation of Armenians that took place during the war." Klein, "Power in the Periphery," p. 8.

[101] Olson, *Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism*, p. 13.

[102] *Handbook of the Turkish Army*, eighth provisional edition (originally released by the General Staff War Office, London, 1916), reprinted by the Imperial War Museum (London, 1996), p. 65.

The estimate of 20,000 tribal volunteers on the Caucasus front has also been confirmed by various recent studies.[103]

However, while the established method of forming tribal cavalry regiments continued, recruiting and using tribal volunteers to support the Ottoman armed forces on the battlefield turned into a much wider-ranging practice during the Great War, whose practice did not always adhere to the established rules, but also often functioned by *ad hoc* applications. As the need for manpower grew, the practice was applied to more tribes than just the "select" ones, provided that their loyalty was not questionable.[104] A more generic name of "voluntary tribal forces" (*gönüllü aşiret birlikleri*) was often used to describe them. The state's intended goals now included more immediate considerations than a general aim of forging unity between the center and the periphery; the units were now primarily regarded as a potential addition of manpower to the armed forces on the battlefield. Forming voluntary tribal units was also seen as a remedy for failed conscription among tribal populations, as well as a method to attract many tribal draft evaders and deserters to military service.[105] Although the law for military service made it quite clear that only those who were not already obligated to enlist could volunteer for service in the armed forces, this condition was also sometimes overlooked and these men were accepted as volunteers.[106]

Yet, certain aspects of previous practice appear to have remained unchanged during the war and certain primary political preferences continued. Loyalty of the tribe to the Ottoman government was regarded as *sine qua non* by the CUP government. The following comment, which was sent in a telegram by the Interior Ministry to the governor of Mamuretülaziz about the project of forming volunteer units from tribal people in the Dersim region, succinctly summarized the government's perspective toward tribal volunteers during the Great War:

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[103] Günay, "I. Dünya Harbi'nin Başlangıcında Rus Saldırısı Karşısında İhtiyat Süvari Alayları," p. 333.

[104] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 54–A/354, 29 Ramazan 1333/10 August 1915. Even when there was urgent need for manpower, the help of some tribes seems to have not been taken into consideration. For example, the Interior Ministry stated in a telegram to the governor of Diyarbekir that "since the Bedirhan family had never been reliable, the volunteers that they recruited would be useless." BOA, DH.ŞFR., 53/344, 30 Receb 1333/13 June 1915. On the relationship between the Bedirhan tribe with the Ottoman state before the war, see Klein, "Power in the Periphery," pp. 248–252.

[105] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/263, 28 Rebîulevvel 1333/13 February 1915.

[106] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 4462, Dosya 136, Fihrist 6–14.

> Your valuable opinion about establishing a volunteer militia in the Dersim region is appropriate and right. However, it is necessary to ensure that the militia chiefs to whom military ranks would be granted are selected from those who are trustfully loyal to the government and those whose influence on the tribes can be properly used by the state. It is also necessary to ensure that they are not able to abuse their status and authority.[107]

Although the Ottoman military always wanted to subjugate voluntary tribal units to the army's chain of command and to place them under the direct authority of regular unit commanders,[108] volunteers from a certain tribe continued to be treated as a separate entity and were not distributed among the ranks of regular units as individual soldiers. A military report written by the Second Army headquarters to the commander of XVI Corps in Diyarbekir on 1 July 1916 advised that tribal volunteers should be put through strict military training like regular soldiers before being sent to the front, but also warned that volunteers from different tribes should neither mix with each other, nor should they merge into regular units; volunteers of different tribes were to be dealt with differently and separately.[109] One reason for this method of approaching tribal volunteers was probably to facilitate greater control over their activities. Volunteers from a certain tribe were usually recruited by the chief person of that tribe, who was also made the commander of that volunteer unit. In this way, the hierarchy of the tribe was automatically carried to the battlefield with its own inner discipline, and the army, which had suffered from the scarcity of commanding officers, did not have to assign its own officers to these units.[110] The second reason was a strategic one: the Ottoman military viewed irregular units as particularly useful for certain duties which were well-suited for small units, including guerilla raids, missions of exploration, and guiding the regular forces in poorly known territories.[111] Moreover, maintaining tribal organization in separate units must also have been seen as a useful way to increase their troop cohesion under combat conditions.

Another reason for keeping tribal volunteers as separate units seems to have been a certain level of condescension on the part of the Ottoman elites towards the Kurdish population—an attitude which echoed

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[107] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 54–A/354, 29 Ramazan 1333/10 August 1915.
[108] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 4–6.
[109] ATASE, BDH, Klasrör 4462, Dosya 136, Fihrist 28.
[110] ATSE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 2–9.
[111] ATASE, BDH, Klasrör 4462, Dosya 136, Fihrist 28.

what Deringil calls "the civilizing mission" mentality of the late Ottomans and their "project of modernity" in provincial administration.[112] A report which was prepared by Lieutenant Colonel Yuzuf İzzet, who was an inspector of tribes (*aşiret müfettişi*), about the existing situation of tribal cavalry regiments presents interesting points in this respect. In the report, which was submitted to the War Ministry on 22 April 1914, Kurdish tribal volunteers are praised for their bravery and fighting skills; but the report also presents extreme suspicion about their usefulness, since "almost all tribal people [were] completely ignorant of religion and piety, and live[d] in a primordial age in terms of education and learning, and, so, it would not be appropriate to expect them to show religious and human sentiments for the fatherland."[113] The inspector advised an urgent and strict training of Kurdish tribal volunteers who were employed in the armed forces, a training which could both "correct" their negative attitudes and increase their love for the fatherland.[114]

What is more interesting is the fact that a similar pejorative discourse was sometimes also used by tribal chiefs themselves. In a telegram that was sent to the General Command of Iraq on 18 December 1914 about transferring tribal units to Kut al Amara, Mahmud Pasha (also called Sheikh Mahmud), who was the chief of the Caf tribe in Salahiye (a subdistrict of Baghdad), complained that since his tribal people were "savage" (*vahşî*) they were afraid of getting on a steam ship which they had never seen before, and therefore he asked for permission to transfer his tribal force via the land route.[115]

Why would tribal people want to volunteer for the Ottoman army, then? What motivated them for this mission? What kind of a discourse did the Ottoman state use to convince them to volunteer for the army? Was there any systematic propaganda effort to mobilize them? One can hardly see such a systematic propaganda targeting tribal volunteers, except occasional emphases made by Ottoman authorities on religious fraternity against the "infidel" enemy. A defensive religious discourse was a constant throughout the war, and there were many cases in which tribal volunteers stated that they had volunteered for the Ottoman armed forces "to take

[112] Selim Deringil, "'They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery': The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 45, no. 2 (2003), p. 311.

[113] Quoted in Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e*, p. 30.

[114] Ibid., pp. 30–31.

[115] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3603, Dosya 3, Fihrist 11–13.

part in the holy war as a religious duty and not to be bereft of this honor."[116] The holy war discourse was certainly significant, but I argue that volunteerism should rather be located within the power relations between the Ottoman state and tribal volunteers. First of all, it was usually a tribal chief or notable—not ordinary members of tribes—who decided to offer a particular tribe as volunteers for the Ottoman armed forces. This decision was, in a sense, a kind of contract between the tribal power holder and the state authority. Moreover, as has already been emphasized above, tribal volunteers continued to act as a tribal group in the armed forces and the Ottoman military authorities treated them as such. In accepting voluntary military service from a certain tribe, the state actually treated that tribe as a peripheral power holder and virtually accepted its autonomy. Recognizing and promoting a certain tribe's regional power appears to have been a major method used by the state to mobilize volunteers from that tribe.

This situation was actually divergent from the universal conscription system that the Ottomans tried to apply throughout the country during the war. This is an example of Ottoman pragmatism: where and when a modernization effort such as universal conscription (which actually belonged to the realm of centralized nation-states) failed, the Ottomans used old imperial methods envisaged within a modern mentality. At a time when the Ottoman military urgently needed manpower on the battlefield, they addressed the problem in these regions within the context of rewarded volunteerism, which was redesigned so as not to oppose state power in local settings, and in a way that was congruent with the expectations of the military and the requirements of modern warfare.

Granting medals and decorations to chiefs and prominent persons of tribes in return for effective voluntary service was a common method of encouragement, examples of which are abundant.[117] This method had also been used commonly by the Ottomans to garner the support of Arab-Bedouin tribes.[118] But while medals and decorations were important

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[116] İ. Hakkı Sunata, *Gelibolu'dan Kafkaslara: Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anılarım* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2003), p. 411; "Cihâd-ı Ekber Yolunda," *İkdâm*, 24 Teşrinisani 1330/7 December 1914.

[117] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3684, Dosya 373, Fihrist 5–07, 5–08; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3693, Dosya 1, Fihrist 1–10; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3687, Dosya 382. On the Ottoman use, and also the types, of medals and decorations during the Great War, also see Edhem Eldem, *Pride and Privilege: A History of Ottoman Orders, Medals and Decorations* (Istanbul: Ottoman Bank Archives and Research Centre, 2004), pp. 396–415.

[118] TNA: PRO WO 157/687, August-September 1914 (the Sinai-Palestine front).

symbols of power that signified the state's recognition and promotion of the status and autonomy of a particular tribe, wartime conditions required more immediate rewards to mobilize voluntary participation in the periphery. Thus, money became a major mobilizing reward in this respect. Normally, when dealing with volunteers, the Ottoman military supplied only basic provisions;[119] in fact, the state sometimes assigned this task to local authorities who were supposed to collect required provisions from local civilians in the form of "donations." But documents show that volunteers sometimes received daily fees in cash (*yevmiye*), as in the case of some armed bands of the Special Organization.[120]

As far as tribal volunteers were concerned, monetary payments in the form of a reward such as gold were more systematic. These rewards were offered in higher amounts both before service as an incentive to volunteer, and as rewards for performing a duty in order to solidify the bond of voluntary unity.[121] As a volunteer recruitment strategy towards tribes, the Ottomans apparently used money as commonly as they used the discourse of the brotherhood of Islam.[122] Especially in the war of propaganda against the British on the Mesopotamia and Sinai-Palestine fronts, money rewards were seen by the Ottomans as a legitimate tool to attain the military support of Muslim tribal people in the region, whose "conscience and faith had not yet been poisoned by British money and propaganda."[123]

In designing methods to encourage tribal people to volunteer and make use of such units in the armed forces, the Ottoman military took seriously the reports and proposals of the commanders who worked in eastern Anatolian areas where tribal populations were concentrated. Colonel Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), who was the commander of XVI Corps in Diyarbekir in 1916, had been very active in this process. He submitted detailed observations and pragmatic proposals to both higher military authorities and civilian administrators in the region. It is quite evident that Mustafa Kemal attributed great importance to potential tribal volunteers as a complementary source of manpower for the Ottoman armed forces and that he was quite eager to mobilize them. For example, on 9 April 1916 he sent

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[119] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 4447, Dosya 79, Fihrist 3.

[120] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2077, Dosya 1, Fihrist 1–1. Moreover, it is understood from documents that another source of financing volunteers during the war became the abandoned properties (*emvâl-i metrûke*) of the deported Armenians. See Akçam, "*Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuştur,*" pp. 235–236.

[121] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3687, Dosya 384, Fihrist 10–1.

[122] Stoddard, "A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa," p. 123.

[123] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3603, Dosya 3, Fihrist 11–03.

a telegram to Mehmed Bey, a deputy of Genç (a sub-province of Bitlis), in which he described such volunteers as "patriotic people" (*erbâb-ı hamiyyet*), who "would be welcomed by the army in every necessary way."[124] In another telegram to the War Ministry on 31 March 1916, Mustafa Kemal expressed that it was quite possible to form a large militia organization in the Diyarbekir region, which would be very helpful for the army during the war. For this, he proposed paying each individual tribal volunteer a maximum of one gold lira a month and each tribal chief, according to his degree of service, five to ten liras a month. He added that this would not only encourage a high number of volunteers to join the armed forces with their own arms and ammunitions, which they usually hid from the Ottoman authorities, but would also mobilize many draft evaders and deserters who had taken shelter among these tribes to re-enlist in the army.[125] He also proposed that besides supplying the basic provisions of these volunteers, it would be beneficial to offer and grant monetary rewards to those who performed remarkable service in the armed forces. In this respect, he mentioned an effective method used on the Dardanelles front where the army paid up to sixty liras to those who captured enemy arms, ammunition or prisoners.[126]

Monetary incentives were also used directly to "convince" tribal people to volunteer for the Ottoman army.[127] The source of such monetary payments was the discretionary fund (*tahsisât-ı mestûre*) of the Ottoman military budget.[128] Other payments were also made from this fund. Militia officers were paid a regular salary, although militia officers received only half of the amount actually paid to the same rank held by an official military soldier.[129] The Ottoman state also considered the families of tribal volunteers within the limits of its mobilization efforts. Tribal volunteers who were killed in fighting were recognized by the state as "martyrs" and their families were allocated a monthly salary that was paid to the families of martyred soldiers.[130]

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[124] (*"Her türlü hüsn-i kabul gösterileceğinin…"*), ATASE, BDH, Klasör 4462, Dosya 136, Fihrist 6–06.

[125] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 2–4.

[126] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 2–3.

[127] *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 117 (January 2004), Document no. 43, p. 124.

[128] ATASE, BDH, Klasör, 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 13.

[129] Ibid.

[130] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 48/279, 18 Safer 1333/5 January 1915; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3684, Dosya 373, Fihrist 36; *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 117 (January 2004), Document no. 37, p. 111.

Religious Volunteers

Perhaps the most consistent mobilizing discourse throughout the war was a religious one, which emphasized the point that Islam itself was under attack by the infidel enemy and that it was therefore incumbent upon every Muslim to join the fight against that enemy. One aspect of this discourse was the official proclamation of jihad and the call to both domestic and foreign Muslims to the fight for the Ottoman state. But it would be misleading to presume that the use of a religious discourse to mobilize Muslims was limited to the proclamation of holy war. In fact, at least as far as the Muslim Anatolian population was concerned, the role of religion in the mobilization process during the war—both its use by the state and its effect in practice—was much more complicated. The state's declaration of jihad and the role played by the higher ulema in proclaiming holy war constituted only one (and actually a less effective) aspect of the process. As argued in Chapter 1, a less appreciated, but no less significant dimension of the process was the contribution and participation of middle and lower strata religious people and institutions in mobilization. Various dervish lodges, medrese students and even local prayer leaders not only worked to mobilize Muslims for the war in their capacity as religious intermediaries between the state and the civilian population, but they also volunteered for the Ottoman army, both individually and in volunteer units.

This section of the chapter will discuss their role in recruiting volunteers and forming volunteer units within the broader phenomenon of religious popular mobilization. What this section aims to emphasize is that religious volunteerism constituted a part of Ottoman power politics during the war. The CUP-dominated Ottoman state welcomed contributions from the middle and lower ulema or dervish lodges in its mobilization efforts at popular levels, but only as long as they were controlled and managed by its own authority. Similarly, as will be discussed below, the religious persons and dervish lodges which were most enthusiastic and active in increasing volunteerism for the Ottoman armed forces were actually the ones who had close relations with the state in general and the CUP government in particular. Especially as far as dervish lodges were concerned, the most active orders were the ones that believed that voluntary mobilization would increase their own power and credibility vis-à-vis the state.

It should not be forgotten that religion was quite embedded in the Ottoman military structure. It was part of both the military education and troop training. As early as Mahmud II's (r. 1808–1839) reign, military

reforms which were directed towards creating a modern standing army established the practice of employing prayer leaders in the military as religious educators and motivators of the troops.[131] "A good soldier is to be a good Muslim and a good Muslim is to be a good soldier"[132] seems to have been a training principle adopted by the military. Influential members of the ulema such as İzmirli İsmail Hakkı and Ali Vahid Üryanizâde[133] wrote religious textbooks to be used as lecture pamphlets within the army and the number of such texts increased remarkably during the Great War. As İsmail Kara has pointed out, a central reason for this increase was the Ottoman military's goal of reinforcing the faith of its soldiers. Emphasis of the religious aspects of the struggle helped bolster soldiers' religious enthusiasm for fighting, their commitment to religiously based military categories such as martyrdom and holy warrior (*gâzilik*), and their morale in general—all of which, it was thought, had been damaged due to continuous conflict and frequent defeat.[134] Routine religious obligations were observed in the military, even during fighting, and there were established posts within the units, such as battalion prayer leaders (*tabur imamları*).[135] These were quite effective for maintaining troop morale during the war; we see many cases where Ottoman soldiers prayed with their battalion prayer leaders before going into battle.[136] At times of crisis such as when the number of desertions increased or discipline dissolved on the battlefront, Ottoman counter-measures always included, among other things, religious lectures and advice to the troops from influential prayer leaders and other religious persons (See Chapter 5).

With regard to conscription, there was reluctance among some segments of the Ottoman ulema, particularly medrese students, whose traditional exemption from military service had been restricted after 1909 so that students who did not pass their exams on time were now required

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131 Heinzelmann, *Cihaddan Vatan Savunmasına*, p. 43.

132 See Kara, "'Askere Din Dersleri': İyi Asker, İyi Müslüman Olur."

133 Such persons were state-employed religious scholars who occupied middle and high ranking posts in the late Ottoman religious education system. Politically they were close to, or at least not critical of, the CUP. For a brief biography of their lives and careers, see Sadık Albayrak, *Son Devir Osmanlı Uleması: İlmiye Ricalinin Teracim-i Ahvali*, 3 vols (Istanbul: Medrese Yayınları, 1980), for Ali Vahid Üryanizâde see vol. 1, pp. 317–318; for İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, see vol. 2, pp. 279–281.

134 Kara, "İyi Asker İyi Müslüman, İyi Müslüman İyi Asker Olur," pp. 48–53.

135 In 1909, the religious leaders of Christian subjects of the empire began to demand the same posts for Christian enlisted men in the Ottoman army. Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni,* pp. 142–143.

136 Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness*, p. 63.

to serve.[137] Already discontented with the CUP-dominated administration, medrese students' disappointment increased with the declaration of mobilization in 1914, as many of them were now involuntarily mobilized for military service.[138] However, some examples imply that the Ottoman military tried to engage medrese students by working with them to find volunteers. One British military intelligence report cites the formation of two large volunteer (*fedâî*) units in the Istanbul area in 1916, which were enrolled under the auspices of the ulema. The Ottoman military employed "young theological students" as recruiters, who "often brought in 20 or 30 recruits at a time. In this way two battalions were raised, one from the Constantinople area and Europe, one from Asiatic provinces."[139]

While the ulema with advanced education were hesitant in terms of war enthusiasm, some dervish lodges were quite enthusiastic about embracing the CUP government's war cause and promoting it on the popular level through their local networks. The Mevlevi and Bektaşi orders were the most active in this process. The Mevlevis, who had been usually opposed to Abdülhamid II, had close ties with the CUP-dominated state authority during the Second Constitutional Era.[140] Sultan Mehmed Reşad V, who was himself said to have been a follower of the Mevlevi order, had been congratulated on his accession to the throne in 1909 by Abdülhalim Çelebi, the sheikh (*postnişîn*) of the Konya Mevlevi lodge (the center of the Mevlèvi order). Abdülhalim Çelebi's journey to Istanbul solely for this purpose has been interpreted as a confirmation of the close tie of the order with state authority.[141]

The Mevlevis supported the pro-war policies of the CUP government and actually worked to legitimize them at the popular level. Veled Çelebi, the sheikh of the Konya Mevlevi lodge during the Great War (who was banished from this post in 1919 by Sultan Vahdeddin), was close to the CUP government and had nationalist inclinations.[142] His pro-CUP position was so obvious that during his post as the sheikh of the order, many written

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137 Zürcher, *Turkey*, p. 98.

138 Amit Bein, "The Ulema, Their Institutions, and Politics in the Late Ottoman Empire (1876–1924)" (Ph.d. dissertation, Princeton University, 2006), p. 201.

139 TNA: PRO WO 157/703, March-April 1916.

140 İrfan Gündüz, *Osmanlılarda Devlet-Tekke Münasebetleri* (Istanbul: Seha Neşriyat, 1984), pp. 212–213, 233; for the Ottoman state's pragmatic approach to dervish lodges during the reign of Abdülhamid II, see pp. 216–235.

141 Engin Öncüoğlu, "Osmanlı Ordusunda Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları" (MA thesis, Hacettepe University, 2004), p. 39.

142 Ibid., pp. 81–82.

complaints were made to the Ministry of Imperial Foundations (*Evkâf*) and the Office of the *Şeyhülislam* alleging that he was actually a political figure acting on behalf of the CUP.[143] The culmination of this political proximity was the formation of the Mevlevi Volunteer Battalion (*Mevlevi Gönüllü Taburu,* sometimes also called *Mevlevi Alayı* or *Mücâhidîn-i Mevleviyye*) in 1915.[144] The directive to form such a volunteer unit allegedly came from the pro-Mevlevi sultan Mehmed Reşad V,[145] while some sources have attributed its foundation to the activities of the Special Organization.[146] In any case, it was a voluntary initiative that was patronized by the state.[147] This patronage included a wide range of support, from open political encouragement to the donation of arms for training Mevlevi volunteers[148] and exemptions of telegram fees for Mevlevis as they worked to recruit volunteers.[149]

The main motive for organizing the Mevlevi Volunteer Battalion was to raise troop morale on the battlefield. The volunteer battalions "would carry the spiritual influence of the order directly to the front, among troops who were often conscripted from provinces not noted for their enthusiastic support of the Unionist government."[150] The Ottoman military also tried to use Mevlevi volunteers in the army as a means of propaganda to motivate the general public to mobilize more voluntary support for the armed forces. The main propaganda journal of the Ottoman military during the war, *Harb Mecmuası* (The War Journal), printed extensive coverage to

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[143] Nüri Köstüklü, *Vatan Savunmasında Mevlevihaneler: Balkan Savaşlarından Milli Mücadeleye* (Istanbul: Çizgi Kitabevi, 2005), p. 78.

[144] Some sources also use the term "regiment" (*alay*) for the Mevlevi volunteers, which is a larger military unit (usually composed of three battalions) than a "battalion" (*tabur*), which is composed of 1000 to 1500 troops. Considering the total number of the Mevlevi volunteers (it was, as will be mentioned below, slightly more than a thousand), the term "battalion" is more appropriate.

[145] "Gönüllü Mevlevi Taburları," *İkdâm*, 22 Kanunisani 1330/4 February 1915; Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 65; Nüri Köstüklü, *Vatan Savunmasında Mevlevihaneler*, p. 65. The battalion that was formed by Mevlevi volunteers of Istanbul was granted a banner (*alem-i şerîf*) from the Caliphate, which was handed over with a public ceremony. "Mevlevi Gönüllüleri," *İkdâm*, 26 Kanunisani 1330/8 February 1915; "Mevlevi Gönüllüleri," *İkdâm*, 27 Kanunisani 1330/9 February 1915; "Mevlevi Gönüllülerinin İhtifâlâtı," *İkdâm*, 1 Şubat 1330/14 February 1915.

[146] Pehlivanlı, "Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa," p. 290; Stoddard, "A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa," p. 71.

[147] Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 73.

[148] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/209, 19 Rebîulevvel 1333/4 February 1915; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1729, Dosya 83, Fihrist 3–11.

[149] BOA, DH.SYS., 123–12/35, 24 Rebîulâhir 1333/11 March 1915.

[150] Stoddard, "A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa," p. 71.

the Mevlevi volunteers in the army and published numerous photographs showing them in processions and during military drills.[151]

The number of volunteers who joined the battalion reached slightly more than one thousand in March 1915.[152] Volunteers were recruited by local lodges of the Mevlevi order throughout Anatolia. The lodges of Jerusalem, Tripoli, Homs, and Latakia also contributed. The Yenikapı Mevlevi lodge in Istanbul (138 volunteers) and the Konya Mevlevi lodge (110 volunteers) recruited the highest number of volunteers.[153] Konya was the center of the Mevlevi order and also functioned as the base for gathering and transferring volunteers.

The Mevlevi Volunteer Battalion was sent to Damascus in March 1915, where the Ottoman Fourth Army was based under the command of Cemal Pasha. However, although the battalion was integrated into the chain of command of the Fourth Army, it was not regarded as (and not expected to be) a combatant force and, therefore, was assigned mostly non-combatant duties. The volunteers were not denied the right to carry arms, but the rifles they were given were usually old models.[154] The Mevlevis were assigned to perform religious rituals and to deliver sermons to increase the morale of troops. They were also assigned to logistical duties such as transportation, construction, and guard duty.[155] Some dervish lodges in the Fourth Army region also provided logistical facilities to the Ottoman army, as in the case of the Aleppo lodge, whose buildings were used as a weapons depot.[156]

Like the Mevlevis, the Bektaşi order also had many followers and supporters among the Young Turks, which facilitated political cooperation between the two groups. The order's relationship to the CUP had been close since the days when the CUP actively opposed Sultan Abdülhamid II.[157] Although the CUP did not have an overall inclination towards

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[151] *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 5 (February 1331/1916), p. 752; *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 9 (May 1332/1916), p. 133; *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 10 (June 1332/1916), p. 148; *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 19 (May 1333/1917), p. 294.

[152] Köstüklü gives the number of 1026 (p. 91), while Öncüoğlu says it was between 1016 and 1026 (p. 69).

[153] Köstüklü, *Vatan Savunmasında Mevlevihaneler*, pp. 91–92.

[154] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1729, Dosya 83, Fihrist 3–12.

[155] Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 120; Köstüklü, *Vatan Savunmasında Mevlevihaneler*, p. 95.

[156] Ahmed Cahit Haksever, *Son Dönem Osmanlı Mevlevilerinden Ahmet Remzi Akyürek* (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2002), p. 57. The sheikh of the Aleppo lodge, Ahmet Remzi Efendi, also joined the army with the Mevlevi Volunteer Battalion.

[157] Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 37.

a certain dervish lodge and actually employed a pragmatic approach in its relations with such orders, the rapport between prominent members of the party and the Bektaşi order sometimes became so clear that some claimed that Talat and Enver pashas were followers of the order.[158]

The Bektaşi Volunteer Regiment (*Bektaşi Gönüllü Alayı* or *Mücâhidîn-i Bektaşiyye*) was formed in 1915, under the leadership of Çelebi Cemaleddin Efendi, the sheikh of the Hacı Bektaş lodge during the war. Similarly, the Bektaşi Regiment was a product of dialogue between the state power and the Bektaşi leadership. It was actually a dialogue of pragmatism, in which both sides expected to benefit from each other's power. While the CUP-dominated state tried to appropriate the popular religious influence and manpower of the Bektaşi order in the war effort, the Bektaşis hoped to gain state patronage in strengthening its own position in society. Available documents indicate that the state had the upper hand in this arrangement and that the regiment was formed upon the request of the state—more specifically by the "wish and consent" (*arzu ve muvâfakatim ile*) of Enver Pasha.[159]

According to the account of Veliyeddin Çelebi, the last sheikh of the lodge, the number of volunteers who joined the regiment was over seven thousand.[160] This number was probably exaggerated by the sheikh, since a reserve officer serving in the Third Army which the Bektaşi Regiment joined in 1915 testified that Çelebi's volunteer force was composed of about 1500 men.[161] While the latter observation might have been made at an initial phase of the volunteer recruiting process, the total number still seems to have been quite high for a volunteer unit, at least as compared to the Mevlevi volunteers. The main reason for this is probably the fact that the Bektaşis, besides recruiting volunteers from the active followers of the order, also tried to mobilize the Anatolian Alevi population for voluntary service.[162] While the main purpose of the unit was to draw on their religious and moral influence in order to increase morale among the troops

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[158] Hülya Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Bektaşiler* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2003), pp. 97–98. This book is about the active support and participation of the Bektaşis in the Turkish National Struggle, 1919–1922.

[159] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 1–19.

[160] His account was published in the *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* newspaper on 5 May 1922. See Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Bektaşiler*, p. 103 and 290–292.

[161] Rifat Erdal, "Bir Yedek Subayın I. Dünya Harbi Hatıraları," I, *Hayat Tarih Mecmuası*, vol. 2, no. 7 (August 1971), p. 60.

[162] Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Bektaşiler*, p. 103; Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 91.

and society in general, unlike the non-combatant character and mostly logistical services of the the Mevlevi Volunteer Battalion, the Bektaşi Regiment was also used as a combatant militia force on the Gallipoli and the Caucasus fronts.[163]

However, the Ottoman military's expectations were not met by the Bektaşi Regiment as a separate unit on the battlefield, at least as a combatant militia force. Vehib Pasha, the commander of the Third Army in eastern Anatolia stated in a telegram sent to the War Ministry on 15 March 1916 that since "the Bektaşi battalions recruited by Çelebi Efendi had not been useful enough," their personnel were distributed to the regular divisions individually. Vehib Pasha also asked for permission to let Çelebi Efendi go back to his hometown of Kırşehir. At the time the telegram was sent, Çelebi Efendi had apparently already left the front and was in Sivas recruiting more volunteers.[164]

Whereas the Ottoman state was willing to welcome volunteers from dervish lodges who could contribute to the military both by their manpower and religious influence, it wanted this process to be under its control, operating with its "wish and consent," in congruence with its own expectations. These expectations apparently included not only immediate benefits such as mobilizing popular support or increasing the morale of the Ottoman troops, but also obtaining their political backing and aid in legitimating the CUP policies during the war. This situation formed a selective relationship between the state and dervish lodges. Therefore, the Ottoman state authorized only the Mevlevi and Bektaşi orders to recruit volunteers. Members of other dervish orders were not allowed to recruit volunteers on their behalf during the Great War.[165]

But this did not mean that followers of other dervish orders in the Ottoman Empire could not volunteer for the army. They could volunteer as long as they joined either the Mevlevi or Bektaşi volunteer forces as individuals. For example, there were volunteers from the Kadirî and Rifaî orders in the Mevlevi Volunteer Battalion in the Fourth Army.[166] There were also individual volunteers who joined the Ottoman armed forces

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[163] Küçük, *Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Bektaşiler*, p. 103; Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 91; Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 377; Stoddard, "A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa," p. 72.

[164] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1942, Dosya 223, Fihrist 1–18.

[165] Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 68.

[166] *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 9 (May 1332/1916), p. 133; *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 19 (May 1333/1917); Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 65.

from the Sultantepe Uzbek lodge in Üsküdar, as well as well as from other Uzbek lodges in Tarsus.[167]

Voluntary Associations in Search of Volunteers

As has been discussed in Chapter 1, the government, in its mobilization campaigns, sought to enlist the support of those voluntary associations which dominated the sphere of associational activity in Ottoman society on the eve of the Great War. These associations, particularly the National Defense League, also played an active role in recruiting volunteers for the Ottoman armed forces. In fact, this was one of the main activities which this association initiated as soon as it was established.[168] The National Defense League formed committees for recruiting volunteers (*gönüllü heyetleri*) within itself, which tried to recruit volunteers throughout the country. Its guidance committees (*irşâd heyetleri*) also contributed to this mission by employing members of the ulema to mobilize voluntary support at the popular level. These men of religion preached to local people the religious virtues of volunteering for the army and of fighting for the fatherland both through oral communication and written statements which were published in the press.[169]

The committees for recruiting volunteers were quite active during the Balkan War. It is also important to note here that during the Balkan War they particularly targeted the Muslim refugees who had been forced to immigrate from recently lost European (*Rumeli*) provinces. The National Defense League worked in collaboration with the Association of the Muslim Refugees from Rumeli (*Rumeli Muhâcirîn-i İslamiye Cemiyeti*), and the theme of "revenge" seems to have often been emphasized in statements to mobilize such volunteers. For example, on 4 February 1913, the daily *İkdâm* called to service those who "wish, in a patriotic mood, to volunteer not only to defend their Ottoman and Muslim dignity and honor (*nâmûs*), but also to take revenge on the enemy."[170]

The National Defense League's recruitment efforts continued on a wider scale during the Great War. It acted as the conveyer of the state's

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[167] I am thankful to Lale Can, who is studying the Uzbek lodges of Istanbul, for drawing my attention to this example.

[168] Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti,* p. 56.

[169] Ibid., p. 57.

[170] Quoted in ibid., p. 56.

call to voluntary service at the popular level. It also worked in close cooperation with the Special Organization and helped it raise volunteers for its militia forces.[171] Local branches of the league operated as if they were volunteer recruiting offices. For example, the branch in Ordu, a district of Trabzon, raised a volunteer force of about 500 people in the area along the coast of the Black Sea between Ünye and Ordu, which was sent to the Caucasus front.[172]

The National Defense League worked in solidarity with other volunteer units and also provided logistical support for them. For example, the Mevlevi lodge in Konya used the league's Konya branch as a base to gather volunteers.[173] The league also raised cash donations for volunteer units. For example, the İzmir branch made a contribution of 100 liras to the Mevlevi volunteers in the region, to be spent on supplying uniforms and other needs of the new volunteers.[174] The Diyarbekir branch of the National Defense League organized a volunteer force of 500 men, which was sent to help the Special Organization force in Erzurum. In the process of their organization and transfer to the front, such volunteer forces were usually accompanied by a religious scholar (*âlim*) who was assigned by the league to provide guidance (*irşâd*), increase morale, and mobilize additional men on the way to the front. The Diyarbekir volunteer force was led by the town's mufti, Hacı İbrahim Efendi, who reported that "on their way to the front he attracted so many men to join them that they numbered one thousand men by the time they reached their objective."[175]

When it did not recruit volunteers, the National Defense League still worked to provide military training for civilians on the home front. An interesting activity in this respect was training capable civilians (Muslims) of all ages, who "could be useful in the defense of the fatherland," in how to use a Mauser rifle.[176] Local branches of the National Defense League organized shooting drills for civilians in the provinces.[177] They even

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171 Pehlivanlı, "Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa," p. 291.

172 Pehlivanlı, "Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa," p. 291; Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 378.

173 Polat, *Müdâfaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, pp. 58–59.

174 "Mevlevi Gönüllüleri İçin," *İkdâm*, 2 Kanunisani 1330/15 January 1915.

175 Pehlivanlı, "Teşkilât-ı Mahsûsa," p. 291; Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 378.

176 The German-made Mauser rifle (9.5 mm) was the main infantry rifle of the Ottoman army during the Great War. In addition, less effective single-shot Martini rifles were also used widely. Larcher, *Büyük Harbde Türk Harbi*, p. 81.

177 It is understood that after the declaration of mobilization, this became a widespread practice in the provinces and non-commissioned officers from the Ottoman military

organized competitive drills to attract more participation.[178] It is worth noting that although the National Defense League was not part of the military, it could apparently carry out military activities on the home front. Moreover, it had access to military arms and ammunition and could employ military trainers to teach civilians how to use a rifle. It is clear that the National Defense League sometimes acted as a paramilitary organization and also worked in collaboration with military authorities. Its activities clearly demonstrate how a popular association became militarized under total war conditions.

Uses and Misuses of Volunteers

The Ottoman military authorities had mixed feelings about the performance and usefulness of volunteer forces in the Great War. For example, Cemal Pasha, a high-ranking commander stated in 1914 that

> According to my experiences both during the Balkan War and the present mobilization, volunteers cause trouble than they are worth . . . Since they lack necessary training and discipline, they exert negative effects on regular troops. And to feed them we need more provisions.[179]

Similar doubts about the performance of volunteer forces were expressed by other observers who wrote their memoirs after the war.[180] Some high-ranking commanders claimed that volunteers were not only "totally useless," but they also served as shelters for those who actually tried to escape from real combat and did sought to avoid enlistment in the regular armed forces.[181] For example, Major Vecihi Bey, who served in Palestine during the last phase of the war, recounted that the Mevlevi volunteers did not carry out the spiritual missions initially expected of them and that the Mevlevis in Damascus often acted as "a unit of entertainment and enjoyment" (*zevk ve eğlence fırkası*) that performed music on certain occasions

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supervised such drills. One such non-commissioned officer was Sergeant Major Nurettin Peker, who says in his memoirs that such drills were carried out in accordance with Enver Pasha's order. He gave shooting training to civil officials and local people in Kastamonu just after the declaration of mobilization. See Nurettin Peker, *Tüfek Omza: Balkan Savaşı'ndan Kurtuluş Savaşı'na Ateş Hattında Bir Ömür*, edited by Orhan Peker and Hilal Akkartal (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2009), p. 109.

178 BOA, DH.İD., 176/38, 9 Rebîulâhir 1332/5 February 1914.

179 Quoted in Öncüoğlu, "Gönüllü Tarikat Alayları," p. 66.

180 Ziya Şâkir, *1914–1918 Cihan Harbini Nasıl İdare Ettik?*, p. 132.

181 Aziz Samih İlter, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Kafkas Cephesi Hatıraları* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2007), p. 27.

such as banquets.[182] Difficulty in maintaining discipline in the volunteer forces also increased such doubts. Desertions were particularly widespread among certain volunteer units, especially the tribal volunteers on the Caucasus front. For example, it was reported that after the Köprüköy battle in November 1914, the number of Kurdish tribal volunteers in the Third Army, which was around twenty thousand at the beginning of the war, dramatically dwindled to around three thousand due to desertion.[183]

The Turkish General Staff's official military history of the war states quite firmly that the strategy of recruiting tribal volunteers was unsuccessful.[184] This view interprets the Ottoman military's relationship with tribal forces (in fact, with all "peripheral forces") from a strict perspective of central state sovereignty which understands sovereignty only in its nation-state form. Therefore, this perspective has claimed that the main reason for this failure was that "the Ottoman state was unable to establish *complete authority* over tribal leaders, even though it granted them the rank of pasha and awarded them decorations."[185] Of course, if the effort of volunteers during the Great War is approached with the retrospective lens of total defeat in 1918, the contributions of volunteers to the Ottoman army tend to be limited. This perspective became even more powerful with the rise of absolute centralism in the age of the Republican nation-state, when universal conscription was established on a full-scale and volunteerism was neither needed nor allowed in the armed forces.

However, it should not be forgotten that during the Great War, volunteer or "irregular" forces were always needed and used by the Ottoman army on all major fronts. Ottoman authorities utilized volunteers to supplement drafted manpower and compensate for an inability to implement conscription effectively. Moreover, volunteers contributed to the war effort through their specific knowledge of certain geographical regions, their ability to conduct guerilla warfare, and mobilize popular support for the war through spiritual influence. For example, Mustafa Kemal's description of potential tribal volunteers as "patriotic people" and his willingness to welcome them at any time is quite illustrative of the Ottoman approach

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[182] *Filistin Ricatı: Erkân-ı Harb Binbaşısı Vecihi Bey'in Anıları*, ed. by Murat Çulcu (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1993), p. 20.

[183] Aytar, *Hamidiye Alaylarından Köy Koruculuğuna*, pp. 140–141.

[184] It should be noted that although the official history of the war always tends to approve Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's actions and sayings, this approach is actually in contradiction with Atatürk's above-mentioned pragmatic consideration of Kurdish volunteers.

[185] *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 3, part 1: Irak-İran Cephesi, 1914–1918* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1979), p. 33. (emphasis is mine).

toward volunteers during the Great War.[186] Similarly, in a telegram to the Iraqi Command on 30/31 July 1915, Enver Pasha insisted that the command should continue to use tribal forces throughout the war, since, he warned, the war would last much longer than expected.[187] Moreover, available documents show that various volunteer forces were sometimes so successful and helpful in combat that they received the appreciation of the highest authorities.[188] In reference to the Special Organization's efforts to recruit tribal volunteers in the Arab provinces, Stoddard argues that such efforts should not be seen as futile because "in view of the Ottoman Empire's very limited monetary and manpower resources, the chief consideration was to win at the lowest cost."[189]

The volunteer forces' activities during the war were not always in accordance with the Ottoman military's expectations; there was almost always a tension between the chiefs of volunteer forces and regular army officers in terms of command. As has already been noted, whereas the Ottoman military preferred to keep volunteer forces as separate units, it still wanted to integrate them within the military chain of command. Thus, regular military officers could sometimes be assigned as commanders of volunteer armed bands.[190] However, this did not always mean that volunteer bands were put under the direct authority of army command. In many cases, they could still act autonomously and carry out plans of action which were not approved by the military headquarters on the front. This situation caused an important problem on the Caucasus front, where the Special Organization's armed bands were employed. Instead of obeying the orders of the regular army officers who were assigned to command them, these bands usually continued to take orders from the authorities of the Special Organization.[191] For example, in a report sent in June 1915, the commander of Iraq in Kut complained to Enver Pasha that Süleyman Askerî Bey, a leading member of the Special Organization and the chief of "irregular forces" in the region, did not act in accordance with the command structure. He explained that Süleyman Askerî had made the grave mistake of relying too much on his irregular forces instead of considering the actions of the regular army. The commander also complained that his

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186 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 4462, Dosya 136, Fihrist 6–06.

187 *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 90 (September 1990), Document no: 2219, p. 20.

188 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 50/168, 17 Rebîulevvel 1333/4 March 1915.

189 Stoddard, "A Preliminary Study of the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa," p. 124.

190 For an example, see *Binbaşı Süleyman Bey'in Manzum Anıları*, ed. by Ömer Türkoğlu (Ankara: Kebikeç Yayınları, 1997), p. 135.

191 Ibid., pp. 135–137.

regular army officers lost their enthusiasm and eagerness to fight as they saw that the officers of irregular forces, who were assigned by the Special Organization, had large sums of money at their disposal. This situation caused resentment on the part of regular officers because their regular salaries were usually delayed severely and almost never paid in full.[192]

But a graver problem with these volunteer bands involved the difficulty of ensuring discipline and curbing abusive acts towards local civilian populations. When the intensity of fighting increased and the tide of the battle turned against the Ottoman forces, volunteers usually tended to desert in great numbers and undermined the combat capacity of their units; in times of victory, they often engaged in pillaging.[193] Their arbitrary actions and abuses sometimes became so intolerable that the War Ministry expressed that it did not want any more volunteer bands in certain regions. A telegram that was sent to all the provinces on 4 April 1915 by the Interior Ministry upon receiving such a warning from the War Ministry is quite exemplary in terms of the degree to which the abuses could reach:

> Since the bands of volunteers which were sent to X Corps terrorize villagers and attempted to turn their arms on their superior officers, and since their presence in the war is considered harmful, the War Ministry requested that no more volunteers be sent to the region.[194]

In an effort to prevent such tensions, the Third Army command issued a regulation in September 1914, regarding the relations between the army and the armed bands. The intention was to control the bands, but little success was achieved and the relations between the Ottoman military and the Special Organization bands "continued to be very difficult throughout the war, greatly limiting the success of both."[195]

One reason for the continuation of such tensions was the fact that band leaders of the Special Organization sometimes received informal support and patronage from the CUP circles. Some contemporary observers from within the military, such as Lieutenant Colonel Şerif Bey who served on the Caucasus front, criticized this political connection and condemned the Special Organization's armed bands as "harmful and pointless" (*muzır ve*

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[192] "Kut'dan Başkumandanlık Vekâletine Şifre," *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 118 (July 2004), document no. 30, p. 98.

[193] Sarısaman, "Trabzon Mıntıkası Teşkilât-ı Mahsusa Heyet-i İdaresinin Faaliyetleri ve Gürcü Lejyonu," p. 26.

[194] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 51/209, 19 Cemâziyelevvel 1333/4 Nisan 1915. The X Corps was stationed on the Caucasus front at this time.

[195] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 444.

mânâsız). He described them as "secret militia forces which were formed by a political party in a clandestine way to carry out virtually certain political missions which the party itself could not perform openly."[196]

The majority of complaints were made about the recruitment of prisoners for the armed bands and their violent acts towards civilians. Their abuses against the non-Muslim subjects of the empire during the war, especially their role in the massacres of civilian Armenians during the forced migration of the Anatolian Armenian population in 1915, were criticized and condemned by various observers of the period. For example, Ahmed Refik [Altınay] described these bands as being composed of "murderers and robbers . . . who committed the most terrible atrocities against the Armenians."[197] A similar observation and criticism about the abuses committed by the Special Organization's armed bands against civilian Armenians were made by the contemporary journalist Ahmed Emin [Yalman]. He explained that these armed bands "followed directly a goal of destruction (*imhâ*)" of the Armenian population.[198] This was also one of the major allegations directed at the leaders of the CUP and the Special Organization, who were tried in the Courts Martial formed after the Mudros Armistice.[199] Recent researchers have attributed the chief responsibility for the abuses against the Armenians during the war to such armed bands.[200]

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[196] *Kaymakam Şerif Bey'in Anıları: Sarıkamış*, ed. by Murat Çulcu (Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1998), p. 156.

[197] Ahmet Refik (Altınay), *İki Komite, İki Kıtal* (Istanbul: Bedir, 1999), pp. 33–34. (The first edition of this book was published in 1919.)

[198] Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim, vol. 1,* pp. 331–332.

[199] *"Tehcir ve Taktil": Divan-ı Harb-i Örfi Zabıtları, İttihad ve Terakki'nin Yargılanması, 1919–1922*, edited by Vahakn N. Dadrian and Taner Akçam (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2008), pp. 234–239. See also the rest of the compilation.

[200] Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu*, pp. 231–253. On the other hand, Guenter Lewy has argued that the incomplete character of the available documents does not allow us to attribute all of the abuses against the Armenians to the Special Organization—although he has not denied the existence of convicted criminals in the armed bands and has confirmed the attacks of "irregulars" or "volunteers" on the Armenian deportees. Lewy has also written that while it is hard to determine whether Kurdish bands were directed by official authorities or whether they acted on their own initiative in plundering or as a result of religious fanaticism, Kurdish irregular and volunteer forces, as well as Circassian volunteers, played a considerable role in the massacres of the Armenian deportees. See Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey*, pp. 82–89, 221–228. For a similar discussion about the role of the Special Organization, see Edward J. Erickson, "Armenian Massacres: New Records Undercut Old Blame: Reexamining History," *Middle East Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 3 (Summer 2006), pp. 67–75. Taner Akçam has recently published a critique of Lewy's book by pointing to the available relevant documents and argued that there are enough documents to support the claim that the Special Organization's armed bands

It should also be added that such abuses were not solely directed towards non-Muslims. Some armed bands also attacked and pillaged Muslim villages in the Erzurum region.[201] During the Russian retreat from eastern Anatolia in late 1917, similar armed bands were also formed by non-Muslim groups in the region in a mood of retaliation. These bands attacked local Muslim villages. In describing inter-communal conflicts in the central Black Sea region during this period, Oktay Özel has used the expression "the hatred in the guise of armed bands" (*çeteleşmiş nefret*).[202]

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a panorama of volunteers in the Ottoman army during the Great War. I have argued that the use of volunteers was practically a systematic practice during the war, which was conceived of as a way of complementing the insufficiencies of the Ottoman conscription system. Where the official draft procedure did not function due to legal, infrastructural or demographic problems, resorting to volunteers became the main alternative method to mobilize the manpower potential of tribal and *muhâcir* populations. In this sense, volunteerism was a substitute of compulsion. While volunteers were used in multiple ways, certain categories of volunteers tended to be used for specific purposes. Prisoner-volunteers were mostly employed in the Special Organization's armed bands, which carried out informal military missions and guerilla attacks both on the battlefront against the enemy forces and on the home front against "disloyal" civilian elements. *Muhâcir* volunteers were often employed in the regions with which they were familiar, as in the case of Circassian volunteers on the Caucasus front. Kurdish tribal volunteers were usually employed as separate cavalry forces which served as auxiliary units on the fronts that were near their native regions, such as on the fronts of the Caucasus and Mesopotamia. Religious volunteers were used mostly for increasing troop morale; their religious influence in society was also used for propaganda purposes to increase the legitimacy of the CUP government's war policies. This chapter has contended that volunteerism during the war constituted a relationship of power. The acceptance of

played a major role in the Armenian massacres of 1915. See Taner Akçam, *1915 Yazıları* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), pp. 165–228.

201 Akçam, *İnsan Hakları ve Ermeni Sorunu*, p. 234.

202 Oktay Özel, "Muhacirler, Yerliler ve Gayrimüslimler," p. 106.

volunteers was characterized by certain political preferences of the CUP-dominated state; only those elements that were regarded as "loyal" and "useful" from the state's perspective were welcomed as volunteers. Volunteerism as such fostered the bond of loyalty between state authority and certain social groups (Muslim elements of Anatolia) on the one hand, and it functioned to marginalize "disloyal" groups on the other. Therefore, it was no coincidence that all kinds of volunteers that have been mentioned in this chapter also took part in one way or another in the demographic homogenization of Anatolia during the Great War.

CHAPTER FOUR

YOUNG BOYS INTO SOLDIERS, THE HOME FRONT INTO BARRACKS: ATTEMPTS AT PERMANENT MOBILIZATION THROUGH PARAMILITARY YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

A major challenge for the CUP-dominated Ottoman state throughout the Great War was to maintain a permanent state of military mobilization. The challenge was twofold: mobilizing manpower for war entailed both the establishment of effective systems of enlistment and the permanent preparation of society for war. This second challenge first and foremost consisted of a militaristic education and regimentation of young men, who largely constituted the backbone of mass armies in the age of universal conscription.

Although compulsory military service had already become universal before the war, the pressing needs of the war led Ottoman authorities to consider an extended training period for the youth, which started long before entering into the actual service, as vital to the Ottoman mobilization effort. This extended training period would include both physical and mental education. Such an approach would not only continuously prepare young boys for war by providing them with physical and military skills, but also would serve as a propaganda campaign to arouse popular support on the home front for the government's war policies. The militarization of society in this way would facilitate a permanent mobilization effort that the war required. It would also increase the CUP government's capacity for social control, since such a permanent state of mobilization would go hand in hand with further penetration into every level of society. This perspective led Ottoman authorities to attribute a significant role to militaristic youth associations, such as boy scouting and physical training organizations. Both of these organizations had already emerged in the Ottoman Empire before the Great War and approaches to physical education had already acquired militarist tendencies during the Second Constitutional Era. Inspired by the effectiveness of large-scale paramilitary youth organizations in European countries (particularly in Germany) Ottoman authorities aimed to re-establish a more extensive and centralized youth associational network in the country during the war. They conceived of paramilitary associations as an instrument for the permanent mobilization of the population.

This chapter focuses on the paramilitary youth associations in the Ottoman Empire, which acquired particular importance on the eve of and during the Great War. While the chapter presents a general discussion on the emergence and increasing importance of militaristic youth associations immediately before the war, its main focus is the Ottoman Youth League, which was established in the middle of the war with the specific aim of mobilizing unschooled provincial and peasant boys. Rather than confining myself to narrating an institutional history of such paramilitary youth organizations, I aim to situate these associations within the social context of the mobilization process. My main intention is to understand what kinds of relations these associations formed between the state and society in this process and how they were received by the people whom they targeted. One of the main contentions of this chapter is that such people were not passive; they produced responses that re-shaped the establishment and activities of paramilitary associations. In this sense, I argue that the Ottoman paramilitary associations often had difficulty realizing their initial aims and were forced to respond to social actors by continually re-shaping their central mission and their methods during the mobilization process.

The Existing Literature on Ottoman Paramilitary Youth Associations and Its Critique

So far, the Ottoman experience of paramilitary youth associations has not received sufficient attention in Ottoman-Turkish historiography. Zafer Toprak's short but pioneering essays have brought the subject-matter into the realm of social history,[1] but no synthetic and comprehensive in-depth studies have since followed. In fact, the several recent writings which shed light on particular examples of Ottoman paramilitary associations usually also contain valuable documentary material about the institutional history of the association they focused on. But, besides the problem of

[1] See Zafer Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri," *Boğaziçi University Journal: Humanities*, vol. 7 (1979), pp. 95–113; Zafer Toprak, "II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri," *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 2, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), pp. 531–536. As another early examiner of the subject, Tarık Zafer Tunaya also drew attention to these associations in his study on the political parties during the Second Constitutional Era. See Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler, vol. 3*, pp. 366–367.

singling out a case from the general process, these essays are limited in scope and descriptive in content.[2]

A more important problem with the existing literature is that since they almost solely focus on associations' legal documentary materials (such as regulations, by-laws, manuals, and public declarations), they usually re-tell the "official" story about the emergence and establishment process of that association. Such legal materials and declarations actually draw a normative picture of a desired process and tell us little about how the association actually developed. Such a one-dimensional approach could be quite misleading and give an uncritical and unchecked impression that the association under study was successful and effective. Such an approach gives us little indication of what kinds of problems emerged in practice, how such problems were addressed by the association, and reshaped its activities, and how the targeted people responded to its call. Especially in regard to the relationship between paramilitary youth associations and the issue of militarism in the late Ottoman Empire, treating the above-mentioned kind of documents as the complete representation of the reality can lead to a quick conclusion that a highly-articulated militarism that emanated from the paramilitary associations was imposed on society smoothly. Such an approach usually does not pay enough attention to possible forms of resistance from people to such projects.[3]

Paramilitary youth associations in the late Ottoman Empire have also been highlighted in recent critical and synthetic research which has tried to analyze the evolution of the Ottoman-early Turkish republican approach to physical education and sports in the light of the Foucauldian concepts of "governmentality" and "bio-politic."[4] Despite a more multi-dimensional

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[2] For essays on individual cases, see Mustafa Balcıoğlu, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri," in Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e*, second edition (Ankara: Asil Yayın, 2004), pp. 198–208; Sadık Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında İhtiyat Kuvveti Olarak Kurulan Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri," *OTAM: Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanlı Tarihi Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi*, no. 11 (2000), pp. 439–501; Sadık Sarısaman, "Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri," in Atilla Şimşek and Yaşar Kalafat (eds.), *Abdülhalûk M. Çay Armağanı*, vol. 2 (Ankara: Işık Ofset, 1998), pp. 833–846.

[3] For example of this tendency, see Handan Nezir Akmeşe's *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), pp. 163–172.

[4] Bkz. Yiğit Akın, *"Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar": Erken Cumhuriyet'te Beden Terbiyesi ve Spor*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004); Y. Tolga Cora, "Constructing and Mobilizing the 'Nation' through Sports: State, Physical Education and Nationalism under the Young Turk Role, 1908–1918" (MA thesis, Central European University, 2007); Y. Tolga Cora, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Millet-i Müsellaha Fikri ve İdeal Erilliğin Yaratılmasına Doğru:

perspective in these studies, the Great War years receive only tangential attention. They tend to situate the Ottoman experience of paramilitary youth associations into an almost uninterrupted line of evolution from the mid-nineteenth century though the early republican era (the Single Party Period). While I do not take issue with examining the broader context of this issue, I argue that the Great War period, with its specific conditions and urgent needs, had its own unique and significant impact on the evolution of paramilitary youth associations. The expectations of Ottoman authorities with respect to those associations established during the war differed from the expectations of similar types of associations which had been founded before the war. Indeed, the specific conditions and requirements of the war transformed the phenomenon of physical education from a minor part of healthy life activities into a mass militaristic phenomenon.[5] But many components of this transformation have not been explored at the practical level. The war years not only reshaped this process, but also revealed its limits in the Ottoman context. For example, as will be discussed below, the establishment of paramilitary youth associations in the Ottoman provincial areas was often a story of failure rather than success, and the actual living conditions of peasant youths played a significant role in their relationship with the state's militarist projects which targeted them. If there was an Ottoman ideology of physical education, this ideology was greatly re-shaped by the needs of the Ottoman mobilization in the war years.

Militarization of Physical Education and the Ottoman Strength League

The Balkan War constituted a turning point in the militarization of physical education and sports in the Ottoman Empire. The disappointing defeat on the battlefield against the newly modernized Balkan armies led Young Turk elites to think about the role of physical education in a militaristic way and helped initiate the view that militaristic physical education classes at schools could contribute in the preparation of young

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Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri'nin Kurulması (1914)," paper presented to the International Congress of 1908–2008 Centennial of the Young Turk Revolution, Ankara University, 28–30 May 2008.

[5] Akın, "*Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*," s. 130.

boys of pre-military age for military service.[6] The Balkan catastrophe, in their opinion, was connected to a larger problem of diminished vigor and health within Ottoman society. In this regard, some people complained after the defeat: "out of every thousand men who had been called up for service, only one hundred were healthy and the remainder had one sort of illness or another."[7] In an age when social Darwinist ideas became quite prevalent among the Ottoman elite,[8] the defeat was not considered merely a military failure, but was actually regarded as a social weakness due to physical incapability of the Ottomans: "We say that to live is to fight, and it is always the strong who dominates in a fight . . . The weak are always a slave to the strong. What bothers us most is the weakness of the Turk. Yes, our nation failed, but it failed because it failed to improve its strength!"[9]

This perspective led Ottoman authorities to place new emphasis on the role of physical education at schools in improving the health of youth and preparing them for military service in a soldierly way. In the words of a prominent Ottoman pedagogue just after the Balkan War, the education of the young population was even perceived as an integral part of training for informally extended military service: "Our children must begin to be soldiers even when they are still at school. They must be educated in a soldierly way. They must be inculcated with sentiments of vengeance and revenge (*kin ve intikam*). The whole nation must be living for vengeance and revenge."[10] However, a more practical and immediate product of this approach was an attempt to establish boy scouting activities, which had already begun to gain momentum in the Ottoman Empire after

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[6] A similar approach to the physical education of the youth for militaristic purposes also emerged in Imperial Russia after Russia's major defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. See David R. Jones, "Forerunners of the Komsomol: Scouting in Imperial Russia," in D. S. Van Der Oye and Bruce W. Menning (eds.), *Reforming the Tsar's Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 61; Joshua A. Sanborn, "Education for War, Peace and Patriotism in Russia on the Eve of World War I," in Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (eds.), *An Improbable War: The Outbreak of World War I and European Political Culture before 1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), p. 218.

[7] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. I, p. 199; "Türk Gücü'nün Umumi Nizamı," in Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Dernekleri," p. 101.

[8] See Doğan, *Osmanlı Aydınları ve Sosyal Darwinizm*.

[9] "Talim ve Terbiye: Türk Gücü," *Türk Yurdu*, no. 35 (7 Mart 1329/20 March 1913), [transliterated text in modern Turkish, vol. 2, Ankara: Tutibay Yayınları, 1998, p. 186].

[10] Edhem Nejad, "Organsal ve Bedensel Gelişmemiz," *Türklük ve Terbiye Yolları* (Istanbul: Yeni Turan Matbaası, 1329/1913), [new edition in modern Turkish, Istanbul: Kızılelma Yayınları, 2001, p. 44], quoted in Yiğit Akın, *Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*, p. 132.

the 1908 Revolution,[11] in a more organized and militarized manner. As a sub-organization of the Turkish Hearths Society, itself a pro-CUP and Turkish nationalist literary organization established in 1912,[12] the Turkish Strength Association (*Türk Gücü Derneği*) was established in June 1913 for this purpose. Its major objective was to "improve the health of Turks, reinforce their physical strength, and raise active generations as a contingency in times of hardships."[13] However, rather than forming a public association which would appeal to as many people as possible throughout the empire, the Turkish Strength Association was conceived almost as a private club which would be open to limited number of people (Unionist and nationalist), and was actually established at only a few high schools. Although membership was not restricted to anybody theoretically, prospective members were required to obtain the unanimous approval of the administrative board of the association and also were required to swear an oath. Moreover, membership to the association entailed an acceptance fee (1 *mecidiye*) and a monthly payment (5 piastres/*kuruş*).[14] Therefore, the Turkish Strength Association remained virtually ineffective and unpopular, until Enver Pasha tried to turn it into a more extensive organization in 1914, when the association became attached to the War Ministry.

The attempts to put boy scouting activities in an organized form targeting the whole young population of Ottoman society intensified in 1914, when a proposal was made to the Council of Ministers on 28 April 1914 to expand the Turkish Strength Association on a more centralized basis by institutionalizing it at schools throughout the empire. This proposal was accepted, and the association was reestablished with the name of the Ottoman Strength League[15] (*Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri*) on 27 May 1914.[16]

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[11] On the evolution of boy scouting in the Ottoman Empire, see Cora, "Constructing and Mobilizing the 'Nation' through Sports"; Zafer Toprak, "Meşrutiyet ve Mütareke Yıllarında Türkiye'de İzcilik," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 52 (April 1998), pp. 13–20; Zafer Toprak, "Türkiye'de İzciliğin İlk Evresi: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Mütareke Yıllarına," *Tombak*, no. 24 (February 1999), pp. 19–27; Gökhan Uzgören, *Türk İzcilik Tarihi* (Istanbul: Papatya Yayıncılık, 2000), pp. 1–34; Turgay Tuna, "Galatasaray'da İzcilik," *Tombak*, no. 28 (October–November 1999), pp. 56–71.

[12] On the Turkish Hearths Society, see Füsun Üstel, *İmparatorluktan Ulus-devlete Türk Milliyetçiliği: Türk Ocakları, 1912–1931* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1997).

[13] Cüneyd Okay, "Sport and Nation Building: Gymnastics and Sport in the Ottoman State and the Committee of Union and Progress, 1908–1918," *The International Journal of History of Sport*, vol. 20, no. 1 (March 2003), p. 153.

[14] "Talim ve Terbiye: Türk Gücü," pp. 188–189.

[15] I prefer to use the term "league" for such associations with a multi-branch structure, all of which united for a common militarist goal.

[16] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 197.

Moreover, the Ottomans also invited Harold Parfitt, a British citizen who led the boy scouting organization in Belgium from 1909 onwards, to reorganize boy scouting activities in the Ottoman Empire and to supervise the organization process of the Ottoman Strength League.[17]

According to its regulation[18] and instruction manual,[19] the Ottoman Strength League was established by the "approval and patronage" of the War Ministry, and would remain attached to it. Its main purpose was "to prepare the youth, both physically and spiritually, for the defense of the fatherland, and to ensure that they keep their strong patriotic character until death."[20] Therefore, the Ottoman Strength League primarily targeted young boys below the minimum age for military service, for whom it aimed to provide physical training and reinforce nationalistic sentiments. It was compulsory for all public schools, including the medreses, to establish branches of the Strength League in their school structures. Similar branches were also expected to be established by non-Muslim communities' schools, privately-owned schools, and even by ordinary civilians outside schools.

In the case of non-Muslim and non-public schools and civilians, participation in the league was not compulsory, but was expected through voluntary action. However, this voluntarism was not supposed to lessen the militaristic tone of the Strength League; on the contrary, it was expected to be a civilian contribution to a militaristic cause. It can be said that this civilian and voluntary contribution was highly desired by the authorities who attributed a symbolic importance to it. For example, official documents and correspondence about the league often used statements such as "the Strength League belonged to the people."[21] The regulation of the league made it quite clear that the league would work under the supervision of the military. Its local branches were to function "under the authority and supervision of the chief of the recruiting office branch" of the region in which a particular branch was located. Moreover, local branches were also required to report their activities to the military authorities in their region.

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[17] Cora, "II. Meşrutiyet Dönemi'nde Millet-i Müsellaha Fikri."

[18] "Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri Hakkında Nizamname," in Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri," pp. 105–107.

[19] *Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri Talimâtı* (Istanbul: Matbaa-yı Askeriye, 1330/1914); BOA, DH.İD., 224/3, 19 Safer 1333/6 January 1915.

[20] "Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri Hakkında Nizamname," pp. 105–107.

[21] BOA, DH.EUM.MH., 87/137, 24 Şa'ban 1332/18 July 1914.

The Strength League's program for 1914 reveals detailed information about what sort of activities were planned to be carried out at schools.[22] First of all, on a general level, the main objective of these activities was to improve physical education of pre-military age students. But it should be noted that what the league meant by physical education activities were actually almost exclusively military exercises and drills. The program categorized the training of students under two headings, one being drills without arms and the other drills with arms. The drills without arms aimed to improve the body fitness of students and to make them physically stronger. This category also included various activities to train students to maneuver better in open terrain, such as learning how to use maps, recognizing geographical landmarks and following a trail. The drills with arms primarily focused on target practice, which were planned to be undertaken with real rifles and live ammunition. Rifles and ammunition would be provided by the Ottoman military.[23]

In addition to these drills, the program also included moral education courses. These courses received a particular emphasis, because it was said that moral education was an inseparable part of the training of soldier-candidates. From the perspective of the Strength League, besides being psychically strong and able to use a weapon, a young man also needed to be someone who was consciously aware of his duties both to himself and to "his fellow citizens and elders;" he was supposed to be not only capable of protecting his health with personal hygienic care, but also an honest man who never lied. Such young men needed also to be "obedient" people, who knew how to respect and treat "the state, soldiers, the police, the gendarmerie and their superiors."[24]

The Strength League promised a license and also certain privileges for its young participants, who attended the training activities regularly and demonstrated through end-of-year exams that they had become ready for military service and capable of carrying out various military exercises. The license holders were also offered certain encouraging privileges that would make their military life easier, such as that when they were drafted

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[22] *Güç Dernekleri'nin Programı* (Istanbul: Matbaa-yı Askeriye, 1330/1914); BOA, DH.İD., 224/3, 19 Safer 1333/6 January 1915.

[23] "In order to keep the people's warlike character and its love for the army alive," these target practices were also declared to be open to civilians, who could participate in them by paying a certain amount of fee. Sarısaman, "Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri," p. 835. And it is understood that this activity was also seen as a good propaganda material to publicize. See, for example, *Harb Mecmuası*, no. 24 (Kanunievvel 1333/December 1917), p. 381.

[24] *Güç Dernekleri'nin Programı*, pp. 14, 18, 22.

they would be sent to any unit they wanted and they would not be sent to units in extremely hot provinces such as the Hicaz and Yemen (*bilâd-ı harre*). Moreover, during their military service, the license holders were also promised promotion to the rank of corporal four months earlier than others, and, if they did not face any punishment during military service, they would be granted leave for one and a half months after regular maneuvers each year.[25]

The Ottoman Strength League aimed to prepare the Ottoman youth for military service and integrate a militarized physical training perspective into the Ottoman school system. It can be said that the Ottoman state took this militaristic objective very seriously. Just in the first months after its establishment, state authorities expressed expectations that branches of the league be founded by military units to train local people everywhere, "even in small villages," and to make each of them "a perfect soldier."[26] The statement which Enver Pasha sent to the Ottoman press on 20 June 1914 about the establishment of the Strength League not only reflected this seriousness clearly, but also presented a succinct summary of the militaristic mentality of the period, which was formulated by Colmar von der Goltz as "nation-in-arms" (*millet-i müsellaha*).[27] According to Enver Pasha, to become a nation-in-arms was the only option for a nation to survive in the age they lived in. With the establishment of the Strength League, he said, "everybody is a soldier now" and "nobody who calls himself a man would wander around the streets idly when the fatherland is in danger, but he would grab a weapon and run to defend the Ottoman honor (*nâmûs*)."[28]

These short quotations from Enver Pasha also highlight the strong emphasis on manliness/masculinity, which was a major characteristic of militarist discourses of the Great War era, and the Ottoman case was not an exception.[29] As Tolga Cora has noted, the idea of manliness that emanated from a strong body was a main foundation block of the "patriotic-heroic-manly-citizen model" which nationalist ideologies always

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[25] *Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri Talimâtı*, pp. 22–23.

[26] BOA, DH.EUM.MH., 87/137, 24 Şa'ban 1332/18 July 1914; BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 15/30, 6 Ramazan 1332/29 July 1914.

[27] Von der Goltz's militarist ideas and their effect on the Ottomans will be dealt with in more detail below.

[28] Quoted in Sarısaman, "Güç Dernekleri," p. 834.

[29] It is an ironic detail to add that it was also Enver Pasha who initiated various practices to mobilize Ottoman female labor during the First World War years. See Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire.*

idealized.[30] It can be said that militarist associations such as the Strength League tried to add "soldier" to this formulation. Moreover, as is clear in Enver Pasha's words, the defense of the fatherland was identified with defending the "chastity and honor" of a woman. This point remained to be another important characteristic of the Ottoman militarist mentality during the war years, though it was not unique to it.[31] This discourse also stated that the "manly soldier" model had already existed in the nature of "the Ottoman son," but he had lost it as he had "become feminine" (*kadınlaşma*) in the course of time; therefore, it was expected that the Strength League would help the Ottomans regain that old "manly soldier" model to create a new generation of young people who would be "embarrassed to become feminine like today's weak children" who spent their time in "coffeehouses and between soft cotton sheets."[32]

However, despite remarkable enthusiasm at the beginning of its foundation, the Strength League largely remained a project on paper and could not realize the expectations declared in its regulations and programs. Although the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the Great War actually further increased the importance of paramilitary youth associations which would be used to mobilize popular support for the war cause of the CUP government, the Ottoman Strength League could not become an efficient association in this sense and could not realize the expectation of undertaking mobilizing actions at the popular level. As the war turned into a multi-front battle of attrition which required the permanent mobilization of the home front, Ottoman authorities, though not abandoning the aims set for the Strength League, needed to form a more efficient paramilitary organization for mobilizing the youth on a more extensive basis.

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[30] Cora, "Constructing and Mobilizing the 'Nation' through Sports: State," p. 7. Also see Y. Tolga Cora, "II. Meşrutiyet'te Beden Terbiyesi: *Genç Kalemler*' in 'Milli Jimnastik' (1911) adlı Risalesi Üzerine," *Müteferrika*, no. 29 (2006/1), pp. 177–192.

[31] For an interesting study which analyzes the nationalist identification of the fatherland with womanhood in the context of Egypt, see Beth Baron, *Egypt as a Woman: Nationalism, Gender and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). For a similar analysis in the case of Iran, see Joanna de Groot, "'Brothers of the Iranian Race': Manhood, Nationhood, and Modernity in Iran, c.1870–1914," in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 137–156.

[32] ("*Bugünkü cılız çocuklar gibi kahve köşelerinde, pamuk şilteler içinde kadınlaşmaktan hayâ eden . . .*"), "Osmanlı Milletine Harbiye Nezâreti'nin Beyânnâmesi," BOA, DH.MB. HPS.M., 15/30, 6 Ramazan 1332/29 July 1914; "Osmanlı Milletine Harbiye Nezâreti'nin Beyânnâmesi," *İkdâm*, 30 Haziran 1330/13 July 1914.

The major reason for the ineffectiveness of the Strength League was that the association remained almost solely as a part of the Ottoman school system. It was able to target only the young boys at schools and could not reach out to the rest. While its activities were confined to schools in major provincial centers, expected voluntary initiatives on the part of civilians in small towns and villages never materialized, nor did the authorities carry out a systematic campaign to stimulate wider popular participation, with the exception of a few initial press statements.

Schools, Mobilization and Peasant Boys: From the Strength League to the Youth League

Ottoman authorities were quite aware of the militarization of physical education in Europe and its integration into school systems on the eve of the Great War.[33] It is apparent that the Ottomans wanted to realize a similar change in their own school system. The school curricula during the Second Constitutional Era began to place a new emphasis on the body, and the discourse of healthy life became one of the major themes presented as an indispensable part of modernization in school textbooks.[34]

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[33] For a comprehensive analysis of the militarization of education in German primary and secondary schools and the relationship between education and popular mobilization during the war years, see Andrew C. Donson, "War Pedagogy and Youth Culture: Nationalism and Authority in Germany in the First World War" (Ph.d. dissertation, The University of Michigan, 2000). On the Italian experience in this respect, see Andrea Fava, "War, 'National Education' and the Italian Primary School, 1915–1918," in Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, pp. 53–69. On the militarized practices of physical education in British primary schools in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see J. A. Mangan and Hamad S. Ndee, "Military Drill—Rather More than 'Brief and Basic': English Elementary Schools and English Militarism," in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Militarism, Sport, Europe: War without Weapons* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 65–96.

[34] Füsun Üstel, *"Makbul Vatandaş" ın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyet'ten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi*, second edition (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), p. 74. In fact, physical education courses had entered Ottoman school curricula much earlier, in the mid-nineteenth century. For example, according to the 23rd article of the General Education Regulations (*Maârif-i Umûmiye Nizâmnâmesi*) of 1869, gymnastic courses had become compulsory for all secondary (*rüşdiye*) schools. Akın, "*Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*," p. 50. However, it is also obvious that it took quite a long time for this "obligation" to be effective and extensively functional in practice. For instance, there was no physical education course in the curriculum of 1904 that was prepared for "primary schools in towns and villages; in the curriculum of the same year for secondary schools, there was only a "hygiene" (*hıfzıssıhha*) course. Similarly, in the curriculum of 1899 for high schools (*idâdi*), there were only "knowledge of public works and hygiene" (*malûmât-ı nâfia ve hıfzıssıhha*) courses. But there is an interesting detail that in the curriculum of 1899 for the School for Tribes (*Aşîret Mektebi*),

Moreover, the concept of discipline in education also received a militarist emphasis during this period. According to a famous pedagogue of the era, Ahmed Cevat [Emre], who wrote civic instruction textbooks (*Malûmât-ı Medeniye*) for Ottoman school children, discipline was the key to prepare children for military service. In his words, "if a child attends physical education courses regularly from the start of his education, if he keeps exercising, learns how to shoot a rifle, participates in scouting and rides a horse, he becomes a perfect soldier."[35] Such words echoed almost entirely similar statements made in Europe, as, for example, in the case of Italy. In a speech in favor of physical exercises at schools and their importance for preparation for military service, an Italian deputy stated in 1890 that:

> The citizen-soldier is not trained in the barracks but in school; for only those who in school and at home have learned the passion for freedom, the holy love of country, and that for it, one must vanquish or die on the battlefield, can be citizen-soldiers. The young men who will enter the army at the age of twenty, having received military training in adolescence, having had target practice in their gymnasiums, will arrive beneath the flags as already-formed soldiers . . .[36]

The objectives of the Ottoman Strength League were perfectly in agreement with such an understanding of physical education and discipline. However, it was very hard for a mobilizing association in the Ottoman Empire to reach a sufficient number of young people only through the existing school system. The infrastructural development level of the Ottoman school system was far from being able to achieve this goal. Although the Ottoman Constitution (*Kanûn-i Esâsî*) of 1876 declared that primary education was obligatory for every Ottoman subject (*Osmanlı efrâdının kâffesince*),[37] the Ottoman Ministry of Education statistics revealed that only one-fifth of the Muslim children of school age attended primary schools in the academic year of 1913–1914.[38] According to another set of

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there were courses in "training" (*talim*) and "foot training" (*ayak talimi*), which could mean gymnastic courses. See Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839–1908: Islamization, Autocracy and Discipline* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), appendices 4, 5, 6, 7.

35 Quoted in Üstel, *"Makbul Vatandaş" ın Peşinde*, p. 86.

36 Sabina Loriga, "The Military Experience," in Giovanni Levi and Jean-Claude Schmitt (eds.), *A History of Young People, vol 2: Stormy Evolution to Modern Times*, trans. Carol Volk (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 21.

37 Article 114, *Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüze Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük (eds.), second edition (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2000), p. 55.

38 Mustafa Gencer, *Jön Türk Modernizmi ve "Alman Ruhu": 1908–1918 Dönemi Türk-Alman İlişkileri ve Eğitim* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), p. 119.

statistics, at the beginning of the twentieth century, out of the total population of 12,136,000 living in the territory corresponding to the land within the borders of today's Turkey (excluding Istanbul), the number of all students at all schools was 913,436, which was only 7.5 percent. For example, this ratio in the Ankara province was 3.6, where there were only 31,081 students out of the total 850,000 population.[39] The situation was not promising for the capital Istanbul, either. In the academic year of 1913–1914, out of the total 4,486 public primary schools throughout the empire, there were only 80 in Istanbul, which had only 10,430 students.[40] The total population of Istanbul in 1914 was estimated as 909,978, which means that the ratio of primary school students to the total population was only 1.14 percent.[41] On the other hand, even in Freiburg, Germany, which had a population of around 85,000 in 1913, there were totally 9,246 students (namely 10.9 percent out of total) at primary and secondary schools.[42]

The role of education in the Ottoman mobilization experience during the Great War was almost at a negligible level compared to the cases, for example, of Germany and France. It can be argued that if a Turkish version of Erich Maria Remarque's famous *All Quite on the Western Front* were written in the Ottoman context, it would be highly difficult to find Ottoman equivalents for some main characters of the novel, such as the student-soldier Paul and the teacher-war propagandist Kantorek; or, their Ottoman equivalents would not be as representative and convincing because of the minor role the school system played in the Ottoman case. The statistical picture drawn above shows that, while it tried to include a paramilitary association in its structure, the infrastructural development of the Ottoman education system was not at a satisfactory level to make a remarkable contribution to Ottoman mobilization efforts during the war.

The backbone of the Ottoman military strength consisted overwhelmingly of illiterate and unschooled peasant boys, rather than schooled urban youths.[43] Therefore, any attempt at permanent mobilization of young

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[39] Necdet Sakaoğlu, *Osmanlı'dan Günümüze Eğitim Tarihi* (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2003), pp. 109, 119.

[40] Mehmet Ö. Alkan (ed.), *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyet'e Modernleşme Sürecinde Eğitim İstatistikleri, 1839–1924* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, 2000), pp. 165–166.

[41] Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914*, p. 171.

[42] Roger Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany: Freiburg, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 54.

[43] It is a widely accepted view that the backbone of Ottoman military manpower was the Anatolian Muslim population (mainly the Turks, but also the Kurds and smaller ethnic groups such as the Laz and the Circassians). For example, see Erickson, Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. xv–xvi; Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System," p. 91.

people in the Ottoman Empire would be doomed to fail without targeting unschooled peasant boys. This point was a major motive for Ottoman authorities in their attempt to establish a new and more popular paramilitary association to mobilize the youth in the middle of the war. For this purpose, the Ottoman Youth League (*Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri*) was established on 17 April 1916. The need to target unschooled peasant boys for a successful mobilization in the Ottoman Empire was one of the major themes that the German officer Colonel Von Hoff, who was the advisor-trainer and general inspector (*müfettiş-i umûmî*) of the Ottoman Youth League, highlighted as being the main objectives of the association:

> In a country where only twenty young people out of a hundred could attend school, the Youth League is something very important and primarily needed. Those eighty unschooled boys actually constitute the most important mass that should be targeted. Actually it is primarily these young people who should benefit from the Youth League. A few sports clubs that were established within schools would not be of any significant value for disciplining (*terbiye*) the nation.[44]

The same point was emphasized on every appropriate occasion by Von Hoff, who also underlined it in the reports which he presented to the Ottoman War and Interior ministries.[45]

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[44] Von Hoff, "Genç Dernekleri'nin Şimdiye Kadar Teşkilât ve Tevsii," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 1 (1 September 1333/1 September 1917), p. 8; Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri," p. 97.

[45] "Genç Dernekleri Müfettiş-i Umumisi Miralay Von Hoff'un Vilayâtta Genç Dernekleri Teşkilâtı için Yaptığı Seyahat Hakkındaki Raporu," BOA, DH.UMVM., 150/62, 22 Zilhicce 1335/9 October 1917; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–3. This point is also related to the mentality that the military considered itself as a "school" for peasant boys. When the state was unable to establish an extensive school system throughout the country, the role of military service also included an educational function. Even in today's Turkey, the army teaches illiterate young men how to read and write during their military service. This educational role of the military was also emphasized by various Ottoman pedagogues at the time, such as İsmail Hakkı: "The army is the most fervent hearth of training for the common people . . . The army functioned as a hearth of education and provided education and skills during the times when this country suffered from a lack of schools and when the available school system failed. The army is a great school." See İsmail Hakkı [Baltacıoğlu], *Terbiye-i Avam* (Istanbul: İkdâm Matbaası, 1330/1914), pp. 47–48. Needless to say, of course, this educational function was characterized by a militarist disposition. On the other hand, it can be said that this emphasis on the educational dimension of the military weakened during wartime. Yet, to some degree paramilitary associations sought to address this deficiency. On the educational role of the military, also see Yücel Yanıkdağ, "Educating the Peasants: The Ottoman Army and Enlisted Men in Uniform," *Middle Eastern Studies*, (November 2004), pp. 91–107.

However, the emphasis on the need to target unschooled boys in villages did not intend to neglect urban boys. On the contrary, it seems that the state's security forces in the major cities such as Istanbul even sometimes resorted to force in their effort to persuade young boys in the street to participate in the trainings. For example, a record of the Istanbul branch of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) stated that the police sometimes caught homeless young people, shoeshine boys, and young porters in the street to make them participate in the trainings of the Youth League.[46] But it is certain that war conditions required a much larger-scale youth mobilization. And the priority was given to unschooled peasant boys.

The Effect of German Militarism and Colmar von der Goltz

While the Ottoman Youth League was established on 17 April 1916, the preparation for its establishment had informally started in earlier that year by Von Hoff, who had been appointed to supervise the entire process. Von Hoff, who had previously no assignment in the Ottoman Empire, was recommended to the Ottoman authorities for this task by Marshal Colmar Freiher von der Goltz shortly before his death from typhus in January 1916, while commanding the Ottoman Sixth Army in Baghdad. Von Hoff was a disciple of von der Goltz in his formative years in Germany and worked under the supervision of the latter in the field of youth education from a militaristic perspective.[47]

Colmar von der Goltz (who was also known as Golç Pasha by the Ottomans) had been an influential figure for Ottoman military thinking during its phase of modernization. He had also previously taken an active part in the German advisory commission invited to the Ottoman Empire by Abdülhamid II after the Ottoman defeat at the Russo-Ottoman War of 1878 to modernize the army and military education. He remained in the empire from 1883 until 1895 and also held the post of inspector of the modernization process of Ottoman military schools.[48] His famous treatise on the necessity of the universal conscription system and the need to

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[46] Toprak, "Türkiye'de İzcilik," p. 19.
[47] Balcıoğlu, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri," s. 201.
[48] F. A. K. Yasamee, "Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz and the Rebirth of the Ottoman Empire," *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 9, no. 2 (July 1998), p. 91.

re-organize society according to military needs, *The Nation in Arms* (*Das Volk in Waffen*), was translated into Ottoman-Turkish in 1884, only a year after its original publication in German and even before its English translation appeared. The second edition of the Ottoman-Turkish translation came out in 1888.[49] Goltz's vision of the readiness for war in the modern era entailed not only a systematic recruitment and training system for civilian-soldiers, but also a permanent popular support for military mobilization from society. This book in particular and Goltz's militarist ideas in general deeply affected Ottoman cadets at the War College where he also taught and his above-mentioned book was used as a textbook.[50]

While many of his former pupils, who had become high ranking officers during the Balkan War, retired and had been replaced by younger officers from the CUP-dominated military leadership on the eve of the Great War, Goltz continued to be admired by the younger generation of Ottoman officers. He was once again invited to the Ottoman Empire in November 1914 as army commander at the remarkable of seventy-one.[51]

It is no coincidence that Goltz's ideas were also influential in envisioning the Ottoman Youth League. In Germany, Goltz had advocated the systematic pre-military training of primary school students since 1876, even when this idea was not welcome by conservative German military leaders.[52] He himself was the founder of a similar association in Germany in 1911, the Young Germany League (*Jungdeutschlandbund*), which worked virtually as a part of the German military and aimed to prepare German young boys for military service.[53] Local branches of this association "sought to gather boys of 16 and older from all social classes and political persuasions and to provide them with thorough military training in the service of the Fatherland."[54] It was also through the Young Germany League that Goltz became acquainted with Von Hoff, where the latter worked as a junior officer under his command until the war started. That is why Goltz

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[49] Colmar Freiher von der Goltz Paşa, *Millet-i Müsellaha: Asrımızın Usûl ve Ahvâl-i Askeriyesi*, trans. Mehmed Tahir, second edition (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Ebüzziya, 1305/1888).

[50] Akmeşe, *The Birth of Modern Turkey*, p. 69.

[51] Yasamee, "Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz," p. 120.

[52] Derek S. Linton, "Preparing German Youth for War," in Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (eds), *Anticipating Total War: The German and American Experiences, 1871–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 167.

[53] Donson, "War Pedagogy and Youth Culture," p. 334; Bruno von Mudra, *Goltz Paşa'nın Hatırası ve Hal Tercümesi*, trans. Pertev Demirhan (Istanbul: Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanlığı Yayınları, 1953), p. 29.

[54] Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany*, p. 512.

recommended Von Hoff for the supervision of the Ottoman Youth League.[55] When he arrived in the Ottoman Empire to undertake the assignment, Von Hoff was introduced to the Ottoman public as a "famous" officer-trainer who worked successfully for many years in training and disciplining the German youth, and was immediately promoted to colonel in the Ottoman army.[56]

Goltz's ideas not only shaped specifically the experience of the Youth League, but also continued to influence the Turkish perspective of military service and the "military nation" into the republican era.[57]

The Establishment of the Youth League: Its Goals and Mobilizing Discourses

The contents of the law[58] and regulation[59] of the Ottoman Youth League give the impression that there were certain continuities and similarities with the objectives previously set by the Strength Association. Like its predecessor, the Youth League also aimed to train "the youth of the fatherland to make them strong, proud and obedient" and to "prepare a happy future for the fatherland which would always be able to defend itself" thanks to these trained youth.[60] On the other hand, as regards the practical

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[55] Von Hoff, "Genç Dernekleri'nin Şimdiye Kadar Teşkilât ve Tevsii," p. 7.

[56] Balcıoğlu, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri," p. 201; Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında İhtiyat Kuvveti," p. 444. The information that I have been able to find about the career of Von Hoff before he came to the Ottoman Empire (and after he left) is actually more limited that I expected. For example, the existing literature (mostly in English) on the German experience of nationalist-paramilitary associations on the eve and during the war hardly mentions his name. It can be guessed that he was rather a man of duty than a theoretician or strategist, and he was a good pupil of Goltz. At the time he was assigned to the Ottoman Empire in 1916, he actually held a combatant post on the Western front, and was not working in the Young Germany League. Von Hoff, "Alman Siperlerine Ait Hakikî Bir Vak'a," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 7 (1 Mart 1334/1 March 1918), p. 9.

[57] For example, the famous early republican treatise on the necessity of military service, *AskerlikVazifesi* (The Duty of Military Service), which was written by Afet İnan aiming to popularize the understanding of military nation in the new Turkish nation-state, directly copied certain sections of Goltz's book. See Hasan Ünder, "30'ların Ders Kitaplarından ve Kemalizm'in Kaynaklarından Biri Millet-i Müsellaha ve Medeni Bilgiler," *Tarih ve Toplum*, 32/192 (December 1999), pp. 48–56.

[58] "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Tanzim Olunan Kanûn Lâyihası ve Bu Lâyihanın Muvakkaten Yürürlüğe Konulması," BOA, MV., 242/45, 13 Cemâziyelâhir 1334/17 April 1916; "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, 14 Cemâziyelâhir 1334/17 April 1916, pp. 898–900.

[59] *Genç Dernekleri: Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Teşkili Hakkındaki Talimatname* (Istanbul: n.p., n.d).

[60] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–3.

process of its establishment and its activities, it can be said that the Ottoman Youth League was a more realistic project, as it tried to act according to the more immediate necessities of the war by considering the conditions in the Ottoman Empire. It is true that the Youth League was, in a sense, a continuation of a militarist understanding of physical education that had already become noticeable in the Ottoman educational system before the Great War. This militarist approach to physical education assumed a more intensified form with the development of boy scouting organizations and the establishment of the Strength Association. But while the emphasis on the necessity of a militarized form of physical education for the preparation of male youth for military service continued to motivate the Youth League, the latter was actually conceived rather as a tool of mobilization than mere training of young boys.

Another characteristic of the Youth League was that the CUP government wanted to keep it under its direct control, by trying to establish a more centralized structure for the provincial organization of the league. As Tarık Zafer Tunaya has observed, the CUP government desired the Youth League to form its own militia organization. In this sense, it was seen as a part of the government's effort to penetrate into and take control of deeper levels of society during the war years.[61] Therefore, it was quite consistent with this political inclination that the Strength League was abolished when the Youth League was formed, thus a possible chaotic situation that would stem from the existence of two different paramilitary associations at the same time was eliminated right at the beginning.[62]

But a more important initial development in terms of the government's effort to control youth associational life was that with the establishment of the Youth League and by the direct intervention of Enver Pasha, all boy scouting clubs in the empire lost their autonomy, were required to become branches of the Youth League, accepting its leadership, law and regulations. In fact, the boy scouting activities in the Ottoman Empire, which were already confined to some schools in big cities, were virtually halted when the war began.[63] Moreover, with the start of the war, Harold Parfitt, who had been invited by the Ottoman state in mid-1914 to organize and supervise boy scouting activities, had to leave the country because the empire joined the war on the side of the Triple Alliance. All of the

[61] Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler, vol. 3*, pp. 366–367.
[62] Article 9, "Genç Dernekleri Kanûn-ı Muvakkati."
[63] *Scouting in Turkey*, Ankara, n.p., 1940, p. 4.

262 Ottoman scoutmaster candidates whom he had been training at the Scout Training Camp at Maltepe, Istanbul, volunteered for the Ottoman army.[64] But while boy scouting was halted at Muslim schools, various boy scouting clubs of Ottoman Armenian and Greek communities remained unaffected by the outbreak of the war. In fact, the continuation of their activities during the first two years of the war concerned certain officials, including Enver Pasha who complained to the ministries of the Interior and Education that these associations' actions had become completely "uncontrolled."[65] Even as early as 24 June 1914, the Ottoman government expressed annoyance when an Armenian boy scouting club in Kadıköy, Istanbul practiced some military drills in its activities, carried banners with Armenian slogans, and conducted its exercises in Armenian. The Interior Ministry decided to ban the activities of the club by claiming that such drills could only be practiced with the permission of the War Ministry and this permission could be given only if such activities were carried out to prepare their members for military service in the Ottoman army.[66]

The Ottoman Youth League planned to include "all [male] Ottoman subjects" from the age of 12 to the minimum age of military service into their activities.[67] The temporary law for the league made it clear that all male Ottomans of the specified ages, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, were supposed to participate in the activities carried out by local branches.[68] But, it is apparent that young people who joined the Youth League were overwhelmingly Muslim. The available documents about the association and its activities almost never mention any non-Muslim participation, nor do they contain any point that would hint that their participation was

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[64] Zafer Toprak, "Türkiye'de İzciliğin İlk Evresi," p. 22; Tuna, "Galatasaray'da İzcilik," p. 57.

[65] Sarısaman, "Osmanlı Güç Dernekleri," p. 833.

[66] BOA, DH.MB.HPS.M., 14/25, 5 Şa'ban 1332/24 June 1914.

[67] According to the Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914, the minimum age for actual military service was 20 (one must have completed his twentieth year of life to become eligible for military service). But the same law also stipulated that those who were nineteen and twenty years old could be conscripted in time of war; this provision was actually put into practice soon after the Ottoman Empire entered the war. "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," pp. 662–704. Moreover, this provision was revised on 29 April 1915 and the minimum age for military service was further reduced; this new revision stated that those who completed their eighteenth and nineteenth years could be conscripted in time of war. See "16 Cemaziyelahir 1332 Tarihli Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatının 2, 3, 4, 5. Maddelerine Muaddel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, 14 Cemâziyelâhir 1333/29 April 1915, p. 589.

[68] Article 2, "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat."

desired by the Ottoman authorities.[69] This situation was related to both political preferences of the government and practical conditions in the midst of the war. By 1916 the nationalist tendencies of the CUP government became more prominent and the participation of non-Muslim Ottoman groups in such activities was not particularly desired. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of the non-Muslim population, particularly the Armenians, were forced to leave Anatolia or subjected to massacres during their deportation. As a consequence of such persecution, there were few non-Muslim boys in the Anatolian provinces who were left to participate in the Youth League in the latter half of the war.

Besides the general objective stated in the law, regulation and declarations, which sought to increase the centralist control and organization of the Youth League, obedience represented another concept that received particular emphasis during the establishment and operation of the Youth League. According to the perspective that characterized this process, the ideal Ottoman young man was supposed to be "obedient" to authorities. The Youth League sought to inculcate its participants with obediance through "acceptance of following orders and behaving in an orderly way."[70] Obedience was also one of the major topics which were discussed frequently in the monthly journal of the league.[71] But what was meant by obedience, especially in the essays of the Youth League's General Inspector Von Hoff and its Inspector of the Public Schools Selim Sırrı [Tarcan], the most prolific writers of the journal, was not blind submission to authority, but a deliberate awareness of one's duties and, thus, a "voluntary" conformity with it: "Young people should not understand obeying orders as some kind of absolute submission, but should accept it

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[69] The only example that I could found in this respect was about some Greek schoolboys who drilled in a local branch of the Youth League in Istanbul. See Selim Sırrı, "Genç Dernekleri ve Yanlış Telakkiler," p. 4.

[70] "Teşkilât, Maksâd ve Gâye," *Genç Dernekleri*, p. 6.

[71] The Ottoman Youth League took written communication very seriously. It published a monthly journal, *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, the first issue of which appeared on 1 September 1917 and its first twelve issues were published regularly; the number of total issues was 26, the last one being published on 1 July 1920. Moreover, the league also occasionally published some pamphlets about various subjects to explain its aim and activities to the public, to give basic information about health issues, and to propagandize the Ottoman war cause. However, being aware that the majority of the population was illiterate, the league also emphasized oral communication, encouraging its members, especially in rural areas, to communicate its aims and the importance of participation in its activities by word of mouth. For such emphases on the importance and usefulness of oral communication and the need to enlist the support of local people, see, for example, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Teşkilâtının Ehemmiyet-i Azîmesi," *Genç Dernekleri*, p. 11.

voluntarily by appreciating the necessity of obedience."[72] Moreover, this obedience was supposed to emerge within a framework of social solidarity to be based on a strict division of labor similar to military's gradation of authority through a system of ranks.[73]

The organization of the Youth League divided its targeted population, namely young boys from the age of 12 to 20, into two different categories. The first category included youth between the ages of 12 and 17. This category of organization was called *Gürbüz Derneği* (literally, "the association for the healthy children"). The second category included youth from the age of 17 to the age of military service (which was theoretically 20, but was reduced up to 18 in the course of the war) and was referred to as *Dinç Derneği* (literally, "the association for the vigorous youth"). The training of the youth was also organized according to these categories. Each category would receive a particular kind of education which was thought to be appropriate for the age span of its participants. While the *Gürbüz* category aimed to train the younger schooled and unschooled boys at the age of primary and secondary education in a longer term program, the *Dinç* section was planned according to the more immediate needs and conditions of the war and aimed to train its targeted population primarily for military service.[74] Since the overwhelming majority of Ottoman Muslim youth in this category was unschooled, the program of this section almost entirely targeted peasant boys. The fact that the guides of the *Dinç* courses were almost all army officers underscores its focus on military service preparation. Moreover, the direction and supervision of local branches were assigned to corps commanders and chiefs of recruiting office branches in their regions. The guides of the *Gürbüz* section, on the other hand, mainly consisted of public school teachers and other civilians assigned by local administrators.[75]

Since the *Dinç* section was primarily seen as preparation for military service, the role of army officers in guiding its participants, namely males

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[72] Selim Sırrı, "Genç Dernekleri ve Yanlış Telakkiler," p. 6.

[73] Selim Sırrı, "Genç Dernekleri'nde Terbiye-i Ahlâkiye, I,", *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 2 (1 Teşrinievvel 1333/1 October 1917), pp. 9–10.

[74] Von Hoff, "Alman Dinçleri Hidmet-i Askeriyeye Nasıl Hazırlanıyorlar?," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 5 (1 Kanunisani 1334/1 January 1918), pp. 9–11.

[75] "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Tanzim Olunan Kanûn Lâyihası"; "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat." It is important to note that the Youth League increasingly attributed an educational role to army officers and saw them as "care givers of the youth," who would be useful in "educating and training the youth" even "after the war." See Von Hoff, "Zâbit, Gençlerin Mürebbisi Olarak," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 7 (1 Mart 1334/1 March 1918), pp. 1–2.

of at least 17 years of age, was preferred. For example, when the *Dinç* section of the Eskişehir branch employed civilians as guides, the Youth League Inspectorate severely warned the head of the Eskişehir recruiting office to make the branch employ army officers for this task.[76]

The task of maintaining records of young people who were required to attend the activities of the Youth League was assigned to village and neighborhood headmen (*muhtar*) who not only needed to prepare regular lists of eligible young boys living in their administrative units, but also to make sure that they attended the activities.[77] Von Hoff attributed great importance to this task, as he had initially been disappointed with the records concerning young people when he first worked in the empire. He sometimes complained about the inefficiency and slowness of gathering statistical data about the youth and keeping their regular records, and he even published a short essay discussing the necessity and importance of statistics in recognizing, thus administering, the population.[78] As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, the function of *muhtar*s as main agents of the central state at the local level had already been enhanced by the application of the universal conscription system and also by the declaration of general mobilization at the beginning of the war, both of which required regular demographic record keeping and monitoring at the level of village and neighborhood units. This task of keeping records of and monitoring young people in local units further increased the responsibility and authority of village and neighborhood *muhtar*s in Ottoman society.

The Manpower Problem

As has been noted above, the *Dinç* section of the Youth League assumed particular importance both for the league itself and the Ottoman military. This was no coincidence, because one of the league's major objectives was to supply as many ready-to-fight men as possible in a very short time for the army in the midst of an ongoing war. However, the Youth League's program, even at this level, was not limited to military preparation. In this

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[76] Balcıoğlu, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri," p. 206.

[77] "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Tanzim Olunan Kanûn Lâyihası"; "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat"; BOA, DH.UMVM., 141/7, 2 Zilkâde 1334/31 August 1916; BOA, DH.UMVM., 145/118, 29 Rebîulâhir 1335/22 February 1917.

[78] Von Hoff, "Nüfusun İstatistiği," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 3 (1 Teşrinisani 1333/1 November 1917), pp. 8–9. Moreover, Von Hoff also demanded the preparation of an administrative yearbook (*salnâme*) showing the administrative division of the empire in detail to the smallest village, which would be useful in keeping records of and monitoring eligible young people. See BOA, DH.UMVM., 144/26, 12 Rebîulevvel 1335/6 January 1917.

respect, the league also sought to convince young men to enlist. Throughout the war, a lack of sufficient manpower in the military remained one of the gravest problems for the Ottoman empire.[79] It is also important to emphasize that this inadequacy did not stem only from casualties on the battlefield, but was a more general problem involving various factors. The difficulty of maintaining the permanent mobilization of men for the front represented an equally threatening challenge. While the absolute number of available conscripts had been considerably increased by the Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914 and the declaration of general mobilization on 3 August 1914, the system, as noted as in Chapter 2, did not function efficiently enough in practice. Any success which the conscription system enjoyed was only partial and limited to certain relatively modernized regions.

A second serious problem in mobilizing men for war was resistance on the part of young men of military age to enlistment. It became increasingly difficult for the Ottoman authorities during the war to enlist new men. As the "short war" expectation quickly faded away and the duration of military service virtually became permanent, harsh living conditions in the Ottoman countryside, where the labor force of each male member of peasant families was critical for survival, increasingly undermined the credibility of the conscription system. Draft evasion became a serious problem as the war dragged on. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, living conditions were not so good for soldiers on the battlefield either and desertions increasingly posed serious problems for the Ottomans. Moreover, the Ottomans were not successful in creating an efficient propaganda mechanism during the war to mobilize popular sentiments, a mechanism that could maintain the enthusiasm for war on the part of the individual soldier. A militarist ideological disposition, which was symbolized and also actually inspired by Goltz's ideas in his *The Nation in Arms*, was not absent in Ottoman society before and during the war, but it can be argued that it was largely confined to elitist circles and pro-CUP army officers. Voluntary patriotic associations such as the Navy League and the National Defense Association aimed to popularize the nation-in-arms ideology vertically and horizontally at all social levels through various militarization campaigns that received remarkable popular participation, but this dynamism was mainly limited to the urban middle-class milieu.

[79] Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert," p. 232.

The response of the Ottoman peasants to the requirements of the conscription system during the war was not standard. Especially when conscription considerably overburdened their lives and seemed in conflict with their own expectations, peasants did not hesitate to resist enlistment. It can be argued, as Eugene Weber does, that at such times, "conscription was seen not as a duty owed to some larger community or nation, but as a heavy tribute exacted by an oppressive and alien state."[80] This reluctance for military service is clearly seen in some official documents, too. For example, in a telegram that was sent to all provinces and sub-provinces on 25 January 1916, the Interior Ministry complained about "apathy in mobilizing and transferring men of military age," urged local administrators to spend more effort to overcome this problem, and used threatening language to warn careless local administrators of future potential punishment.[81]

Therefore, by establishing the Youth League Ottoman authorities not only aimed to train young boys for military service and to propagate their war cause especially in rural areas, but they also tried to overcome reluctance and resistance to conscription. In fact, in a report on the general military situation to the deputy commander-in-chief Enver Pasha on 20 September 1917, Mustafa Kemal [Atatürk] as the commander of the Seventh Army in Aleppo summarized all the major issues concerning the mobilization of manpower in the Ottoman army:

> Compared to the initial phases of the war, the army is currently quite weak. The available personnel of many corps are only one-fifth of what is actually needed. We are not able to mobilize the manpower resources of the country to supply our needs . . . Let me present an example to reveal the general situation of our strength: fifty percent of the 59th Division with its existing battalions each having a thousand personnel, which was sent to me to undertake the world's most difficult tasks, consists of very weak men who cannot even stand on their feet, and the new enlisted and supposedly healthy men include untrained children between the ages of 17 and 20 and good-for-nothing men between 45 and 55.[82]

In the above quotation and in the literature produced by the Youth League, weakness not only meant lack of training, but also often referred to levels

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[80] Eugene Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 295.

[81] BOA, DH. ŞFR., 60/116, 19 Rebîulevvel 1334/25 January 1916.

[82] "20 Eylül 1917 Tarihli Rapor," *Atatürk'ün Bütün Eserleri, Vol 2: 1915–1919* (Istanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1999), p. 121. This report is also available in Şükrü Tezer (ed.), *Atatürk'ün Hatıra Defteri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1972), pp. 142–143.

of physical exhaustion and illness. The latter was a remarkably serious problem during the war as contagious diseases killed thousands of people on the battlefield and the home front alike.[83] The paramilitary youth associations' objectives already included initiatives to raise consciousness for health care and personal hygiene.[84] But the specific conditions of the war years also required more direct and practical measures concerning simple health care and hygiene, protection from contagious diseases and curing personal injuries. Therefore, Von Hoff and other writers frequently touched upon health issues in the journal of the Youth League, and underlined the need to educate not only the youth but the entire population in this regard. Von Hoff called "everybody who is mature and conscious enough to take a responsibility" (*kuvve-i mümeyyize sahibi*) to contribute to a campaign to educate the public.[85] Specifically, he proposed that "lectures would be given to everybody, including unschooled youth, everywhere in the country to the smallest villages, about basic methods and measures of health care."[86] For this purpose, the Youth League also published an informative pamphlet, written by Von Hoff[87] and distributed thousands of copies of it throughout the country.[88] The journal of the league also gave practical health information, such as how to dress a wound or how to protect from tuberculosis.[89] Regarding the health issue, Von Hoff also particularly underlined the need for a country to have "healthy and strong mothers" to give birth to and raise healthy children. For this purpose, he proposed to educate young single girls about personal health care and motherhood before they married.[90]

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[83] See Hikmet Özdemir, *Salgın Hastalıklardan Ölümler, 1914–1918* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2005). According to Erickson, the total number of Ottoman soldiers who died of disease during the war was 466,759. See Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 240.

[84] Akın, "*Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*," p. 137.

[85] Von Hoff, "Kavâid ve Tedâbir-i Evveliye-i Sıhhiye," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 2 (1 Teşrinievvel 1333/1 October 1917), p. 1.

[86] Ibid.

[87] See Von Hoff, *Hıfzıssıhha Kavâidi ve Hastalık, Kaza Vukuunda Yapılacak Tedâbir* (Istanbul: Evkaf-ı İslamiye Matbaası, 1334/1918).

[88] Such pamphlets were given free of charge, as an aid to those who could not afford to buy them. "Genç Derneklerinde Fukara-yı Etfâle Muâvenet," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 5 (1 Kanunisani 1334/1 January 1918), pp. 15–16.

[89] For example, see Von Hoff, "Mevâd-ı Tedbiriye ile Sıhhiye Hidemâtı," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 4 (1 Kanunievvel 1333/1 December 1917), p. 15; Adnan Fuad, "Tükrük de Kü'ul Gibi Vereme Yatak Hazırlar," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 4 (1 Kanunievvel 1333/1 December 1917), pp. 15–16.

[90] Von Hoff, "Bazı Umûmi Terbiye Meselelerine dair," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 1 (1 Eylül 1333/1 September 1917), p. 12. However, this proposition apparently remained a wish, since no pamphlets were written or activities were undertaken.

This last point also reflected the Youth League's approach to the female population. While similar militaristic associations in Europe, such as the Young Germany League, spent a considerable amount of time and energy to mobilize young women, the Ottoman Youth League restricted its relationship with young Ottoman women to the discursive emphasis on the motherly ideal of raising healthy boys for the fatherland. The organization and activities of the league did not include any specific sections for girls. No attempt was made by the league to consider the possibility that girls would turn into soldiers in the case of urgent need. Even projects to enlist female labor in manual works were lacking in the league's activities. This situation actually differed with the general approach to women in the Ottoman Empire during the war. For example, as has been mentioned earlier, there were attempts (which were even official and organized) to mobilize female labor in Istanbul.[91] Moreover, authorities even formed "women labor battalions" in various regions such as Çukurova to work in agriculture.[92] The Youth League's relative indifference to young women can be attributed to the strong discourse of masculinity/manliness which characterized its *raison d'être*. As has been discussed above, "feminization" was seen as one of the major weaknesses of Ottoman men and the foundation of paramilitary associations was regarded as an attempt to overcome such a weakness. Obviously, it is hard to conceive of any practical project targeting young women within this perspective. Therefore, a much more abstract discourse was adopted regarding women, which assigned them the role of good mother raising healthy and powerful future soldiers for the fatherland.

The Organization at the Local Level: Participation and Resistance

Every provincial and district governor was required to establish a branch of the Youth League in his administrative unit and to give regular reports to the Interior Ministry about its activities and people's attendance.[93] In fact, this administrative and bureaucratic obligation created a quick mushrooming of local branches at the initial phase—a situation which can also give the impression that there was remarkable enthusiasm and

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[91] See Karakışla, *Women, War and Work in the Ottoman Empire*.

[92] Toprak, *İttihad—Terakki ve Cihan Harbi*, p. 97.

[93] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–3; BOA, DH.UMVM., 121/34, 8 Ramazan 1334/9 July 1916.

success at the early phase of the establishment of the Youth League. Indeed, from its date of establishment, 17 April 1916, through the middle of July 1917, a total of 706 local branches were opened throughout the empire.[94] Lists of newly opened branches were regularly published in the journal of the league. One of the first impressions that these lists reveal is that the number of branches were not distributed evenly throughout the country. While there were very few branches in the regions that were under occupation and near or within the actual battle zones, some local units stand out with large numbers, such as the province of Bursa/Hüdavendigâr's sub-provinces Karesi with 114 branches and Kütahya with 105 branches. Another impression is that there were very few branches in local units outside Anatolia, such as Basra, Baghdad, Hijaz, Beirut, Aleppo and Syria, where the majority of the population was Arab.[95] The journal sometimes gave information about local branches by using an apparently exaggerated language of success. For example, some news about the Youth League organization in Eskişehir, a district of Bursa, stated that authorities in Eskişehir established branches in every corner of the sub-province, including even the smallest towns.[96]

On the other hand, it would be highly misleading to take this relatively high number of local branches, which was actually the result of the bureaucratic obligations mentioned above, as a measure of local people's responses to these organizations. It is evident in correspondence between the Interior Ministry and local administrative units that opening a local branch did not necessarily mean carrying out efficient activities. First of all, it should be noted that even the bureaucratic obligation could not produce any local branches in some units. For example, though it was not an occupied region or nearby a frontline, there were no branches in the Antalya/Teke, a sub-province of Konya until mid-July 1917. Apparently, this situation in Teke began to change only after the governor was changed and the Interior Ministry sent warnings.[97]

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[94] *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 1 (1 Eylül 1333/1 September 1917), pp. 14–15.

[95] *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 1 (1 Eylül 1333/1 September 1917), pp. 14–15; Toprak, "İttihat ve Terakki'nin Paramiliter Gençlik Örgütleri," p. 112; Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda İhtiyat Kuvveti," p. 447.

[96] "Genç Dernekleri Postası," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 2 (1 Teşrinievvel 1333/1 October 1917), p. 14.

[97] The establishment of branches could begin when the new governor Fettin Bey took office in late 1917. See "Genç Dernekleri Postası," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 7 (1 Mart 1334/1 March 1918), p. 16.

Secondly, despite relative enthusiasm and dynamism in a few regions, Ottoman authorities time and time again expressed discontent about the general process and complained about its slowness and inefficiency. For example, after receiving warnings from the War Ministry and Enver Pasha himself,[98] the Interior Ministry needed to warn all governors in June 1917 that the establishment process of the Youth League "was not taken as seriously as it required in some provinces and totally ignored in others."[99] Therefore, the Interior Ministry reminded them that local administrators held the chief responsibility for establishing local branches of the Youth League and also urged them that it was essential "to make local people acquainted with and embrace this useful organization for the best interest of the country."[100]

Similarly, Von Hoff, who traveled across Anatolia and made observations during the establishment process of the Youth League, expressed dissatisfaction about the existing situation. He also complained that the process was not progressing fast enough and some local administrators were still negligent about it. Accompanied by Selim Sırrı in these trips, Von Hoff submitted reports about his observations, criticisms and advice on the establishment process of the Youth League to the Interior Ministry.[101] He often emphasized the need for local administrators to spend more effort in establishing local branches. He also regularly complained that the *Gürbüz* section of the league was not yet established in most places, while all energy was focused on the *Dinç* section. As has been mentioned above, this situation was, of course, related to the immediate demand of the war for new young reinforcements who were already prepared for military service. But Von Hoff pointed to a deficiency in this field too, which was that the existing branches were established almost entirely in provincial centers and did not yet extend to surrounding towns and villages. During these trips, Von Hoff and Selim Sırrı also tried to organize lectures in provincial centers for those who would work as guide trainers in local branches of the Youth League. The shortage of guide trainers, who had themselves been trained for this task, to work for local branches was another major problem that hindered the establishment and activi-

98 BOA, DH.UMVM., 149/40, 5 Şevval 1335/25 July 1917, document no. 4, 6, 10.
99 BOA, DH.UMVM., 121/38, 00 Şa'ban 1335/June 1917.
100 Ibid.
101 BOA, DH.UMVM., 150/62, 22 Zilhicce 1335/9 October 1917.

ties of local branches in many places.[102] As a practical measure to solve the problem especially for villages, Von Hoff proposed that those who had been trained to work as guide trainers in the Youth League could themselves train other candidates who would be selected and appointed by local administrators.[103]

An important criterion of success could be the number of young men registered with the local branches of the Youth League. In a letter that he sent to a German periodical in 1918, Von Hoff stated that the Youth League educated about 200,000 young participants under the supervision of about 3,500 guide trainers whom he had instructed.[104] But in fact, the league officials did not maintain regular and accurate records of the number of young people who attended the *Gürbüz* and *Dinç* sections. The available statistical data in this respect include either round numbers or fragmentary figures. Only some local branches provided written statistical data about their attendants and even these are for certain periods of time. For example, the chief guide of the Youth League branches in Bursa reported that from the date of establishment to October 1917, more than 8,000 young people regularly attended the activities of the Youth League branches in the provincial center and its vicinity.[105] According to another set of information, 5,168 young people registered with the league in Biga/Çanakkale by 18 June 1917; 4,152 of these consisted of boys between the ages 12 and 16, while 1,016 were above the age of 17.[106] Similarly, out of the total number 7,184 young people who registered for the branches in

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[102] For example, in the report that was sent from Menteşe, a sub-province of the Aydın province, about the establishment process of the Youth League, lack of guide trainers was given as the major reason for not being able to establish branches in villages of the region. BOA, DH.UMVM., 155/69, 1336.Z.6 (12 September 1918).

[103] BOA, DH.UMVM., 150/62, 1335.Z.22 (9 October 1917). An anecdotal problem that Von Hoff faced during one of his early Anatolian trips actually symbolizes general infrastructural deficiencies that he observed throughout the country, which hampered the establishment process of the Youth League. When he arrived in İzmit, a sub-province of Kastamonu, in the evening of 11 September 1916, he went to the hotel where a reservation had been made for him. But the receptionist and manager of the hotel said to him that they had received no information and reservation for him, and refused to offer him a room without payment. When Von Hoff called authorities in Istanbul about the problem, it appeared that they really had not informed the hotel on time. Although the mayor of the town immediately tried to fix the problem and the hotel manager apologized to him for this inconvenience, Von Hoff was irritated and returned to the train station, where he preferred to sleep that night. BOA, DH.UMVM., 141/30, 13 Zilkâde 1334/11 September 1916.

[104] "Jugendpflege und Turnen in der Türkei," *Zeitschrift fur Schulgesundheitspflege*, vol. 31 (1918), pp. 204–205.

[105] Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında İhtiyat Kuvveti," p. 449.

[106] Ibid.

Samsun/Canik, a sub-province of Trabzon, 6,225 were in the *Gürbüz* section and 959 attended the *Dinç* section.[107] Although such numerical figures represent only an incomplete picture, they can still allow us to make some observations. For example, the first thing that can be noted is the fact that the number of those who registered with the *Gürbüz* section far exceeded those in the *Dinç* section. This was actually an awkward situation for the league officials because it was the *Dinç* section which was given priority during the war to mobilize the unschooled peasant boys who were near the age of military service.

The lack of administrative efficiency in the process of establishing league branches was further increased by a bureaucratic confusion concerning the financial expenses of the Youth League. It quickly became apparent that the financial burden which the Youth League's activities would bring had been underestimated. Moreover, it had not been decided at the beginning clearly which governmental institution would fund the league. Since it was initially declared that the league would be attached to the War Ministry and would work under its patronage, it must have been supposed that the War Ministry would also be its main financial sponsor. But concerning the payment of some expenses, various disagreements appeared between the War and Interior ministries, which produced polemical correspondence between the two institutions. The War Ministry usually claimed that if civilian officials were involved in any activities of the league, it would be the Interior Ministry's responsibility to pay for the expenses. For example, the War Ministry did not want to pay for transportation and accommodation expenses of guide trainers by claiming that these needed to be paid by "local civilian authority" of the region where guide trainers resided.[108] There is evidence that the same decision was made for other cases and expenses were indeed paid by the Interior Ministry.[109] On the other hand, it is also apparent that the Interior Ministry was not content with this situation. The Interior Ministry stated clearly in a correspondence to the War Ministry that although such payments had been made by the former, it was actually the latter's responsibility to undertake them, since the Youth League was directed by the War Ministry.[110] Even payment for writing materials used by the league sometimes caused a problem between the

[107] BOA, DH.UMVM., 121/36, 5 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/27 February 1917.
[108] BOA, DH.UMVM., 143/70, 18 Safer 1335/14 December 1916.
[109] BOA, DH.UMVM., 143/82, 23 Safer 1335/19 December 1916.
[110] BOA, DH.UMVM., 143/95, 27 Safer 1335/23 December 1916.

two ministries. For example, the Youth League Inspectorate claimed that the Interior Ministry needed to pay for the notebooks which were used to keep records of young people in local units, since it was the Interior Ministry's village and neighborhood headmen who used them.[111] In some cases, both of the ministries preferred to solicit financial aid for the Youth League's expenses from pro-CUP voluntary-patriotic associations, instead of paying themselves or arguing extensively between them. For example, the expenses of Youth League guide trainers of the Edirne province, who came to the provincial center to receive training courses, were paid largely by the National Defense League.[112]

In fact, bureaucratic inefficiency and financial confusion constituted only one aspect of the poor implementation of the Ottoman Youth League. A more serious problem, which concerned state-society relations in the Ottoman Empire, was the reluctance and even sometimes deliberate resistance shown by the targeted young population towards embracing the Youth League and participating in its activities. As increasingly grave and persistent problems emerged on the home front during the war, the state's demand for such permanent support and sacrifice also fell on increasingly deaf ears. Therefore, many families on the home front, who could barely earn a living and had to work more than ever to supply their basic needs, were hesitant and unenthusiastic to send their children to Youth League activities which actually gave the impression that the scope of obligatory military service was now extending to cover much younger boys. The league's many guide officers and trainers in the provinces contributed to this misunderstanding by drilling young members of the Youth League as if they were already soldiers. Many people in rural areas started to believe rumors, which purported the state's desire to create "an army of children." Such rumors included claims that "even children under the age of 15 would now be conscripted" and that "all young men were required to participate in a lifelong military service."[113] These reactions took the form of open resistance in some places. An official of the Youth League reported that he heard the following words from a village prayer leader (*imam*) during one of his inspection trips in Anatolia:

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[111] BOA, DH.UMVM., 141/84, 26 Zilhicce 1334/24 October 1916; BOA, DH.UMVM., 145/118, 29 Rebîulâhir 1335/22 February 1917.

[112] BOA, DH.UMVM., 141/24, 9 Zilkâde 1334/7 September 1916.

[113] Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında İhtiyat Kuvveti," pp. 461, 463.

> A strange thing happened the day after we founded the local branch of the league. Many mothers raided the *muhtar*'s house with sticks and demanded that the newly founded branch should be abolished. We could hardly calm them down.[114]

Against such rumors and popular suspicion, the Youth League administration needed to clarify their position to the public. For example, Selim Sırrı wrote an article in the first issue of the league's journal to correct the misunderstandings about the Youth League, in which he particularly emphasized that no members of the organization intended to operate the Youth League as some kind of military barracks. He not only warned future trainers of the Youth League about proper ways of training the youth, but also tried to appease the people who tended to regard the participation in the Youth League as some kind of extended military service:

> The drills that will be practiced in the Youth League are not the same as those undertaken by soldiers in their barracks. The exercises that we want to teach young men in the Youth League are only to increase their knowledge and appreciation about the future of the military. Otherwise, we have by no means the intention of forcing children who have not yet reached the age of military service to practice military exercises.[115]

Some journalists also contributed to this effort to emphasize publicly that the Youth League had been established not to extend military service to younger boys, but to serve a larger aim which was to create healthy and vigorous young people. For example, Yunus Nadi emphasized that "the attachment of the Youth League to the War Ministry" did not necessarily mean that it had been established for military service. He needed to justify the establishment of the Youth League in somewhat apologetic language: "the Youth League actually aims to prepare youth for life; but military service is also a part of national life. Preparation for military service is not the sole objective of the League. Perhaps it is a consequence of its objectives."[116]

However, such warnings and "corrections" exerted only limited influence on the public, especially on people in rural areas. First of all, despite all denials by the Youth League authorities, preparing young boys for active military service was indeed a major part of the league's activities.

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[114] Vedad 'Urfi, "Kuvvetli Bir Gençlik Nasıl Elde Ediliyor?," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 19 (1 Kanunievvel 1335/1 December 1919), p. 42.

[115] Selim Sırrı, "Genç Dernekleri ve Yanlış Telakkiler," pp. 3–4.

[116] Quoted in Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda İhtiyat Kuvveti," p. 462; *Tasvir-i Efkâr*, 3 Kanunievvel 1332/16 December 1916.

It is true that it had not been established solely for this aim, but immediate and pressing needs of the war virtually turned the whole project into a quick preparation station of Ottoman Muslim youth for active service on the battlefield. In fact, this point was also implied in Von Hoff's abovementioned complaint that in many provinces of Anatolia all energy had been spent on establishing the *Dinç* section of the league, namely the section for boys at the age of 17 and above, while the *Gürbüz* section had been ignored.[117] Therefore, people's belief that the Youth League meant to extend military service to younger boys was not only based only on rumors, but also on clearly observable experience.

Secondly, although the military continuously needed reinforcements on the battlefield, the need in Anatolia for men to work in fields for the survival of families could sometimes outweigh the military's requirements. Therefore, it was not easy to gather unschooled peasant boys for the Youth League activities. This situation was frequently mentioned in the telegrams that were sent from the provinces to the Interior Ministry as answers to the circular order asking for progress reports on the Youth League organization in local units. For instance, in a telegram which was sent from İzmir on 4 February 1917, it was stated that, especially in the sub-provinces of Tire, Bozdoğan and Sarayköy, authorities were having serious difficulty gathering "unschooled" children in the age category of the *Gürbüz* section for training in the Youth League.[118] In the report which was sent from Kütahya on 27 January 1917, it was straightforwardly stated that "since eligible young boys in villages [were] busy with agricultural work" and "because no officers [were] available" in the town center to be sent to these villages to train these boys, no branches of the Youth League could be established in the villages of the region.[119] The telegram that was sent from Konya on 11 February 1917 emphasized more directly the relation between the lack of manpower and the difficulty that families had themselves. It was stated in the telegram that "since their fathers and other guardians [were] in arms, unschooled young boys [had] to work to supply the needs of their own households, and only few of them [were] able to attend" the activities of the Youth League.[120]

Although participation in the Youth League's activities was compulsory for all eligible schooled and unschooled Ottoman young males, there were

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117 BOA, DH.UMVM., 150/62, 22 Zilhicce 1335/9 October 1917.
118 BOA, DH.UMVM., 146/109, 30 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/24 March 1917, document no. 4.
119 BOA, DH.UMVM., 146/109, 30 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/24 March 1917, document no. 9.
120 BOA, DH.UMVM., 146/109, 30 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/24 March 1917, document no. 16.

serious problems in maintaining sufficient levels of participation and attendance. As the problem of nonattendance and even desertion during training reached significant levels, authorities were remarkably confused with how to remedy the situation. Although the Temporary Law of the Youth League stipulated that all eligible Ottoman young boys were required to participate in the Youth League trainings,[121] it did not mention anything about what sorts of sanctions would be applied to those who never appeared and who did not attend regularly without having a valid excuse. Therefore, to the questions coming from provinces about what legal action needed to be taken for this problem, the War and Interior ministries had no ready and clear answers. Instead of immediately applying a legal action, the ministries preferred more practical measures and advised local authorities to get help from the gendarmerie; those boys who did not attend the trainings would be taken from their homes by gendarmes who would accompany them to the local branch of the league.

While this measure was evidently taken in many places, it caused other problems. Specifically, it led to an increase in desertion during training.[122] Moreover, as the authorities in Karahisar-ı Sâhib (Afyon) complained, "it was not possible to gather absentees with the help of the gendarmerie for every single training day." As a result, local authorities asked for advice on possible forms of more forceful punishments.[123] The authorities considered applying the 74th article of the Temporary Law of General Provincial Administration, which would make absenteeism punishable by a fine.[124] However, as the Interior Ministry concluded that it was not legally proper to extend the provincial administration law to cover the functions and duties determined for the Youth League, this possibility was abandoned.[125] Again, practical measures were recommended instead of legal sanctions. Besides insistence on getting help from the gendarmerie, it was also

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[121] Article 2 of the Temporary Law of the Youth League stated that all Ottoman youths, who were at the ages determined in the law and regulations, were obliged to attend the trainings of the Youth League. This obligation lasted until the date when one was drafted for his actual military service. Only those who were determined not healthy enough to participate in these trainings and those who were abroad would be exempted. See "Genç Dernekleri Hakkında Kanûn-ı Muvakkat."

[122] Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savası Sırasında İhtiyat Kuvveti," p. 464.

[123] BOA, DH.UMVM., 149/44, 9 Şevval 1335/29 July 1917.

[124] "İdâre-i Umûmiye-i Vilayât Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 5, 17 Rebîulâhir 1331/26 March 1913, pp. 186–216. In short, the 74th article of this law stipulated that those who broke or breached provincial administration laws would be punished by a fine from 1 lira to 5 liras.

[125] BOA, DH.UMVM., 149/44, 9 Şevval 1335/29 July 1917.

recommended that local administrative authorities, local notables, enlightened and elder people act as an advice committee and give influential counsel to the parents of those boys who did not attend training of the Youth League.[126] In this way, all influential people at the local level could contribute to permanent mobilization efforts of the Ottoman state.

The vicious cycle between the workforce shortages in agriculture and the urgent need for provisions during the war years significantly distressed the Ottoman army. Whenever and wherever the Ottoman armed forces had difficulty supplying food for their personnel, army commanders themselves could request that peasant boys be excused from attending the activities of the Youth League. If peasant boys' labor in fields seemed more necessary and useful for feeding the army than their attendence at Youth League events, their absence could easily be condoned. In a telegram that was sent to the Interior Ministry from Sivas on 24 December 1916, it was explained that "since the establishment of Youth League branches in villages could adversely affect the agricultural harvest and hinder provisioning food to the armed forces," this part of the process had been abandoned and instead the organization was established only in town centers.[127] Similarly, a telegram that was sent from İzmit on 23 April 1917 expressed that *Dinç* section training sessions were now postponed through a decision taken in conjunction with the War Ministry in order not to interrupt agricultural production.[128] In fact, it is evident from a report submitted by the Youth League Inspectorate to the War Ministry on 23 January 1917 that such individual measures became commonplace in a short time. This report stated that if their labor in agricultural production was urgently needed, eligible peasant boys could be excused from training sessions of the Youth League during the war.[129] Such examples show that militarist objectives of the Ottoman elites had to be modified according to Ottoman socio-economic realities.

Coping with the manpower shortage on the home front produced both legal regulations which implemented long-term plans and *ad hoc* measures which tried to address unforeseen problems. The legal regulations and temporary measures that were made to compensate workforce shortage could sometimes retard other larger objectives such as popularizing

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126 BOA, DH.UMVM., 149/15, 8 Ramazan 1335/28 June 1917.

127 BOA, DH.UMVM., 146/109, 30 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/24 March 1917, document no. 10.

128 BOA, DH.UMVM., 146/109, 30 Cemâziyelevvel 1335/24 March 1917, document no. 26.

129 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–36.

the Youth League in rural areas, no matter how useful the latter was for the Ottoman war effort in a longer run. One such early example was the Collective Labor Regulation (*Amele-i Müşterekiyye Talimâtnâmesi*), which was approved on 17 October 1914 to facilitate greater economic productivity from those males on the home front who were not obliged to serve in the military. For example, the regulation stipulated that "in every village, all males between the ages of 16 and 20, and those above the age of 45, and also those males who were of military age but were excused and living in their villages for any reason, [are] required to work collectively to sow and cultivate the fields of their villages."[130] Coping with this problem became more critical through the middle of the war. Moreover, the deportation and destruction of the Anatolian Armenian population left behind a considerable area of abandoned cultivable lands which remained idle (at least until incoming *muhâcir*s were resettled on these lands). Under these circumstances, the Temporary Law of Agricultural Obligations which included more extensive measures to encourage greater productivity from the available manpower on the home front was approved on 24 September 1916.[131] However, even this measure proved insufficient, and therefore additional steps were required. For example, a military order which was issued in November 1916 to army commanders required that the army personnel were also to help carry out agricultural works in their regions wherever possible.[132]

In the regions where nonattendance was difficult to address and where the need for manpower was to be considered urgently, the Youth League Inspectorate also tried to seek flexible and practical solutions that could be relevant to specific cases, instead of insisting on absolute conformity. If gathering peasant boys to train with the Youth League seemed impractical, authorities thought that assigning them to other "useful" services in their regions would be equally worthwhile. Von Hoff actually observed during his trips across Anatolia that when it was difficult to establish branches in villages, it was even more difficult and unrealistic to ask boys in these villages to travel to branches in town centers. Such difficulties could also be seen in the reports sent by local branches to the inspectorate of the league. Therefore, he thought that instead of letting them spend their time in vain, these boys could still be employed in various

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130 Quoted in Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesi'nin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 88.

131 "Mükellefiyet-i Zirâiye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," *Düstûr*, serie II, vol. 8, 20 Zilkâde 1334/18 September 1916, p. 1297.

132 Öğün, *Kafkas Cephesi'nin I. Dünya Savaşı'ndaki Lojistik Desteği*, p. 93.

home front posts where they could be helpful for the Ottoman mobilization effort. For example, he proposed that these boys could provide services in the Red Crescent or Red Cross hospitals in their regions, help families in their villages, whose male members served in armed forces or had been disabled in the war, cultivate their fields and transport their harvest, or provide any other possible help needed in military communication zones. In this way, he stated, they could become accustomed to "serving the fatherland from an early age."[133]

On the other hand, agriculture was not the only sector that was affected negatively by the attendance requirement of the Youth League. A similar situation also existed in various strategic service sectors, such as postal and communications services. Authorities sought and received exemptions from attending Youth League training sessions for the young people employed in these sectors.[134] In fact, again due to the urgent need for qualified personnel, there was a tendency for such exemptions gradually to become a common practice covering employed young people in all service sectors. For example, in a report that was sent to the head of the Fatih district recruiting office in Istanbul by the responsible officer of the *Dinç* section of the Youth League in the district, it was stated that out total 500 young people recorded in the branch by 14 January 1917, "only 30 people" regularly attended trainings, and even many of these regular ones worked in various sectors. For those working young men, whose military service obligations had been postponed because of their official employments,[135] the officer asked for "forgiveness from training" in order not to interrupt their jobs. Moreover, he also requested that exemptions be issued or accommodations made for those who worked far from training camps, since they were usually late for work after morning training and this caused "daily fee deductions."[136]

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[133] BOA, DH.UMVM., 149/40, 5 Şevval 1335/25 July 1917, document no. 2, 3.

[134] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–36; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–43.

[135] As has been discussed in Chapter 2, the Ottoman state needed its middle and lower ranking civil servants and technical personnel to continue their work in wartime. People such as post office clerks and telegram technicians, banks clerks, railway technicians and clerks, accountants, policemen, etc. were temporarily exempted from military service. See Articles 91, 92, "Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," pp. 688–692.

[136] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–42. Apparently, the absence of working young men from training sessions of paramilitary associations was also a common problem in other belligerent countries during the war. For a similar problem in the Freiburg branch of the Young Germany League, see Chickering, *The Great War and Urban Life in Germany*, p. 513.

In this regard, the Youth League's offers of accommodation often precipitated criticism from other governmental institutions. In a correspondence to the Youth League Inspectorate on 8 March 1917, the Ministry of Education, which was more concerned with the training of the youth than their employment, warned that such decisions could exert negative effects on the youth and encourage other regular members of the Youth League to seek official employment in order to avoid training. Thus, the Ministry of Education advised the Youth League Inspectorate that it would be proper to make such offers of exemption in coordination with the Interior Ministry.[137]

Another major problem which hindered the process of popularizing the Youth League and paralyzed its activities in many places was the fact that its targeted young population began to be drafted directly as the armed forces frequently required more reinforcements. As has already been noted above, one of the main objectives of the Youth League was to prepare the youth for military service, both physically and mentally. But as the increasing number of deaths, disabilities and desertions badly undermined Ottoman military strength on the battlefield, this period of preparation apparently came to be regarded as dispensable. In this regard, Ottoman authorities periodically reduced the minimum age of military service. Even as early as 29 April 1915, an amendment was made to the Temporary Law for Military Service of 12 May 1914, which reduced the minimum age of conscription age from 20 to 18.[138] Similar revisions of military service age were also made about the schooled youth. Through a decree issued on 3 July 1917, the age of conscription for students began to include those who were born in 1898.[139] Moreover, attending school at the date of conscription was no longer accepted as a valid excuse.[140] In other words, those young boys who were eligible for the *Dinç* section became eligible for conscription. In consequence, the *Dinç* section of the Youth League disappeared entirely in many places. It is little wonder that around this same time certain local authorities mentioned in progress

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137 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1825, Dosya 403, Fihrist 1–46.

138 "16 Cemâziyelâhir 1332 Tarihli Mükellefiyet-i Askeriye Kanûn-ı Muvakkatının 2, 3, 4, 5. Maddelerine Muaddel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, 14 Cemâziyelâhir 1333/29 April 1915, p. 589.

139 "1316 Tevellüdlilerinden Hizmet-i Maksûre ile Celb Edilecekler Hakkında Kararnâme," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 9, 13 Ramazan 1335/3 July 1917, p. 702.

140 "1312–1316 Tevellüdlilerinden Mekâtib-i Sultaniye'nin Sondan Dördüncü Sınıfına Müdâvim Bulunanların Hizmet-i Maksûreye Tâbi Tutulmaları Hakkında Kararnâme," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 9, 22 Zilkâde 1335/9 September 1917, p. 722.

reports submitted to the Interior Ministry that since eligible youths in their regions had already been conscripted, they had not been able to establish branches of the *Dinç* section.[141]

The Youth League and the State: Ideology and Politics

Although the Ottoman Yourth League experience was often informed by the specific conditions and immediate needs of the war effort, the league's underlying ideology actually contained many elements of the CUP government's militarist body politics.[142] In this sense, the Youth League should be understood as a political project. In the first instance, Enver Pasha's above-mentioned remark that "Everybody is a soldier now!" underscores the militarist-ideological perspective. In addition, the Youth League was an "official" project and had organic ties with the CUP from the beginning; the latter not only supported the league, but also patronized it. In this sense, as the Turkish nationalist disposition of the CUP became more marked by the middle of the war, this disposition also characterized the general perspective of the Youth League. However, while this disposition was evident, it is also hard to say that Youth League officials spent significant energy on nationalist propaganda. The pressing needs of the war led them to prioritize only those activities which would produce immediate results for the war effort. For instance, the journal of the league more often focused on practical objectives such as preparing the youth for military service and propagating physical education than on nationalist theorizing.

On the other hand, Youth League officials, primarily Von Hoff, always claimed that the Youth League had been completely outside politics. Of course, this understanding of politics was obviously based on a relatively narrow definition of the concept, which could be described as being an integrated part of a political party. In language which remarkably echoed the nationalist discourse, they tried to justify themselves by claiming that they only worked to serve the people without having any political agenda. Von Hoff's following words present a perfect example of such justification:

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[141] For example, this was the case in Marmaris, a district of the Menteşe sub-province. See BOA, DH.UMVM., 155/69, 6 Zilhicce 1336/12 September 1918.

[142] Akın, "*Gürbüz ve Yavuz Evlatlar*," pp. 94–95.

> Training of the nation is a national issue, not a political one. Therefore, we in the Youth League have nothing to do with politics; we never talk about politics with guide trainers or youths, and we do not work with any political party. We, as a completely neutral association, go after only one goal: To help the nation, to work to educate the nation, and, above all, to train the youths deprived of attending schools.[143]

However, this discourse itself was political, a characteristic way of making politics in nationalist perspectives. Yet it still implies the existence of a less aggressive nationalist outlook. It is ironic that, albeit a narrow definition of the concept, Von Hoff considered this understanding of politics seriously and his insistence on maintaining a certain distance from civilian politicians in general and the CUP in particular caused tension between the Youth League administration and the CUP government. The available evidence reveals that the CUP increasingly tended to demand more control in the administration of the Youth League and to intervene more directly in its activities. Such demands faced remarkable resistance from Von Hoff. As already mentioned above, Tunaya has argued that the CUP imagined the Youth League as a militia organization of its own, which would make a contribution to the CUP's effort to extend its control over all aspects of Ottoman society. Apparently, the CUP's moves in this direction clashed with Von Hoff's principles to the extent that the latter became *persona non grata* for the leading CUP figures. In late 1917, some leading CUP figures, including Bahaeddin Şâkir who was also an active member of the Special Organization and took part in its guerilla missions,[144] asked for a meeting with the Youth League administration, in which they discussed the general situation of the Youth League and made certain demands regarding both the nationalist perspective and activities of the league. Although the available documents do not reveal the exact contents of this discussion and what specific demands were made, it can be surmised from the consequent developments that the CUP wanted to use the Youth League for party propaganda and to augment Ottoman administrative ranks with pro-CUP people.[145] The leading role of Bahaeddin Şâkir in this discussion suggests that the demands might also have

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[143] Von Hoff, "Mukaddime," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 1 (1 Eylül 1333/1 September 1917), pp. 1–2.

[144] Bahaeddin Şâkir represented a more aggressive Turkish nationalism in the CUP. He has been described by Hanioğlu as "the Stalin of the CUP." M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "The Second Constitutional Period, 1908–1918," in Kasaba (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. 4*, p. 75.

[145] Sarısaman, "Birinci Dünya Savaşı Sırasında İhtiyat Kuvveti," p. 465.

included requests for greater contributions from the Youth League to the actions of the Special Organization. Rejecting the CUP representatives' demands, Von Hoff made a fierce statement after the meeting, which virtually cut his ties with the government and ended his term in the Ottoman Empire as the inspector of the Youth League:

> I am a soldier . . . Today, the Youth League is an association which directly belongs to the youth. Hence, it must be directed by a military board . . . If politics gets involved in this organization, its aim completely diverges. This would be murder. I cannot work for a political aim by the order of a civilian committee. If the Committee of Union and Progress insists on its proposal, I leave for Germany tomorrow without tainting a soldier's honor.[146]

Apparently, Bahaeddin Şâkir became extremely angry at this reaction of Von Hoff and requested from the War Ministry that Von Hoff be dismissed in the best interests of the Ottoman government. The War Ministry agreed with him. Consequently, Von Hoff was dismissed from the Youth League and he left the Ottoman Empire for Germany in April 1918, where he was re-assigned a military post on the Western Front. In his place, Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Asım was appointed as a deputy inspector of the Youth League.[147]

However, whatever the intention and demands were, it had already become extremely difficult to make any changes in the league's outlook and objectives in the middle of 1918, when the resources of the empire had already eroded considerably. From this date on, the performance of the Ottoman armed forces on the battlefield drastically deteriorated and signs of defeat became increasingly manifest. Even so, the Youth League continued its activities through the war's end and the signing of the Mudros Armistice. Although its activities were extremely limited, it still continued to publish its journal until September 1920.[148] During the Armistice period, the Youth League quickly abandoned its more overt military discourse and objectives. Instead, it tended to use language that almost solely focused on the importance of a healthy life and physical education. Perhaps more importantly, the goal of reaching out to peasant boys began

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146 Quoted in Balcıoğlu, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri," pp. 207–208.

147 It is interesting that whereas the journal of the league continued to give information about what Von Hoff was doing after he left the Ottoman Empire, it never mentioned anything about the reasons why he left. See "Genç Dernekleri Postası," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 12 (1 Ağustos 1334/1 August 1918), p. 13.

148 The last issue (26th) of the journal of the Youth League was published on 1 July 1920.

to receive less emphasis in these years, while the scholastic dimension of their activities once again became more pronounced. Finally, the relationship of the Youth League with party politics subsided during the post-CUP period. In fact, there was a return to Von Hoff's more cautious nationalist perspective in this respect:

> The *Dinç* and *Gürbüz* sections of the Youth League, the Ottoman soldiers and officers who work in them and the students who attend their activities are not allowed to get involved in political activities and to become a member of any political party. They spend their time and energy only on their education, training and scouting.[149]

Conclusion

The need to maintain a permanent mobilization for war required the state to permeate deeper levels of society and open new channels between state and society. In this respect, the unschooled Anatolian Muslim peasant boys who constituted the backbone of the Ottoman armed forces represented the principal sphere of activity. The paramilitary youth associations were conceived of as a tool to mobilize this youth population. The Ottoman Youth League was established in the middle of the war for this purpose. It was, in a sense, a continuation of a militarist understanding of physical education which had already emerged during the Second Constitutional Era and produced examples of militaristic youth associations by the eve of the Great War. However, the wartime associations were more effective than their predecessors because they generally evolved to meet Ottoman authorities' requirements for new military recruits.

It has also been argued in this chapter that the relationship that was formed by the Youth League between state and society was not simply imposed by the state on a passive population. People did not always act according to the demands of the state; they also responded according to their own living conditions and expectations. Such responses, which ranged from voluntary support to reluctance and even open resistance, re-shaped and sometimes modified the objectives and activities of the

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[149] S., "Vatanın Evlâtlarına Muâvenet," *Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri Mecmuası*, no. 16 (1 Eylül 1335/1 September 1919), p. 18. An initiative was made during the early republican period to re-establish a youth organization similar to the Ottoman Youth League. Although even a draft law was prepared for this purpose, it did not come into existence. See Mustafa Balcıoğlu, "Osmanlı Genç Dernekleri'nden İnkılap Gençleri Dernekleri'ne," in Balcıoğlu, *Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa'dan Cumhuriyet'e*, pp. 209–222.

Youth League at the local level. In particular, the lack of manpower in agriculture played an important role in people's attitude to the Youth League. Popular consent and support for the mobilizing effort of the state were not entirely absent, but in achieving these objectives, authorities also needed to consider popular expectations. Failing to do so could produce resistance to mobilization. In this sense, a tacit contract was formed between the state and the people. When the state exceeded the limits of the contract, even coercive measures fell short.

In fact, the state's transgression of this tacit contract and the people's resistance to permanent military mobilization constituted a much larger issue during the war for Ottoman society. A major consequence of this issue was refusal to continue fighting, which manifested itself in the form of desertions. The problem was so extensive and deep that it haunted not only the battlefield, but also the home front. Therefore, any measure to cope with it necessitated a "total" approach, one which dealt with the battlefield and the home front at the same time. The next chapter will focus on this issue.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIMITS OF OTTOMAN MANPOWER MOBILIZATION: THE PROBLEM OF DESERTION AND ATTEMPTS TO REMOBILIZE

Although the Ottoman army managed to maintain its fighting capacity until the end of the Great War, throughout the conflict it increasingly suffered from shortages of manpower. Desertions from the army constituted a major problem in this respect, which reached an alarming level towards the end of the war. Desertion, which can largely be understood as an intentional rejection to fight and a deliberate decision to avoid military service, represented perhaps one of the most direct forms of resistance to military mobilization during the war. Even if military service was obligatory under the system of universal conscription, the specific terms of a soldier's service suggested a contractual aspect in the relationship between the enlisted man with the state.[1] Although the enlisted man was the weaker party in this tacit contract, he could still have certain expectations: a reasonable supply of basic needs while in service, a consistent conviction that he would be fighting in a just war, and a steadily fed hope that the war would not be prolonged and that victory was not far away. Such hopes represented the expectations of Ottoman enlisted men at the beginning of the war. Therefore, it can be argued that a successful military mobilization depended on the state's capacity to live up to this tacit contract throughout the war, even as the war's realities increasingly placed their fulfillment in jeopardy. While the reasons of desertion from the Ottoman army were numerous and varied in the course of the war, the act of desertion was a reaction of the enlisted man to the failure of the state to meet his expectations; in a sense, desertion was a partial termination of this contract by the enlisted man, albeit in a legally forbidden and religiously and culturally disapproved way.

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[1] "Citizens served the army as a representation of the state, and the state as a representation of the sovereign people. Military service thus carried to its conclusion Jean-Jacques Rousseau's logic of the social contract, in that obedience to military authority made the citizen-soldier as free as before, in the sense that he obeyed a source of authority originating in himself and his compatriots." Leonard V. Smith, "Remobilizing the Citizen-Soldier through the French Army Mutinies of 1917," in Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, pp. 152–153.

This chapter approaches desertion in the Ottoman army during the First World War as both a military and social issue. While the Ottoman military did not experience large scale military mutinies, such as those in France in 1917,[2] I will argue that the great number of desertions (about 17 percent of all enlisted men) constituted one of the major factors that eroded the Ottoman mobilization effort and war performance. The issue of Ottoman desertion in the Great War has been largely ignored in nationalist Turkish historiography,[3] which has either treated it as a minor military problem or usually attributed it to "non-Turkish" Ottoman subjects—Armenians, Greeks and Arabs. In contrast, I will show that the numerical extent of desertion was so wide and the demographic composition of deserters so diverse that it included nearly every ethnic or religious group, including Muslim Turks. In fact, given that Muslim Turks were the majority of both the Ottoman population and the enlisted men in the armed forces, their case is much more significant; therefore, this chapter will mainly focus on them. Furthermore, I will argue that desertion became a major social problem requiring measures on the part of not only the military but also the state authority on the entire home front, which, in turn, opened up new channels for the state to further penetrate society.

Focusing mainly on the Muslim population of Anatolia, this chapter will first give a general panorama of the size of the desertion problem and then explore the reasons for desertion as explained by military authorities and, where possible, also by deserters themselves. I will argue that the act of desertion could be seen as a form of resistance by the ordinary enlisted man. Neither the presumed strong military culture condemning desertion nor severe penal laws could prevent desertion from becoming a major problem. The scale of desertion showed the limits of the Ottoman conscription system in total war conditions. Elaborating on the "lifestyle" of deserters, I will also explore how they survived after they deserted.

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[2] See Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[3] Ottoman-Turkish historiography on the Ottoman First World War experience, including the official military history of the war published by the Turkish General Staff, has almost always remained silent on this issue and, except for occasional mention, has not produced an in-depth investigation on it. Perhaps the only critical intervention into this silence has come from Erik J. Zürcher, whose short but pioneering essays have drawn attention to this highly significant issue. See Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert"; Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion" and Erik J. Zürcher, "Refusing to Serve by Other Means: Desertion in the Late Ottoman Empire," in Ö. H. Çınar and Coşkun Üsterci (eds.), *Conscientious Objection: Resisting Militarized Society* (London: Zed Books, 2009), pp. 45–52.

While many deserters chose to hide near their own villages and received shelter from fellow villagers, many others resorted to brigandage by forming armed bands. Generally formed along ethnic and religious lines, the proliferation of these bands of deserters-turned-brigands, along with other deserters who did not turn brigands but still roamed the countryside, constituted a threat to state authority as it attempted to maintain order.

In struggling to deal with the problem of desertion, the Ottoman state regularly resorted to punitive measures, but it also attempted to formulate positive incentives to mobilize public support for itself as it sought the collaboration of local populations against the deserters. The gendarmerie, reorganized in this process, played a key role in this struggle. The state was never completely successful in tackling the issue, but it was able to establish a reinforced basis for internal security in Anatolia, which largely rested upon nationalist preferences. This internal security mechanism helped the re-mobilization effort during the Turkish National Struggle of 1919–1922, which resulted in the creation of the Turkish nation-state.

The Extent of the Problem

Technically, desertion means leaving active military service without permission, with the intent of remaining away indefinitely. However, especially when numerical figures are concerned, Ottoman documents and even secondary sources seem to use the term in a broader sense, which also includes those who did not obey the call to service during mobilization, those who did not present themselves at recruiting offices when they reached the age for military duty (i.e., draft evaders), and those who unilaterally extended their leave. Perhaps with the intention of covering all these mentioned, both archival documents and secondary sources sometimes use a more general term of "military fugitive" (*asker kaçağı*) instead of "deserter" (*firârî*). Therefore, it should be noted that in the Ottoman context statistics on desertions necessarily include all those who "deserted," that is to say in the larger and all-inclusive sense of the term.

The existing statistical data on Ottoman desertions in the Great War are still raw. The available data that can be accessed in the archives either provide us with round total numbers at a very general level, or with some fragmentary sets of figures which belong to specific regions during specific periods. The latter is usually scattered and lacks a systematic character. Significant mid-level figures such as the precise and cumulative numbers of desertions for each year of the war, for each major front throughout the

war, or for different ethnic-religious groups are greatly lacking (or such data still wait to be compiled, systematized and cross-checked). Yet, the available statistics actually suffice to show the remarkable extent and seriousness of the desertion problem in the Ottoman war experience.

The Ottoman official casualty statistics of the Great War do not provide a specific set of figure for desertions, but include it under a more general heading of "deserters, POWs, sick, missing," the total number of which is 1,565,000; this is almost 70 percent of the total number of all casualties, which is 2,290,000.[4] There is no doubt that the number of desertions must have occupied a considerable place in this figure. On the other hand, some secondary sources directly address the estimated total number of desertions. The problem of desertion in the Ottoman army intensified remarkably in the second half of the war. İsmet İnönü, a staff officer during the Great War (and the second president of the Republic of Turkey), estimated that the number of deserters in 1918 alone was about 300,000. In his words, "this was a very high number that had no other equivalent in our history."[5] The chief of the German Military Mission in the Ottoman Empire during the war, Liman von Sanders, said in a report, entitled "Condition of the Turkish Army Today," in December 1917 that desertions from the Ottoman army had exceeded all bounds and the army had more than 300,000 desertions at that time.[6] According to journalist-scholar Ahmed Emin [Yalman], who claimed that he had access to the official military sources related to the Ottoman casualties during the Great War, desertions reached the number 300,000 at the beginning of 1917, and the aggregate number of deserters amounted to more than 500,000 by the summer of 1918.[7] By cross-checking the available information in such sources, Edward Erickson also confirms the estimated total number of Ottoman desertions as 500,000.[8] Another confirmation has come from Erik J. Zürcher, who has also compared the Ottoman desertion figures to

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[4] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 62, Dosya 309A, Fihrist 005. See Table 3 in Chapter 2.

[5] İsmet İnönü, *Hatıralar*, vol. 1, edited by Sebahattin Selek, second edition (Istanbul: Bilgi Yayınevi, 1992), pp. 126–127.

[6] Von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, p. 190. An Ottoman Foreign Ministry document contains a quotation from the newspaper *La Tribuna de Genéve*, dated 23/24 September 1917, which claimed almost the same figure as the total number of desertions in the Ottoman army up to that time. See BOA, HR.SYS., 2441/7, 4 April 1917. The document does not contain any official denial of this claim by the Ottoman government.

[7] Yalman, *Turkey in the Great War*, pp. 261–262.

[8] Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 243. According to Erickson's estimates, the number of desertions is higher than the number of soldiers who died of disease (466,759) and the number of combat dead and missing (305,085). It was also higher than the total number

those of the German army, which suffered 130,000–150,000 desertions during the war. Considering that around 13.5 million men were drafted in Germany during the Great War, the proportion of deserters to the total number of drafted men was only about one percent.[9] The same proportion was slightly higher than one percent in the British armed forces.[10] In terms of actual numbers of desertions, rather than the proportions, the Russian case is comparable to that of the Ottoman, where 500,000 soldiers deserted during the first year of war.[11] The Italian army represents another similar case. In the Battle of Caporetto in 1917, more than 350,000 men deserted from the Italian army and roamed the countryside.[12] However, while there are comparable cases, the Ottoman army confronted a serious problem. Given the total number of enlisted men in the Ottoman military throughout the war, which was 2, 850,000,[13] the total number of deserters (500,000) amounts to almost one-sixth, or roughly seventeen percent of all the men enlisted during the war.[14]

Although detailed and categorized statistical data are mostly lacking, archival documents, as well as personal accounts of the war, still allow us to find some specific examples which confirm the gravity of the extent

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of Ottoman POWs, which is, according to Yücel Yanikdağ's estimate, around 220–250,000. See Yanıkdağ, "'Ill-Fated Sons of the Nation'," p. 22.

9 Erik J. Zürcher, "Between Death and Desertion," p. 257. However, the issue of desertion in the German army proportionally increased in the last year of the war, and specific proportions were remarkably high for certain units on certain fronts. For example, the spring offensive of 1918 brought the German soldier to the limits of his endurance. "Up to 10 percent of men deserted in the preparatory stages en route from the eastern front." See David Englander, "Mutinies and Military Morale," in Hew Strachan (ed.), *World War I: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 198.

10 *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War (1914–1920)* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1922), p. 741. This source includes detailed and comprehensive sets of statistics on various aspects of the British experience during the Great War.

11 In terms of proportions, the Russian case was much lower, considering that from 1914 to 1916, 14.4 million Russian were called to service. See Mark von Hagen, "The First World War, 1914–1918," in Ronald Grigor Suny (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Russia, vol. 3: The Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 96–97. According to another source, the total number of Russian desertions increased considerably in 1917 and reached as high as 2,000,000. See Nicholas N. Golovine, *The Russian Army in the World War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1931), pp. 121, 125.

12 Holger H. Herwig, "The German Victories, 1917–1918," in Strachan (ed.), *World War I*, p. 258.

13 See Table 2 in Chapter 2. Ahmed Emin Yalman gave a slightly higher number of enlisted men as 2,998,321. See Yalman, *Turkey in the Great War*, p. 252.

14 A British military intelligence report claimed as early as July 1915 that the number of deserters from the Ottoman army was up to 20 percent of the total troops. See TNA: PRO WO 157/693, July 1915.

of the problem of desertion. These significant examples also help us explore the various layers of the problem. For example, the German consul in Erzurum reported in a telegram on 2 June 1915 that one-third of the troops gathered in the camps of the Third Army in Eastern Anatolia had fallen sick and that "another one-third had deserted on the march to the army."[15] After the defeat on the Caucasus front against the Russian forces, the Third Army alone had about 50,000 deserters by the winter of 1916.[16] Desertions in the Third Army zone were at such a high level that even the Interior Ministry, complaining about the proliferation of desertion cases (*kesretle firâr vakaları*) in this zone, had to warn its local administrators and officials in the region on 18 May 1915 that not only lack of security measures, but also carelessness on their part in providing good camping and resting conditions for the troops could contribute to desertions.[17] According to a British military intelligence report dated 29 October 1917, in the mountainous areas of the Hizan district alone, located in the east of Bitlis in Eastern Anatolia, there were about 30,000 deserters at that date; these consisted mostly of ethnic Kurds, who had fought as irregular units in the Ottoman army on the eastern front.[18] In the last year of the war, Liman von Sanders complained in a telegram that he sent to the German Ambassador Count Bernstorff in Istanbul about poor provisions and logistics in the Ottoman armed forces and said that "the number of Turkish deserters is higher today than that of men under arms."[19]

Whose Problem?

The extent of desertion was so wide and diverse that almost all ethnic and religious groups living in the empire constituted a part of it. The problem has rarely been mentioned in nationalist Turkish historiography, and when dealt with it has usually been attributed to non-Muslim and "non-Turkish" Ottoman subjects, most prominently the Armenians, Ottoman Greeks and Arabs.[20] Evidently, there were non-Muslim and Arab deserters

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15 Von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, p. 50.

16 Pomianowski, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Çöküşü*, p. 201.

17 BOA, DH.EUM.KLU., 15/37.

18 TNA: PRO WO 106/63. The report, besides describing the situation, discusses possible ways of utilizing these deserters for British aims.

19 The telegram is dated 20 June 1918. See Von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, p. 243.

20 For example, this is the approach of the official history of the war written by the Turkish General Staff, which also adds the Kurds to the view: "Arabs, Kurds and Christian elements did not welcome the mobilization. While some deserted, some who were at the

from the Ottoman armed forces during the Great War.[21] However, given that Anatolian Muslims (which included mostly Turkish, but also Kurdish and to a lesser extent Circassian and Laz elements) constituted the majority of both the Ottoman population and enlisted men in the armed forces, their case is much more significant in terms of both extent and intensity. The available statistical information does not tell us much about the exact proportions of different ethnic-religious groups in the Ottoman army. The available data are fragmentary, from which one needs to make projections. For example, Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir, who was a deputy chief of staff in the Yıldırım Army Group formed in the last year of the war, noted in a report on the ethnic composition of infantry divisions that 66 per cent of the troops were Turkish, 26 percent were Arab, and 8 percent were others.[22] A more general and cautious projection can be made in this respect by assuming that every ethnic or religious group in the empire was represented in the armed forces according to its proportion in the general population of the empire. In this projection, out of about totally 23 million people in early 1914, the approximate ratios of major groups in the Ottoman armed forces would be as follows: 47 percent Turks and Anatolian Muslims, 37 percent Arabs, 8 percent Ottoman Greeks, 7 percent Armenians and 1 percent Jews.[23] Though fragmentary and unsystematic, some archival statistical data that were compiled by various recruiting offices and gendarme units in various Anatolian provinces for some specific time intervals, which usually categorized the numbers of deserters in

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border regions and nearby deserts escaped abroad." *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi, vol. 1: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Siyasi ve Askeri Hazırlıkları ve Harbe Girişi*, p. 230.

[21] And at least in some regions and at some dates, these deserters could also constitute the majority, as in the case of Teke/Antalya, a sub-province of Konya, where non-Muslim deserters were reported to be in a higher number than the Muslim ones in mid-1917. See BOA, DH.ŞFR., 78/205, 5 Şevval 1335/25 July 1917.

[22] Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir, *Yıldırım*, p. 346; also cited in Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness*, p. 129. To give another fragmentary example, an account on the Sinai-Palestine front says that, out of about 250,000 troops who served on this front for the four years of the war, only "5 to 6 thousands were Arabs and the rest were Turks." See *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 4, part 1: Sina-Filistin Cephesi* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1979), p. 83.

[23] However, it should be remembered that there is still no consensus on the demographic statistics of the non-Muslim groups in the late Ottoman Empire. It should also be remembered that as has been discussed in Chapter 2, the Ottoman conscription system worked better in some regions that others, regardless of the demographic characteristic of those regions. This projection is only a rough estimate. For more details on the demographic statistical data, see Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, pp. 188–189; Eldem, *Harp ve Mütareke Yıllarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Ekonomisi*, p. 4; Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi*, pp. 446–449.

Table 10. Deserters in Aydın from 2 August 1914 to June 1916[24]

	Deserters within the country who are still fugitive			Deserters who escaped abroad			Deserters who were captured		
Grand Total	Total	Non-Muslim	Muslim	Total	Non-Muslim	Muslim	Total	Non-Muslim	Muslim
49,238	14,529	3,156	10,571	4,868	4,868	0	29,841	12,552	18,379

their regions Muslim and non-Muslim, also support this projection. Muslim deserters constituted the majority in such data—a situation which is congruous with their proportion in the population. For instance, according to a report on deserters within the province of Aydın covering the dates from the beginning of mobilization (2 August 1914) to June 1916, out of a total of 49,228 deserters the majority was constituted by Muslims, which amounted to 28,950 (See Table 10 above).

It is hard to deny that Ottoman non-Muslims were usually reluctant to answer the call to arms. From the early moments of the declaration of mobilization onwards, draft-evading became a frequent problem. Popular culture of the Ottoman Greeks even coined a specific term for their draft-evaders, "the roof battalions" (*tavan taburları*), which described those who hid in the roofs of their buildings to avoid being caught by Ottoman recruitment authorities.[25] Cases of Ottoman Greek draft-evaders and deserters constituted a recurrent news item in Istanbul newspapers.[26] There were also various "semi-legal" ways of avoiding service, which were mostly were resorted to by Ottoman Greeks and Armenians, such as acquiring a passport of a foreign country (most frequently Greece and Russia) or traveling abroad (usually Egypt and the United States) and staying there long enough to evade draft.[27] Another tactic was acquiring a counterfeit medical report to declare oneself unfit for military service, which, it seems,

[24] BOA, DH.EUM.6.ŞB., 9/8, 8 Zilkade 1334/6 September 1916. The Province of Aydın included at this date the sub-provinces of İzmir (centre of the province), Aydın, Denizli and Saruhan (Manisa). For several more examples of such statistical data belonging to various Anatolian provinces, see BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 24/17, 17 Zilkâde 1334/15 September 1916; BOA, DH.EUM.ADL., 26/21, 15 Muharrem 1335/11 November 1916; BOA, DH.EUM.ECB., 8/37, 4 Rebîulâhir 1335/28 January 1917.

[25] Haris Spataris, *"Biz İstanbullular Böyleyiz": Fener'den Anılar, 1906–1922*, trans. İro Kaplangı, (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), p. 148.

[26] See, for example, "Asker Kaçakları," *İkdâm*, 8 Ağustos 1330/21 August 1914.

[27] Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice, 1844–1918," p. 89; Gülsoy, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, pp. 145–146.

was quite popular among Ottoman Jews, though such behavior was hardly isolated to a single community.[28] There were also documented cases of non-Muslim desertions, as in the case of some Armenians who deserted from the Caucasus front, many of whom participated as volunteers in the Russian army.[29] Similarly, cases of Arab desertions were not only mentioned in Turkish sources,[30] but also in accounts by German officers[31] and other foreign participants in the Ottoman army.[32]

On the other hand, whereas such examples of draft-evading and desertion for non-Muslim and non-Turkish groups can certainly be multiplied, easy generalizations should equally be avoided. The picture is actually more complicated. For example, even after 1915, we find examples of Armenian enlisted men serving in the front line,[33] not to mention their service in the Labor Battalions. Some Armenian officers performed remarkable service on the front and won the appreciation of Ottoman authorities. For example, Garabet Haçeryan, a doctor-captain, served on

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[28] Lexander Aaronsohn, *Türk Ordusuyla Filistin'de: Bir Yahudi Askerin I. Dünya Savaşı Notları*, trans. Necmettin Alkan (Istanbul: Selis, 2003), p. 45. Faking illness and malingering was also common among Muslim enlisted men. See, for example, *Bir Doktorun Harp ve Memleket Anıları* (*Dr. Mehmet Derviş Kuntman*), edited by Metin Özata (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2009), pp. 72–73. Apparently, feigning mental illness was particularly frequent in this respect. See Liz Behmoaras (ed.), *Mazhar Osman: Kapalı Kutudaki Fırtına*, fourth edition (Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2001), p. 178. However, mental illnesses actually constituted a serious problem in the Ottoman army during the war, although Ottoman medical authorities tended to underestimate its pervasiveness. On this topic, see Yücel Yanıkdağ, "Ottoman Psychiatry and the Great War," in *Beiruter Texte und Studien: The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, edited by Olaf Farschid, Manfred Kropp, Stephan Dahne (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg in Komission, 2006), pp. 163–78.

[29] Stefanos Yerasimos, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Ermeni Sorunu*, p. 13. Stanford Shaw says that there were as many as 10,000 Armenian volunteers fighting in the Russian army, about half of whom were Ottoman subjects. Shaw, *Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, pp. 93–105. In fact, it can even be said that this point is "over-documented" in Turkish nationalist historiography to strengthen the position of the Turkish official thesis in the debate of the Armenian question of 1915. See, for example, a recent compilation of documents by the Turkish General Staff, *Arşiv Belgeleriyle Ermeni Faaliyetleri, 1914–1918/Armenian Activities in the Archive Documents, 1914–1918*, 6 vols. (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2005).

[30] BOA, DH.EUM.KLH., 5/56, 14 Safer 1334/22 December 1915. This point is also mentioned in various soldires' memoirs. See, for example, Cemil Filmer, *Hatıralar* (Istanbul: Emek Matbaacılık, 1984), p. 68.

[31] See, for example, Hans Guhr, *Anadolu'dan Filistin'e Türklerle Omuz Omuza*, trans. Eşref Bengi Özbilen, (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), pp. 144, 211.

[32] See, for example, the memoirs of Venezualan soldier of fortune/officer Rafael de Nogales, *Four Years beneath the Crescent*, p. 309.

[33] Zürcher gives the example that there were Armenians serving on the Sinai-Palestine front as late as the spring of 1916. See Zürcher, "Ottoman Labor Battalions in World War I," p. 192.

the Dardanelles front and was decorated for his outstanding service during the war.[34] Another decorated Armenian soldier was Sarkis Torossian who served on the Dardanelles front as an artillery officer and showed extraordinary performance, for which he was personally congratulated by Enver Pasha.[35] Similarly, a huge subversion among Arabs in the Ottoman army, as had been expected by the British Arab Bureau, never materialized, even after Sharif Hussein's revolt in 1916. No Arab units of the Ottoman army came over to Hussein.[36] As David Fromkin has observed, many Arab soldiers continued to demonstrate loyalty not only to Islam but also to the Ottoman government: "A British Intelligence memorandum based on interviews with captured Arabic-speaking officers in prisoner-of-war camps reported that most of the officers actually supported the Young Turks, and that even the minority who did not were 'unable to square their consciences with a military revolt in the face of the enemy.'"[37]

Similarly, an interesting example on the deserters and prisoners of war who were captured by the British forces between 31 October 1917 and 24 November 1917 suggests that Arab soldiers (as well as Greeks, Jews and Armenians) serving in the Ottoman Army did not surrender in disproportionate numbers. According to this British report, which presents a remarkably similar proportional picture to the one outlined above, out of a total 7,233 Ottoman prisoners and deserters, 64 percent were Turks, 27 percent were Arabs and 9 percent were Greeks, Armenians and Jews."[38] According to another set of British statistics issued from the Egyptian Expeditionary Force just after the war, out of a total 453 captured deserters 297 were Turks, 42 were Arabs, 37 were Greeks, 4 were Jews, and 71

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[34] Dora Sakayan (ed.), *Bir Ermeni Doktorun Yaşadıkları: Garabet Haçeryan'ın İzmir Güncesi*, trans. Atilla Tuygan (Istanbul: Belge Yayınları, 2005). For more about Armenian enlisted men serving on the Dardanelles front, see Çöl, *Bir Erin Anıları*, p. 25.

[35] A second lieutenant at the beginning of the war, he was promoted to captain after the Dardanelles. He also served on the Mesopotamia and Palestine fronts. However, his family was massacred during the deportation of 1915, and he eventually deserted to the British side while serving in Palestine in 1918. See his memoirs, Captain Sarkis Torossian, *From Dardanelles to Palestine: A True Story of Five Battle Fronts of Turkey and Her Allies and a Harem Romance* (Boston: Meador Publishing Company, 1947) (originally published in 1929).

[36] David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East, 1914–1922* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), p. 219.

[37] Ibid., pp. 209–210. Out of total 57,084 combat dead on the Dardanelles front, 914 were natives of the Arab provinces. See Veysi Akın, "Çanakkale Şehitleri," in Mustafa Demir (ed.), *Çanakkale Savaşları Tarihi*, vol. 4 (Istanbul: Değişim Yayınevi, 2008), p. 2346.

[38] Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness*, p. 129.

were described as "others" (which probably included mainly Armenians and Kurds).[39]

On the other hand, the problem of desertion was not confined to enlisted men. Officers sometimes deserted too, even though examples of officer-deserters are not that many. But an interesting example from the province of Aydın shows that officers sometimes not only deserted from the army, but also joined the armed bands of deserter-brigands.[40]

Reasons for Desertion: Explained and Implied

In trying to explain the reasons for high numbers of desertion in the Ottoman armed forces, two main sets of documents help us. The first set consists of memoirs and dairies of various middle- and high-ranking Ottoman officers who participated in the combat and witnessed actual war conditions. The contents of these writings, which were almost always written and published after the war, vary from person to person. While all of them contain valuable observations and information about various aspects of the war, the memoirs of high-ranking officers usually sound like official reports or sometimes take the form of an apology and justification of their deeds during the war. Those officers of middle and lower ranks are more spontaneous and present the situation without much filtering. Unfortunately, Ottoman enlisted men (including the deserters themselves) were nearly all illiterate and have left us very few written materials. The second set of documents consists of archival material preserved in interrogation reports of captured deserters. I use both types of Ottoman documents in which captured Ottoman deserters were interrogated by Ottoman authorities, and British documents in which captured or surrendered Ottoman deserters were interrogated by British authorities. As an enemy of the Ottomans, the British view allows us to approach the issue from a different perspective. Sometimes British documents help to fill gaps in the picture drawn entirely on the basis of Ottoman sources. Although such interrogations were put into a written form by the interrogator (not the deserter himself) and the questions asked were chosen again by the interrogating authorities, these documents still provide us with records which come closest to the voice of deserters. Other than these two sets of

[39] *Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire*, p. 633.

[40] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 89/185, 19 Şevval 1336/28 July 1918; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 90/27, 26 Şevval 1336/4 August 1918.

materials, official correspondence and intelligence reports about the issue (on both Ottoman and British sides) also present significant information.

Physical and mental exhaustion stands out as the major cause for desertion among Ottoman soldiers. Such exhaustion was most often expressed by deserters through complaints regarding insufficient food rations, poor clothing, and disease. The fact is quite clear that as the meager resources of the country were further strained towards the end of the war, the conditions on the battlefield became less bearable for the soldier. But while this phenomenon is definitely undeniable and there are many examples to support it, one has to be cautious not to look for an ever-present positive correlation between worsening conditions on the battlefield and desertions. And the evolution of the problem from the beginning of the war to the end sometimes followed a line with ups and downs, rather than a simple straight line. The factor of defeat and hopelessness resulting from the prolongation of the war (or, in other words, the feeling that defeat is unavoidable) should also be taken into consideration in this respect. The general picture suggests that defeatism definitely played a major role in increasing desertions, though deserters, who were understandably more concerned with more concrete and direct factors affecting their lives, rarely mentioned it. The available evidence shows that most desertions from the Ottoman army occurred under conditions of defeat on the Caucasus front in 1915 and the Palestine front in 1918. Among the relevant archival and secondary sources, I have found the fewest examples of desertions on the Dardanelles front in 1915, where the Ottomans were victorious. Though not entirely absent, desertions, at least in the more tightly-control areas of the peninsula, do not appear to have been a significant problem for the Ottoman Army in Gallipoli.[41]

Perhaps related to the defeat factor, the fear of death or injury certainly played an important role too, although it was infrequently and indirectly mentioned by deserters. When soldiers hinted at this fear, they often chose to use indirect language to express it. For example, in a British military intelligence report, some deserters stated that "the Turkish armaments were inferior to that of the Russians" and they gave this, together with short rations, as the reason for their desertion.[42]

In British military intelligence reports, many captured Ottoman deserters mentioned insufficient food rations and hunger as the main reason of

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[41] Erickson, *Ottoman Army Effectiveness*, p. 63.
[42] TNA: PRO WO 157/703, March–April 1916.

their desertions. The British observed that "bad food and disgust at the war are the reasons always given for desertions."[43] In fact, Ottoman military authorities themselves were quite aware that this situation was one of the main problems that caused desertions. Ali Fuat Cebesoy, an Ottoman staff officer during the war, stated in a military historical study of the war that many desertions stemmed "not from the lack of patriotism of the Ottoman soldier," but from unbearable conditions and misery that had become persistent with the prolonged war, and, therefore, "one should not be surprised at the increasing number of desertions under these circumstances."[44] Another Ottoman officer, İbrahim Sorguç, who fought on the Palestine front, described poor food and clothing for soldiers on the front in large parts of his memoir. He attributed the reason for the decisive defeat on the Palestine front to these dire conditions. Like Cebesoy, he did not question "the courage and heroism of the Turkish soldier" despite the large number of desertions, but complained that such martial qualities could become useless, because a hungry and barefoot soldier would not be able to fight.[45]

This "heroism" or "patriotism" was not given, but actually depended on the endurance level of the soldier facing the actual conditions. It also depended on the continuation of the contractual nature of military service. A few examples demonstrate this situation quite clearly. A deserter on the Dardanelles front, who went to the British side in December 1915, said during his interrogation by British officers that he deserted because he was tired of the war. He also claimed that their food was insufficient: "Food consisted of a very small loaf, soup, haricot beans, chick peas, fish and grapes."[46] On the Mesopotamia front, "an Arab deserter," deserted in February 1916, claimed that if he stayed in the service much longer he would have died of hunger,[47] while a Turkish sergeant, who deserted from the Palestine front in April 1918, said that the cause of his desertion was bad food.[48] Several weeks earlier a deserter on the same front stated that for five days he and his comrades had no rations, after which a limited

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[43] TNA: PRO WO 157/800, June 1917.

[44] Ali Fuat Cebesoy, *Büyük Harpte Osmanlı İmparatoluğunun 1916–1917 Yılındaki Vaziyeti: Birsüssebi-Gazze Meydan Muharebesi ve Yirminci Kolordu* (Istanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1938), p. 18.

[45] *İbrahim Sorguç'un Anıları, İstiklal Harbi Hatıratı*, edited by Erdoğan Sorguç (İzmir: İzmir Yayıncılık, 1995), pp. 43–44.

[46] TNA: PRO WO 157/700, December 1915–January 1916.

[47] TNA: PRO WO 157/703, March–April 1916.

[48] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

amount of bread was served. He also expressed that "there was some disturbance among the men on this account, and an officer threatened to shoot those who cause[d] it. They used to supplement their rations with any cattle they could commandeer."[49]

While there is no shortage of examples of desertion and complaints about food shortage on all major fronts and in each year of the war, the intensity of the problem increased remarkably in the second half of the war, particularly during 1918. Poor agricultural harvests due to lack of labor and seed, and inadequate transportation facilities contributed to the severity of the problem of food shortage on all fronts in the last year of the war, when the British forces began to have the upper hand in battles against the Ottomans in Palestine. Accordingly, although we do not have exact statistics, the existing examples suggest that the number of desertions in Palestine in 1918 was much higher than that of other years and other fronts.

A comparison between an Ottoman soldier's rations in March 1918 on the Palestine front and his peace-time rations in March 1914 strikingly reveals the extent to which the provisioning situation had deteriorated in the last year of the war. According to a British military intelligence report based on captured Ottoman documents, the Ottoman soldier's peace-time daily ration in March 1914 was as follows:

> 900 grams of bread
> 600 grams of biscuits
> 250 grams of meat
> 150 grams of bulgur (cracked wheat porridge)
> 20 grams of cooking butter
> 20 grams of salt
> (Extra rations: Molasses, coffee, tea, bread and curds. These may be replaced by Tahin Helva, a sweetmeat made of sesame and molasses. There was also a generous allowance of fuel and soap.)

However, the average daily ration of the Ottoman soldier on the Palestine front in March 1918 was only 500–600 grams of bread, with a little wheat porridge and perhaps a few vegetables; meat was rarely issued, and in very small quantities. A further comparison of this famine diet with the daily ration of the British soldier on the same front in 1918 is still more striking, and presents a good fact about the disadvantageous situation of Ottoman troops in a war of attrition against the enemy. The daily ration of a British soldier was as follows:

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[49] TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.

336 grams or ¾ lb. fresh meat
446 grams or 1 lb. bread
112 grams or 4 oz. bacon
84 grams or 3 oz. jam
84 grams or 3 oz. sugar
56 grams or 2 oz. vegetables; with tea, milk, salt, etc., and extra issues.[50]

Next to the shortage of food, insufficient clothing also played an important role in undermining the Ottoman troops' endurance against dire conditions on the battlefield. The extent of the problem was apparently so wide that not only enlisted men, but also officers and even unit commanders suffered from it. When soldiers had to fight in extreme cold (as in winter in the Caucasus) or extreme heat (as in the Arabian Desert), the suffering was much more severe. Liman von Sanders complained in 1918 that the clothing of the troops was so bad that many officers under his command wore ragged uniforms, and even some battalion commanders had to wear rawhide sandals (*çarık*) instead of boots.[51] British military intelligence reports also include some examples of deserters mentioning this problem among their reasons for desertion. An Ottoman soldier who deserted on 4 March 1918 from the Palestine front, and who had served as an army cook and butcher, stated that there had been no issuance of new clothing or boots for many months.[52] Another deserter, who was interrogated by the British in late February 1918, complained that there had been no boots available to distribute to the troops for the last eleven months, and "yellow hide slippers tied with thongs are issued instead, and worn without socks." He also stated that there was a great shortage of leather in Istanbul and the price of a single pair of boots increased remarkably.[53] This shortage seems to have led Ottoman troops to steal from the enemy. An Ottoman prisoner of war under British captivity claimed that he saw fifty British prisoners near Nablus in December 1917, who went barefoot, "as the Turks had stolen their boots."[54]

Poor feeding and clothing conditions, which undermined the immune system of soldiers, contributed to an increase in epidemic diseases among the troops. Casualty figures show that the Ottoman military medical care system had a hard time coping with such epidemic diseases as

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[50] TNA: PRO WO 157/727, May 1918.
[51] Von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, p. 243.
[52] TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.
[53] According the information given by him, the price of one pair of boots at this time was 16 *Mecidiye*s (about 3 British Pounds). TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.
[54] TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.

dysentery, typhus and malaria. A recent study of diseases in the Ottoman army estimated that around 400,000 men died during the war from contagious diseases. This remarkably high number amounts to about 13 percent of the total men enlisted during the war.[55] Therefore, not surprisingly, deserters often complained in their interrogations about diseases and a lack of medical care. For example, a deserter who escaped from the Kut al-Amara region on the Mesopotamia front said that there was much sickness among the troops on the front.[56]

Bad treatment of enlisted men by their officers was another important factor about which deserters frequently complained. It is understood from deserters' statements that beating was the most common form of maltreatment in the Ottoman army during the war.[57] Of course, it is difficult to assess how widespread it was within the army, since there is always the possibility that interrogated deserters tended to exaggerate their sufferings on the front with the hope of benefiting from clemency and good treatment under captivity. But deserters were not the only ones talking about such maltreatments. Various Ottoman-Turkish officers, who served in the war (and did not desert), also mentioned this practice in their memoirs. Faik Tonguç, who served on the Caucasus front as a reserve officer, was one of them. He admitted in his memoirs that although he condemned the act of beating as an inhuman and outdated method of discipline before going to the front, the cruelty of war had made him "learn to beat men harshly."[58] He justified this act by stating that this was the only way to discipline the uneducated and untrained peasant boys, a method which was more effective than lecturing them with a religious discourse.[59] The problem of beating is also frequently mentioned in the memoirs of enlisted men. According to, for example, the eyewitness accounts of İbrahim

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[55] Özdemir, *Salgın Hastalıklardan Ölümler, 1914–1918*, pp. 132–153. Ahmed Emin Yalman estimated a higher number of deaths as 466,759, while the Ottoman military hospital records give a slightly lower number as 388,000.

[56] TNA: PRO WO 157/703, March–April 1916.

[57] Insensitive handling by superiors was a common problem in other armies too. German and British deserters on the Western Front also often mentioned this behavior as a major factor prompting them to flee. See Watson, *Enduring the Great War*, p. 113.

[58] Such losses of idealism in the actual conditions of war remind us of Eric Leed's statement: "Anyone who examines the experience of the First World War must talk about 'disillusionment'." See Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 75.

[59] Tonguç, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Bir Yedek Subayın Anıları*, pp. 107–108. For a similar "transformation" in another reserve officer, see Öğütçü (ed.), *Abdülkadir Kemali Bey'in Anıları*, p. 184.

Arıkan, who was a literate enlisted man serving with the rank of sergeant on the Dardanelles, Galicia and Palestine fronts respectively, beating was nearly a part of the daily routine in the army life. It is understood that officers usually resorted to beating as a common form of punishment in mild crimes.[60] Abdullah Fevzi Efendi, a medrese teacher who joined the army as a volunteer and became a battalion prayer leader, condemned the harsh treatment of enlisted men by officers (particularly beating) as one of the main factors that undermined the morale and cohesion of Ottoman troops.[61]

A deserter from the Dardanelles front complained that "soldiers were beaten by their officers on the slightest provocation."[62] Although one can guess, as the case of Faik Tonguç suggests, that the Anatolian Muslim peasant soldier was not immune to maltreatment such as beating, the available evidence, mostly from British military intelligence records, shows that non-Muslim and Arab deserters lay much more stress on this problem. In British interrogation reports, some non-Muslim and Arab deserters gave maltreatment as the major reason for their desertions. For example, an Armenian officer, who became a prisoner of war in May 1918, claimed that "every offense committed by an Armenian in the army is harshly dealt with." He further claimed that Armenians in the Ottoman army "can only be promoted to second lieutenant, except doctors, who are captains, and chemists, who are first lieutenants."[63]

Documents, especially those related to the Palestine front in 1918, also demonstrate that the Arab deserters, officers and enlisted men alike, complained about maltreatment even more intensively than the non-Muslim ones. According to an Arab officer, who deserted in April 1918 from the Palestine front, one of the three major reasons why men deserted was bad treatment by officers (the other ones being the idea that war would never end and the shortage of rations).[64] A prisoner of war, an officer who was captured on 10 March 1918 on the Palestine front (whose ethnic origin is not given), stated that the Arabs were ill-treated, which was generally the cause of their desertion.[65] An Arab cadet officer, who deserted on 18 April 1918,

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[60] İbrahim Arıkan, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Bir Nefer: Bir Mehmetçiğin Çanakkale-Galiçya-Filistin Cephesi Anıları*, edited by Selman Soydemir and Abdullah Satun, third edition (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2010), pp. 76, 81, 136, 180.

[61] Abdullah Fevzi Efendi, *Çanakkale Cephesinde Bir Müderris*, pp. 129, 144, 170–171.

[62] TNA: PRO WO 157–700, December 1915, January 1916.

[63] TNA: PRO WO 157–727, May 1918.

[64] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

[65] TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.

expressed that "Arab officers in the Turkish Army are badly treated, being passed over in favor of Turks for promotion and command. A Turkish second lieutenant is sometimes put over an Arab Captain."[66] Another Arab deserter from the Mesopotamia front claimed that Turks and Arabs were on bad terms, complaining that "the Turks supported their officers whenever there was any friction and maltreated the Arabs who consequently deserted in considerable numbers."[67]

This last case also suggests that relations among soldiers of different ethnic and religious groups within the Ottoman armed forces might have been as hateful as the treatment coming from superior officers. The diary of an Ottoman medical corporal Ali Rıza (Eti) Efendi, who served on the Caucasus front, presents an interesting example in this respect. He wrote that as Turkish soldiers saw many Armenian volunteers fighting on the enemy side against them and heard rumors about the Armenians among their own ranks collaborating with Russians, animosity towards Armenian soldiers reached such a high point that "every day in each battalion, Turkish soldiers shot a few Armenians during fighting, as if it happened accidentally."[68] The same kind of hatred apparently overwhelmed him too, although he made humanistic comments on various aspects of the war. He straightforwardly expressed that he thought revengefully about poisoning a couple of Armenians in the military hospital where he served.[69] But his diary does not mention any statement that would hint that he did so.

Accusations by Arab soldiers against Ottoman military authorities sometimes took a form of propaganda, to which the Ottomans sometimes needed to respond at an official level. A document in the Ottoman Foreign Ministry archives contains an interesting case in this respect. In 1917, an Arab deserter, who served as an officer in the Ottoman army on the Caucasus front, made a claim in an Egyptian newspaper (*El Kofkat*) that Arabs were maltreated by the Turkish officers. Reportedly, he further claimed that a Turkish officer killed 18 Arab officers, and the Arab division on the front, which had 17,000 men at the beginning, decreased to 300–400 men, as its Arab soldiers were killed by the Turks.[70] The Ottoman authorities

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66 TNA: PRO WO 157–727, May 1918.

67 TNA: PRO WO 157/703, March–April 1916.

68 "*Günde beher taburdan üç beş Ermeniyi kaza'en vuruyorlar . . .*," Ali Rıza (Eti) Efendi, *Harb-i Umumide Hatırat-ı Askeriyem: Eğin'den İtibaren Hatırat-ı Askeriyem*, edited by İ. Gönül Eti and Murat Koraltürk (Istanbul: Önsöz Basım, 2007), p. 126. For another edition of this diary, see Ali Rıza Eti, *Bir Onbaşının Doğu Cephesi Günlüğü, 1914–1915*, edited by Gönül Eti (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2009).

69 Ibid., p. 160.

70 BOA, HR.SYS., 2440/16, 03 September 1917.

were informed about the news by the Hague consulate, which received it via Reuters. Then the Ottoman General Staff requested the Third Army headquarters to investigate the claim. A response was issued, undersigned by Enver Pasha, which suggested that such claims were simply lies concocted by the Egyptian newspaper.[71]

Discrimination regarding maltreatment was not limited to non-Muslim and Arab soldiers. We also encounter Turkish deserters complaining about discrimination against them in favor of German soldiers in the Ottoman army. It is also apparent in British reports that British authorities took this situation no less seriously than the complaints made by non-Muslim and Arab deserters. An Ottoman sergeant-major, who deserted in August 1918 from the Palestine front and was described by the British as "educated and intelligent," stated that "he would be willing to die for his country, but that he considered he had no country left. The Turk is now the slave of the German who takes everything for himself. How can a man have any patriotic feelings left? Neither he nor his three comrades who deserted with him ever intend to return to Turkey."[72] The same observation is also supported by an Arab deserter on the same front and year, who was similarly described by the British as "intelligent." He claimed that "the Turkish troops are quite convinced that the Germans get the best food and treatment."[73] A general comment made by British intelligence officers, which was based on such statements, summarizes the situation succinctly:

> The Turkish soldier, even more than the Turkish people at large, dislikes the Germans, as he sees the superior treatment offered by the Turkish Authorities to the German soldiers, and his indignation knows no bounds when he sees that there are no German units fighting side by side with him, while he knows that many Turkish units were decimated while fighting for the Germans in Galicia and Rumania. Quarrels are frequent between German and Turkish soldiers. In Damascus, informant saw Turkish soldiers at the instigation of their own officer attacking the men of a German Transport unit.[74]

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[71] BOA, HR.SYS., 2448/17, 13 February 1918.

[72] TNA: PRO WO 157–735, April–September 1918.

[73] TNA: PRO WO 157–735, April–September 1918. An Ottoman petty officer, Hamit Ercan, who served as a telegram officer during the war, states in his memoirs that when he was on the Caucasus front he had heard that some starving Ottoman soldiers pillaged the provisions sent for the German soldiers. He also confirms that the Ottoman soldiers believed that the Germans in the Ottoman army received better food and treatment. See, Hamit Ercan, *Bir Osmanlı Askerinin Anıları: Balkan Savaşı'ndan Kurtuluş'a*, edited by L. Alpat, A. Mehmetefendioğlu and O. Arslan (İzmir: Şenocak Yayınları, 2010), pp. 94, 118.

[74] TNA: PRO WO 157–727, May 1918.

However, discrimination also existed in the British attitude towards Ottoman deserters. The available documents show that British authorities chose to make two different general categories of deserters as "Turkish deserters" on the one hand, and "Arab, Armenian, Greek and Jewish deserters" (namely "non-Turkish") on the other. Their treatment of these categories was not equal. It is understood that they saw the second category of deserters as potentially "harmless" and more helpful for the British military purposes than the first. A military intelligence report, which formulated a policy regarding the treatment of deserters in British hands, specified that Turkish deserters were "to be evacuated without exception as prisoners of war," while "Arab, Armenian, Greek, and Jewish deserters, who are to be examined by Intelligence Corps Officers, and, if inhabitants of Occupied Enemy Territory, and considered harmless, are to be released and allowed to remain in or return to their villages."[75] The British also offered the deserters in the second category the choice that if they were willing to work for them, they would be sent to the nearest headquarters of the Egyptian Labour Corps, with a note on their disposal sheet that would expedite their release. Moreover, if a non-Muslim or Arab deserter appeared to be able to provide any useful contribution to the British units on the battlefield, such as working as "a guide or to point out gun positions," an application would be made to the nearest intelligence corps officer to employ him for such a purpose.[76] A British comment on POWs demonstrates how the discriminatory attitude of the British towards Turks, Arabs and non-Muslims turned into a biased precautionary measure. This comment, which was actually advice offered to interrogation officers, warned that "Turkish officer prisoners of war seldom give information of any real value and may attempt to mislead their captors . . . Arabs and Christian officer prisoners of war are more likely to give useful information."[77]

On the other hand, not all the reasons for desertion were related to the conditions on the battlefield. Soldiers were not fighting machines lacking any private relationship with the outside world. On the contrary, they had

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[75] TNA: PRO WO 157–722, December 1917.

[76] Ibid.

[77] TNA: PRO WO 157/711, December 1916. An Ottoman document dated 4 July 1914 also states that the British treated the Muslim prisoners of war differently according to their ethnic origin. The document says that the British separated Muslim prisoners into different groups such as Turkish, Arab and Kurdish, and they sent them to different camps in India. The document claims that the British treated the Turkish prisoners of war badly while they offered fair treatment to the Arabs. See *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 117 (January 2004), document no. 57, p. 159.

families and loved ones, whose memories always remained vivid on the front. When the war became prolonged and separation from home was counted in years, the concern and worry of soldiers about their loved ones could reach an unbearable point. The Ottoman military's policy of giving leave to soldiers on the front was quite tight during the war. Mentioning that not a single soldier had been granted leave in the first two years of the war, Ali Fuat Cebesoy saw this problem as one of the main reasons for desertions from the Ottoman army.[78] Other Ottoman commanders also shared his view that soldiers' staying away from their homes for years without even receiving any letters from their loved ones undermined their capacity to endure hardship.[79] The leave problem was a source of tension, because "leave was more than just a respite for war-weary troops; it was also a chance to reaffirm their humanity, to express their identities as members of families and coherent communities."[80] Moreover, when granted, the duration of leave was often not long enough to satisfy the soldiers' need, as it is obvious from documents that a considerable portion of desertions actually consisted of those who overstayed their leaves.[81]

Especially when soldiers received bad news about their loved ones, desperation and worry could lead them to desert even if they were quite steadfast in the face of other dire conditions. The overwhelming majority of Ottoman soldiers were illiterate, and correspondence with loved ones was minimal. But there were other channels available for receiving news, such as incoming enlisted men from a soldier's hometown. Soldiers could also get information about their families when they passed through their own provinces or nearby towns during troop transfers from one front to the other. The case of Sergeant Receb of Ödemiş, who served in the military hospital in İzmir, represents a good example in this respect. He deserted on 18 February 1916 when he received news of his father-in-law's death from the patients who had just arrived at the hospital from his hometown of Ödemiş (a district of Aydın). When he was captured and interrogated, he stated that he deserted because the news saddened him too much and he became worried about his children who had been under

[78] Cebesoy, *Büyük Harpte Osmanlı İmparatoluğunun 1916–1917 Yılındaki Vaziyeti*, p. 18.
[79] Hüseyin Hüsnü Emir (Erkilet), *Yıldırım* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2002), p. 24.
[80] David Englander, "Discipline and Morale in the British Army, 1917–1918," in Horne (ed.), *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War*, p. 137.
[81] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 79/50, 17 Şevval 1335.

the care of his father-in-law.[82] Similarly, Private Ömer of Yalvaç (a district of Konya), who overstayed his leave, mentioned the death of his mother as the reason of his desertion.[83]

The Deserter and His "Life-Style"

How did a deserter survive after deserting? What kinds of difficulties awaited him as a deserter? Was there a specific life-style that a deserter adapted to? How did civilians react to deserters when they faced them? Was a deserter a complete outcast in Ottoman society? Since the voice of the Ottoman deserter hardly left a documentary trail, we need to compile answers to such questions from other people's comments. Interrogation records, the only channel which gives us limited direct access to the deserter's voices, focus almost entirely on the act of desertion and largely omit the experiences of the deserter afterwards. Therefore, they are not very helpful in drawing a picture about the life of a deserter. Any picture that could be taken from them will be quite incomplete, since they deal with the captured deserters. There were many deserters who were not captured, and some captured deserters also spent quite a long time as fugitives before they surrendered to or were caught by authorities. Official documents of both military and civilian authorities, which approached the issue as a security problem, are the only available sources in this respect. But interestingly, beneath the official discourse in treating the issue of desertion, they also contain many significant details about the practical aspects of the matter.

The first impression one gets from these documents is that the major problem connected to desertion was brigandage (*şekâvet*). This is no surprise, for deserters have always been "natural material for banditry" in all societies.[84] Desertion and brigandage during the Great War were so intertwined that Ottoman documents almost always mention these two words together, as if they were synonymous.[85] For a deserter running

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[82] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–1; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–7.

[83] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–73.

[84] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, revised edition (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. 38.

[85] There is no shortage of such documents about deserter-brigands in the Ottoman archives. Here is a little selection: BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb., 6/7, 23 Receb 1333/6 June 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb., 20 Şa'ban 1333/3 July 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb., 9/46, 19 Zilhicce 1333/28 October 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.3.Şb., 9/47, 21 Zilhicce 1333/30 October 1915; BOA,

away from the law and with no chance of getting steady work to provide for himself, brigandage was the only alternative in most of the cases. Yet, while they were closely related, the official perspective on crime always made a difference between desertion and brigandage. A deserter's status was still seen as more redeemable than that of a brigand. First, a Council of Ministers decision made it clear on 21 April 1918 that desertion was purely a military-legal matter. Even if a soldier committed crimes of both desertion and brigandage, he was first to be tried or indicted at a court martial for desertion, and only then was to be sent to a judicial civil court to be tried for brigandage.[86] While the act of desertion was never regarded as a lighter crime and at times subjected to summary justice, a deserter, if he did not commit murder, was still seen as a soldier and sometimes could be granted amnesty (as will be discussed below), which meant that he was re-enlisted. Documents imply that the extent of the problem of brigandage was quite large during the war years, which further increased in 1918. A telegram that was sent by the Interior Minister Talat Pasha to all local administrative units on 1 June 1918 complained that, the murders committed by bands of deserter-brigands were occurring in almost every corner of the country, and requested that such crimes should be regularly reported to the ministry.[87] Next to murder, the more routine crimes committed by such bands consisted of pillaging and robbing villagers and townsmen. These took place either in a direct form by using brute force, or via threat.[88] Deserter-brigands extorted local people not only for basic needs such as food and clothing, but also money and other valuables such as jewelry.[89] Local people suffered so much from such abuses in some places that they even considered leaving their villages for more secure places. Some villagers around Bozdoğan, a district of Aydın, petitioned the government to prevent further "evil acts" (*şer olayları*) committed by the deserter-brigands in the area, and they migrated to the town center to protect themselves.[90]

The pillaging of peasants' harvest concerned the authorities not just as a security issue, but as a major threat to the collection of the tithe

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DH.EUM.3.Şb., 2 Zilkâde 1334/21 August 1916; BOA, DH.EUM.5.Şb., 23/13, 8 Cemâziyelâhir 1334/12 April 1916; BOA, DH.EUM.5.Şb., 32/2, 2 Rebîulevvel 1335/27 December 1916.

86 BOA, MV., 211/181, 9 Receb 1336/21 April 1918.

87 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 88/3, 21 Şa'ban 1336/1 June 1918.

88 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 79/17, 13 Şevval 1335/2 August 1917.

89 See, for example, BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 32/2, 2 Rebîulevvel 1335/27 December 1916; BOA, DH.ŞFR., 79/17, 13 Şevval 1335/2 August 1917.

90 BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 14/31, 18 Şa'ban 1334/20 June 1916.

(*aşâr*), which was crucial for provisioning the army. A telegram sent by Talat Pasha to Kütahya on 31 July 1917 mentioned that the Interior Ministry received a report from the Finance Ministry complaining of abuses caused by bands of deserter-brigands, who not only robbed both the poor and rich, but also made the tithe collection almost impossible. Therefore, the telegram required the local authority to take serious measures as soon as possible to prevent the activities of these bands.[91]

Brigandage was not an activity that was done individually. Whether they were deserters or not, brigands usually formed bands (*çete*), whose number of members varied from a few people to hundreds. Even when documents mention individual names of deserter-brigands rather than bands, they are usually the leaders of such bands. How did a group of deserters gather in a band? It can be said that the major factor in this process was the common ethnic-religious background. The available documents show that most of such bands, or at least the ones that were relatively larger and gave the authorities a hard time, were usually, if not exclusively, ethnically homogeneous groups. Deserters did not always found new bands for brigandage, but joined those already in existence, whose chiefs they knew through common ethnic ties; these chiefs may or may not have been deserters themselves. Mountainous regions of Anatolia provided shelter for these bands. For example: Şahin Bey was a brigand chief of Albanian origin, who led a band of about 60 Albanian horsemen around Bandırma, a district of Bursa/Hüdavendigâr, a province where apparently other Albanian deserter bands also concentrated.[92] Halil İbrahim was a "Turkish" band leader near Ödemiş, who headed a band of 80–120 Turks.[93] Kadir the Donkey Rider (*Eşekçi*) was another Turkish brigand chief, who had about 20–30 men in the Bandırma region. Kadri Efe was a Circassian

[91] BOA, DH.ŞFR, 78/262, 11 Şevval 1335/31 July 1917.

[92] BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 14/52, 23 Ramazan 1334/24 July 1916. In fact, there was a long-established network of brigandage and paramilitary activity in the South Marmara region. Muslim Albanians and Circassians constituted the main manpower pool of the bands in the region. Deserters continued to feed such bands in the region. Authorities were not always in conflict with such bands in this region, as they sometimes sought to cooperate with them in mobilizing support from the local population. These bands also turned into potential "patriots" during the early stages of the Turkish National Struggle after the Mudros Armistice. The leaders of the nationalist resistance in Anatolia sought to get their involvement in the resistance against the Greek invasion. The post-armistice Istanbul government also tried to mobilize them against the nationalists. See. Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 55–80.

[93] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

band leader in the same region, who had considerable influence among his fellow countrymen and headed about 80 horsemen. The Yetimoğlu band had been formed by the Laz diaspora in Yalova (a sub-district of İzmit), which recruited deserter members during the Great War.[94]

Some bands might have been ethnically mixed, but still religiously homogeneous, as in the case of the band of Ali Bey, an Albanian, heading a band of 70–80 Circassians and Albanians. Non-Muslim deserters also formed their own bands. For example, "the Brother of Topal Agop" was an Armenian chief hiding in the Amanos Mountain (*Gâvur Dağı*) in the Cilicia region, who led a band of 20–25 Armenians.[95] Estaveri was a Greek band leader, who deserted from the army in the Central Black Sea region when mobilization was declared, and came to Adapazarı (a sub-district of İzmit), with his friend Apostol, where, besides brigandage, they discouraged the local Greek male population from joining the army.[96]

Deserter-brigands were usually associated with mountainous areas that provided good shelter for fugitives running away from government control. This impression is also supported by many documents which discuss deserter bands. However, this is an incomplete picture, because deserters also chose to hide close to home, which often entailed living in urban and suburban areas. For example, correspondence between the Istanbul governorship and the Interior Ministry shows that deserters also sought refuge in and around big cities. The correspondence, which was dated 9 May 1916, mentioned that some 265 deserters were concentrated in Beykoz (a Bosphorous village, now a suburb of Istanbul).[97] Similarly, upon a report received from the Mosul judicial inspector (*adliye müfettişi*), the Interior Ministry sent a telegram to Mosul on 17 June 1915, urging the local authority to take necessary steps against deserters, who took refuge not only in the villages but also in the towns of the province.[98] Medical Corporal Ali Rıza also mentioned that during the fighting on the Caucasus front, one could see many deserters, most of whom were Armenians, wandering in the city of Kars.[99] On the other hand, it must also be emphasized that

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[94] Ryan Gingeras, "Beyond Istanbul's 'Laz Underworld': Ottoman Paramilitarism and the Rise of Turkish Organized Crime, 1908–1950," *Contemporary European History*, vol. 19, no. 3 (2010), p. 219.

[95] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

[96] BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 13/15, 11 Receb 1333/25 May 1915.

[97] BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 13/55, 1334.B.06.

[98] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 54/41, 1333.Ş.4.

[99] Ali Rıza Efendi, *Harb-i Umumide Hatırat-ı Askeriyem*, p. 48. Kars was under Russian control at this time.

the problem of desertion did not concern exclusively the land forces. It is true that the great majority of desertions was from the land forces which constituted the largest branch of the Ottoman military.[100] But we have examples showing that desertions also took place in the navy.[101]

Generally, bands of deserters intimidated local populations across the country, but sometimes deserters themselves could fall prey to brigands. Especially when deserters tried to find their way in unfamiliar lands with no arms, they became easy victims in the hands of brigands. A decree by the Bitlis court martial, approved by the sultan on 2 January 1915, presents an interesting case in this respect. The court martial sentenced several brigands to ten years of hard labor (*küreğe konmak*) for robbing deserters. The brigands Ali Kahya bin Hüseyin, Feto bin Ahmed, Hamid bin Said, Mirza bin Şenco and Salih bin Mamo, who were residents of Kulp (a district of Bitlis) and most likely Kurdish, established bands to rob deserters in their region.[102] Cases of deserters who were robbed also seem to have been frequent on the Sinai-Palestine front, where they became easy prey to bands of Bedouins. This situation also attracted the attention of the British, who observed that "the Turkish soldiers on the Sinai front would desert easily, in spite of the distance and hardship of the Palestine-Anatolia road, if they did not fear the existence of the Bedouin robbers. The wounded Turk, who is forgotten by the Red-Crescent soldiers and remains helpless on the battlefield, will almost certainly be visited by Bedouin robbers."[103]

Many deserters carried off their arms and ammunition, and, therefore, posed a threat to both local people and authorities. Their arms were often the most technologically advanced in the country, since they were the ones actually used by the army.[104] This also increased the level of their threat. In a telegram sent to the Interior Ministry on 9 July 1916, the governor of Hüdâvendigâr complained that the Albanian deserter bands, particularly the one headed by the above mentioned Ali Bey, had newer and

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[100] According to Erickson's estimates, the number of total men mobilized for the Ottoman navy was 15,000, while it was 2,608,000 for the army. Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 243.

[101] See, for example, BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 15/13, 27 Şa'ban 1333/10 July 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 24/43, 28 Receb 1334/31 May 1916.

[102] BOA, İ.HB., 164/1333 S-054, 23 Safer 1333/10 January 1915.

[103] TNA: PRO WO 157–735, April–September 1918.

[104] Moreover, another way of obtaining arms and ammunition was through smuggling, which was a method often used by brigand bands in Anatolia before the war, particularly by those in the Aegean region. See Olcay Pullukçuoğlu Yapucu, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Bir Sancak: Aydın* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2007), p. 200.

much more effective arms (Mauser rifles) than the rifles used by the local gendarme units, and requested at least fifty new Mauser rifles.[105] Similarly, an Interior Ministry report on the problem of desertion in Pozantı (a sub-district of Adana) stated that the deserters' rifles had a longer range than the ones owned by the local gendarmes. The report warned that if deserters were to be caught in this region, this could only be done by providing better arms to the local gendarmes.[106] An Ottoman deserter in British hands on the Palestine front, who was a native of İzmir, said during his interrogation that when he was on leave in his hometown a few months ago, the mountains in that district were full of deserters, both officers and enlisted men, who were "well armed and with machine-guns."[107]

Besides disrupting the tithe collection, another major problem caused by such armed bands of deserters was hindering of conscription. In doing this, their intention was apparently to use the potential conscripts for their own manpower. Such bands acted as if they were military units seeking to fill their ranks with newly enlisted men. A British military intelligence report noted in April 1916 that in the mountainous region around Karaman (a district of Konya), "a large body of deserters has been terrorizing the country, robbing the Turkish population and preventing recruiting." The report also said that this activity caused the Ottoman authorities much anxiety.[108] Concerning deserters with arms, an interesting statement was made by an officer deserter in British hands in 1918: "if a deserter returns to his village in Asia Minor with his rifle and ammunition, he is told to take to the hills, as 'he will be required in the future'. If he arrives without his rifle and ammunition, he is sent back to his unit and told to bring them away with him next time he deserts."[109]

Did the relationship between deserters and local populations exist exclusively in the context of brigandage? Were all deserters brigands? Were deserters always seen as a source of evil by local populations? Did local people always side with authorities in struggling with deserter-brigands? How did local people respond when a deserter came to his own village or hometown? Did local people provide shelter or support for deserters? Did they sympathize with or despise deserters?

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105 TNA: PRO DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 14/52, 23 Ramazan 1334/24 July 1916.

106 BOA, DH.EUM.VRK., 16/51, 16 Şevval 1334/16 August 1916.

107 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918. It is understood from documents that some deserters even sold their rifles and ammunitions for survival. See, for example, *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 84 (March 1984), document no. 1985, p. 75.

108 TNA: PRO WO 157/703, March–April 1916.

109 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

Erik-Jan Zürcher has asserted that Ottoman deserters "would stay as guests in the villages they moved through" and "the population often sympathised with them." He has also argued that "this is perhaps the most important difference with the situation in the European countries during World War I."[110] While I can only cautiously support Zürcher's argument because of the limited nature of the available archival documents, I can still assert that the relationship between deserters and local people was more complex than a simple antagonism which the official discourse wished to present. There are various cases and reports which strongly imply that deserters sometimes received shelter, support and even encouragement from local people. But, it is equally important to underline that it is not easy to discern how much of this actually stemmed from sympathy and how much from fear, for local civilians were usually helpless against armed bands of deserter-brigands. Sympathy and fear on the part of civilians towards deserter-brigands could often intertwine, because, as Hobsbawm has observed, "where there is no regular or effective machinery for the maintenance of public order there is not much point in appealing to the authorities for protection."[111] In some cases, the local populace might have also benefited financially from this relationship as deserters sometimes paid for the help and services they received. On the other hand, it should also be emphasized that, as will be discussed later, the intensification of the problem also brought some new factors to the dialogue between the state and local people, in which the former tried to re-mobilize the latter to capture deserters by using various new sanctions and incentives such as the threat of migration, harsh punishment, monetary rewards, or status promotion with decorations.

A military report, which was sent by the commander of the 37th Caucasus Division to the II Caucasus Corps headquarters on 20 June 1917, implies that the support that deserters received on the home front was a serious problem and alarmed Ottoman authorities. The report complained that desertions, which "had increasingly become a chronic trouble threatening the general performance of the army," were supported by some people in the regions adjacent to the front. The division commander demanded harsh punishment for such people who aided the deserters.[112]

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[110] Zürcher, "Refusing to Serve by Other Means," p. 50.
[111] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, pp. 96–97.
[112] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2880, Dosya 323, Fihrist 3.

Some deserters could go directly to their villages and stay there for a long time until their presence became known. It was the deserters' very own household that provided shelter and support in these cases. Such examples suggest that both deserters' families and fellow villagers either sympathized with their situation or preferred to condone it. For instance, a deserter by the name of Ahmed, son of Hasan, who deserted from the Muş mobile gendarme battalion, said in his interrogation statement on 7 December 1916 that he deserted because he was sick, and he went home to his village, where he stayed for as long as six months, until he was caught by the gendarmes.[113] In another interesting case, private Şâkir, son of İmamoğlu Hüseyin from the Şarkîkaraağaç district of Konya deserted three times. Each time he fled to his village and stayed about ten days, a significantly shorter time period compared to that of the above-mentioned Ahmed. According to his statement on 27 November 1916, in his first two desertions, his uncle informed the gendarmerie and turned him in to the government forces; the last time, he surrendered on his own to benefit from the sultan's amnesty issued for all deserters.[114]

Civilian support for deserters did not only come from ordinary people, but sometimes from local administrative officials as well. For example, a village *muhtar* in Siird, Hacı Ahmed bin Osman, was sentenced on 20 April 1915 to three years' hard labor for "facilitating desertions of enlisted men."[115] Since village *muhtar*s were actually the key and primary local officials who were to provide the state with the most helpful and direct information in capturing deserters, their support for deserters seems to have alarmed the authorities. *Muhtar*s and other local authorities' support for deserters usually indicated either kinship or tribal ties with deserters or some kind of financial benefit. In another case, a resident of Konya, Hacı Mustafa, informed the War Ministry by a telegram that a sub-district director (*nâhiye müdürü*) in the province, by the name of Tursun Ağa, neglected to pursue deserters in return for a certain amount of money (300 liras a month).[116] Sometimes such bribes for freedom were given not directly by deserters, but by their relatives or patrons. For example, Hacı Adem from Silvan, a district of Diyarbekir, was accused of bribing the gendarmes to free deserters. The court found him guilty and sentenced him to three years' imprisonment for this crime on 26 February 1916; the

113 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2325, Dosya 82, Fihrist 1–4.
114 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–110.
115 BOA, İ.HB., 168/1333 C-018, 5 Cemâziyelâhir 1333/20 April 1915.
116 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 87/180, 7 Şa'ban 1336/18 May 1918.

related document does not mention what ties he had with the deserters in question.[117] A more serious case in this respect took place in Kangal, a district of Sivas. Danecioğlu Veli, who was from the Ceviz village of the district, was accused not only of bribing the local gendarme unit commander for giving up pursuit of the deserters in his village, but also of giving a false statement in order to shield deserters who were hiding in the village. Three more people of the same village, Süleyman, Mustafa and Bektaş, were also accused of giving false statements for the same purpose. They were all found guilty. While Danecioğlu Veli was sentenced to three years' imprisonment, the otheres were imprisoned for one month.[118]

Turkish writer Bekir Eliçin's novel, *Onlar Savaşırken* [While They Fight], presents a very interesting example of a village *muhtar*, Alâettin Efendi, who exploited deserters hiding in his village for his pecuniary interests. The novel focuses on desertion as a social issue in an Anatolian village milieu during the ten-year war period from the end of the Balkan War through the Great War to the end of the National Struggle (1919–1922). The story takes place in the Genezin village of Avanos, a district of Ankara. The village is also where the writer was born in 1912 and raised, and the novel includes many valuable documentary points on desertion. Alâettin Efendi forced two village households to give bribes in exchange for not reporting the desertion of its family members to the gendarmerie. These bribes could be in various forms, such as paper money, jewelry and sometimes sexual favors provided by the deserters' wives. The *muhtar* even formed a small band under his control, composed of a few deserters, which he used for brigandage and as a force of threat. Turning desertion into a business, Alâettin Efendi worked with and received support from a local notable, Mehmet Efendi, and from the chief of the recruiting office in Avanos. This triangle of interest among a village *muhtar*, a local notable and a government official helped sustain a local monetary interest in deserters without interruption throughout the ten-year war period.[119]

Exploiting deserters for money was not limited to civil administrators and military commanders. There were also others who saw helping deserters as an economic opportunity and, thus, tried to turn it into a business.

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[117] BOA, İ.HB., 168/1333 C-42, 11 Cemâziyelâhir 1333/20 April 1915.

[118] BOA, İ.HB., 169/1333 B-003, 2 Receb 1333/16 May 1915.

[119] Bekir Eliçin, *Onlar Savaşırken* (Istanbul: Okar Yayınları, 1978). For a comment on the novel from an economic history point of view, see Korkut Boratav, "Anadolu Köyünde Savaş ve Yıkım: Bekir Eliçin'in Romanının Öğrettikleri ve Düşündürdükleri," *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 15–16 (Fall-Winter 1982), pp. 61–75.

The boatman Topaloğlu Hüseyin from Rize, a sub-province of Trabzon, was one of them. He was accused of smuggling deserters with his boat from the Black Sea coast of Anatolia to the coast of Caucasus in return for money. The Tbilisi consulate general informed the Ottoman Foreign Ministry that Topaloğlu Hüseyin carried about twenty armed deserters on his boat from the eastern Black Sea region to the city of Sokhumi on the Caucasus coast in order to facilitate the deserters' sale of their arms. The consulate also informed the ministry that the activity zone of the skipper covered the whole Black Sea coast from Canik/Samsun, a sub-province of Trabzon, to the east. Upon this information, the Interior Ministry sent a telegram to Trabzon and Canik on 3 August 1914, and requested urgent measures to be taken concerning this case.[120]

Bribery was used not only to free those who deserted from the army, but also to evade the draft. For example, Nurettin Peker complained in his memoirs that, when he served as a petty officer in the recruiting office of İnebolu, a sub-province of Kastamonu, right after the declaration of mobilization, many prospective draftees offered him bribes to evade service or to be assigned to non-combatant units.[121] Especially when an economically better-off person, who did not want to serve, faced a government official inclined to abuse his post for economic benefit, money could provide a safer or "semi-legal" way of escaping the army. A British military intelligence report on the Palestine front stated in March 1918 that keeping away from military service in this way had "assumed extraordinary proportions."[122] And although we do not have exact statistics, the available documents suggest that non-Muslim Ottomans, mostly Armenians and Greeks, used this method quite often, perhaps proportionally more frequently than the others, when the opportunity arose. For example, the same British report mentions an Armenian in Istanbul, who managed to stay away from military service by continually paying a certain amount of money (20 piastres) a month to the recruiting officer.[123] Another Armenian, who had been hiding from military service in a village of Hama, a sub-province in Syria, explained to the British that deserters were quite safe in that particular village, since each of them paid a certain amount of money (130 piastres) a year to the Turkish sergeant in command of the local gendarme unit. Claiming that it was the same in all the nearby

120 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 43/159, 11 Ramazan 1332/3 August 1914.
121 Peker, *Tüfek Omza*, p. 106.
122 TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.
123 TNA: PRO WO 157/725, March 1918.

villages, he gave an interesting example: "At one place, for instance, about thirty miles south-west of Hama there is a Greek village with a population of about 500. As the inhabitants are rich enough to bribe the recruiting officials, they have only produced one recruit since the beginning of the war."[124]

In some cases, bribery also helped deserters go abroad, as in the case of some Ottoman Greek deserters, who bribed the Ottoman officials to get on board an Italian ferry (the *Milano*) at the Istanbul port to travel to Salonica.[125] In fact, as has been mentioned above, going abroad or hiding in a foreign country had been a common way of avoiding enlistment both before and during the war. Of course, it can easily be surmised that this option was available only to those who were economically better-off, and those who at least had ties with people abroad. Therefore, it can be suggested that urban middle class and non-Muslim Ottoman deserters might have been more inclined to resort to this means than the others, as the available documents already imply.

Encouragement for Desertion

Desertion was n ot always the result of a spontaneous decision taken by an individual soldier on his own. There were sometimes external and planned efforts that aimed to urge soldiers to make that decision. As far as the Ottoman army is concerned, such efforts, which can be called propaganda for desertion, had both domestic and foreign sources. By foreign I mean propaganda activities which were designed and carried out by enemy forces on the front throughout the war. The propaganda of the British intelligence forces to encourage desertions from the Ottoman forces on the Mesopotamia and Sinai-Palestine fronts presents an important case in this respect, which will be analyzed here. Although they were in a less organized form (and are also less documented), Ottoman authorities also had to deal with domestic groups encouraging desertion. The available examples suggest that, at the domestic level, it was mostly the nationalist elements of non-Muslim groups that applied such propaganda methods according to their own agendas. Of course, due to the limited nature of the available evidence, it is difficult to understand the exact

[124] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.
[125] BOA, DH.EUM.KLU., 2/44, 10 Zilkâde 1332/30 September 1914.

extent of this type of domestic and separatist propaganda. Furthermore, it is also difficult to make generalizations in this respect. Still, the available examples suggest that the nationalist elements of the Ottoman Greeks and Armenians were relatively prominent among instances of domestic propaganda for desertion. Moreover, the state's deep concern for such cases implies that domestic propaganda might have been effective on soldiers from particular religious-ethnic backgrounds, at least among those who were already hesitant to enlist and to serve, or had become so as the war continued.

For example, Sergeant Vangel Foti was an Ottoman Greek enlisted man who alarmed Ottoman authorities by his propaganda activities in the army, aiming to urge about fifty non-Muslim soldiers (who were most likely fellow Ottoman Greeks) in his unit to desert with their arms and ammunition. Apparently, he was partially successful, since fifteen of these soldiers, including himself, deserted, and this act made Ottoman authorities take urgent measures against this case.[126] Similarly, as previously mentioned, Estaveri and Apostol were Ottoman Greek deserter-brigands, who not only deserted from the Ottoman army, but also worked to encourage other Ottoman Greek enlisted men to do the same.[127] Ispiro of Ioannina was another Ottoman Greek accused of encouraging enlisted Ottoman Greeks to desert; he died as he was being taken to court martial to be tried for his actions.[128] Encouragement for desertion among the Ottoman Greeks was sometimes carried out by the Greek residents of the empire, who held Greek citizenship. For example, Tanash was a "subject of Greece" residing in Istanbul, who was accused of helping many enlisted Ottoman Greeks desert. Ottoman authorities decided to deport him from Istanbul to "a proper inner region having no access to the coast."[129] This propaganda could also assume a more organized form, as in the case of Apostol, a medical doctor in a western Black Sea town, Zonguldak, a district of Bolu. He was accused of being a member of the Greek nationalist organization Ethniki Etairia, which the Ottomans described as "an association of mischief;" he was accused of encouraging the local Greek men of military age not to enlist when mobilization was declared. He was

126 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 42/100, 28 Receb 1332/22 June 1914.
127 BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB., 13/15, 11 Receb 1333/25 May 1915.
128 BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 15/4, 24 Şevval 1334/23 August 1916. The reason of his death is not mentioned in the document.
129 BOA, DH.EUM.ECB., 7/57, 29 Safer 1335/25 December 1916.

captured and court-martialed.[130] Similar examples of propaganda activities for desertion are also existent for the Ottoman Armenians.[131]

The enemy propaganda for desertion was better planned and, apparently, regarded as part of the military campaign on a particular front. Moreover, it primarily targeted Muslim and Turkish soldiers. The British forces in the Middle East established a modern system of military intelligence against the Ottomans during the war. They effectively developed a sophisticated intelligence gathering system, which consisted of networks of British and native agents, interrogations of deserters and prisoners of war, air reconnaissance and wireless interception.[132] Especially in the second half of the war, as the Ottoman military power became more vulnerable and the British became more aware of the deteriorating conditions in the Ottoman ranks, encouraging desertions became a particular focus of propaganda efforts carried out by British military intelligence units. By using propaganda pamphlets, leaflets, photographs (which were usually dropped from planes) and also rumors, the British deliberately tried to exploit the major weaknesses of the Ottoman soldier, though they were careful to use a language that would not directly hurt the dignity of the Ottoman soldier.[133] These messages emphasized the hopelessness of the Ottoman war effort and, therefore reinforced pointlessness in continued suffering on the front. Desertion to the British side was also presented to the Ottoman soldier as an easy and reasonable way of returning home to loved ones. But a significant point which the British particularly underlined in their propaganda was that it was quite safe to desert to the British side, since the British did not kill or torture their prisoners of war; on the contrary, they claimed that they treated them quite well. For this purpose, the British prepared leaflets (in Turkish) containing concocted statements by Ottoman prisoners of war in British camps, who stated that they received good treatment in captivity and advised their friends that it was quite safe and reasonable to desert to the British side. For example, on 9 July 1917, the British distributed such a leaflet entitled, "To My Turkish Soldier Friends," allegedly signed by an Ottoman soldier by the name of Mehmed Hilmi, who stated:

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130 BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 1/27, 29 Ramazan 1332/21 August 1914.

131 See, for example, BOA, DH.ŞFR., 79/58, 17 Şevval 1335/6 August 1917.

132 See Yigal Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign, 1914–1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

133 Servet Avşar, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda İngiliz Propagandası* (Ankara: Kim Yayınları, 2004), pp. 258–264.

> Brothers, I deserted and took refuge to the British side. The British took me and my friends into their custody and treated us very well. My friends . . . you are destroying yourself in the desert in vain. Take refuge with the British. I swear that they are ready to offer anything that a refugee soldier and officer would need.[134]

Similarly, a British military intelligence report dated 26 April 1918 stated that "the pictures dropped by our aeroplanes representing abundant food and comforts in Prisoners' Camps in Egypt" appealed very strongly to Ottoman soldiers' feelings.[135] Of course, how the British treated their prisoners of war would be a completely separate topic of study, which is beyond our concern here.[136] But apparently, given the high number of desertions in the last year of the war, the contents of the British propaganda for encouraging desertions from the Ottoman army potentially influenced large numbers of Ottoman troops.[137]

In fact, British military intelligence was quite careful and sensitive in measuring the effect of their propaganda on the enemy. A statistical report on the Palestine front in 1918 about the number of Ottoman deserters who ran away to the British side reveals that from May through September of that year, the number of Ottoman desertions to the British side had increased noticeably since the previous year. While the number of deserters for the entire month of September 1917 was just 73, it had already reached 69 in the first week of the same month in 1918. Having emphasized that "at least 80 percent of enemy prisoners of war interrogated have either seen or heard of our leaflets and are acquainted with the gist of their contents," the report described this numerical increase as "an appreciation of the effect of propaganda on enemy desertion."[138] This

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[134] Quoted in Avşar, *İngiliz Propagandası*, p. 260. For a few more examples of such leaflets see Ibid., pp. 316–323.

[135] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918. Also see Ercan, *Bir Osmanlı Askerinin Anıları*, p. 118.

[136] For a recent study on the Ottoman prisoners of war in the First World War, see Yanıkdağ, "'Ill-fated' Sons of the 'Nation': Ottoman Prisoners of War in Russia and Egypt, 1914–1922." Also see, Yücel Yanıkdağ, "I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Tıbbi Oryantalizm ve İngiliz Doktorlar," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 153 (September 2006), pp. 26–33; Cemalettin Taşkıran, *Ana Ben Ölmedim: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Türk Esirleri* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2001).

[137] İbrahim Arıkan, who served on the Palestine front in 1918, witnessed the frequent dropping of such propaganda materials by the British war planes. He states in his memoirs that against this propaganda, Ottoman officers orally told the troops that the British had no water to drink and they were about to die of thirst. See Arıkan, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Bir Nefer*, p. 223.

[138] TNA: PRO, WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

feeling of appreciation was further supported by the statements of deserters. For example, an Ottoman officer deserter stated that the British propaganda leaflets had an "excellent effect" on Ottoman soldiers, obviously including himself. Another Ottoman deserter expressed that a soldier in his company picked up one of the British propaganda leaflets and handed it to his section commander, who showed it to the men; "this helped them to make up their minds to desert."[139]

Interrogations of deserters apparently fostered the British belief that the propagation of good treatment of prisoners of war in the British hands would appeal to enemy soldiers and encourage them to desert. For example, an Armenian deserter from the Palestine front stated that "many more Armenians, Greeks, Arabs would desert from the Turkish Army, but for the fear of ill-treatment by the British."[140] Other deserters also emphasized the fear that the British killed or maimed prisoners of war. British military intelligence regarded such stories as enemy counter-propaganda carried out deliberately by the Ottoman and German officers to prevent their men to desert.[141] These stories was also confirmed by two Greek deserters from the Ottoman army on the Palestine front, who told the British that the troops were now beginning to "disbelieve stories told them by their officers," that the British killed their prisoners.[142] Such statements by deserters led British military intelligence to believe that their propaganda for enemy desertion was quite influential. In fact, some severe Ottoman counter measures on the Palestine front against this propaganda also implied that British propaganda materials were indeed influential. For instance, Ottoman unit commanders issued orders that any man found with such propaganda materials in his possession was to be flogged or even shot.[143]

British propaganda leaflets on the Palestine front were usually bilingual, written in both Ottoman Turkish and Arabic, and a special appeal was made to the Arabs.[144] Since most of the Ottoman troops were illiterate, the British also abundantly used propaganda photographs and drawings.[145] On the other hand, some examples suggest that being illiterate

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[139] Ibid.
[140] TNA: PRO, WO 157/725, March 1918.
[141] Ibid.; TNA: PRO, WO 157/735, April–September 1918.
[142] TNA: PRO, WO 157/728, June 1918.
[143] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.
[144] TNA: PRO WO 157/727, May 1918.
[145] For two examples of such propaganda leaflets, see Haluk Oral, *Arıburnu 1915: Çanakkale Savaşı'ndan Belgesel Öyküler* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2007), pp. 142, 145.

did not always prevent access to the contents of such leaflets. They could sometimes still be effective on illiterate men, when a literate soldier read it out loud to the men in his unit, as in the case of "a Turkish deserter" who stated that he was influenced by a British pamphlet when some of his comrades told him of its contents.[146]

British claims of treating Ottoman prisoners of war well represented one of the major themes among propaganda materials. There were also some photographs showing Ottoman soldiers in the British camps performing freely their religious duties altogether at specific places of worship.[147] Moreover, the claim that the Ottomans were actually controlled by the Germans and that German soldiers in the Ottoman army were in a privileged position was constantly exploited by British propaganda. An interesting example in this respect was an illustrated leaflet showing, as explained by a British report, "the Turkish cow being milked by a German, Enver Pasha bowing before the Kaiser Wilhelm II emaciated Turkish soldiers before their capture and the improvement in their condition in our prisoners of war camps."[148] Indeed, this theme was seemingly as influential as the one that the prisoners of war were treated well. For example, an Ottoman deserter, who was described by the British as "an intelligent Turkish sergeant," stated that he heard of a propaganda leaflet describing the undesirable "manner in which German troops in Turkey treated the Turks, and obtaining the command of the country." He also said that "if the men of his regiment could all see this pamphlet, they would desert."[149]

Measures against Desertions and Attempts to Re-mobilize Deserters

The problem of desertion posed a double challenge to state authority. First of all, the act of desertion was a rejection of one of the main means of existence of the modern state, namely the universal conscription system. Compulsory military service was, in a sense, a daily plebiscite between

146 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.
147 Avşar, *İngiliz Propagandası*, p. 259.
148 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.
149 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918. Though it is hard to generalize it, some Ottoman soldiers indeed mention in their memoirs such tension between the Ottoman and the German soldiers (or rather the Ottoman soldiers' annoyance to the German soldiers' contemptuous attitude towards them) in the Ottoman army during the war. See, for example, Peker, *Tüfek Omza*, pp. 144–145.

society and the state, through which the authority of the state was "made" to approve on the part of society. The constant participation of society in this plebiscite was considered vitally significant for the legitimacy of the state. This was also true for the Ottoman state in the post-*Tanzimat* era, and the problem of desertion was not merely regarded as a military issue, but also a threat to its legitimacy from the state's point of view. Secondly, the armed bands of deserter-brigands roaming on the home front, disregarding and attacking civilian authorities and security forces created an extensive internal security problem. The CUP government's reassuring its authority over the people, at least in the context of Anatolia, depended on coping with this problem successfully.

Therefore, as the extent of the problem of desertion widened, Ottoman authorities needed to take urgent measures against it. These measures consisted of two parts, which included both preventive and punitive methods. The first part involved immediate measures taken on the battlefield, some examples of which have already been mentioned above. These were mostly military measures aimed at preventing soldiers from deserting. The second part was more extensive and involved various social, administrative and legal arrangements as well as military measures. These measures also affected civilians. They not only required action by military officers, but also created new roles for local administrators and domestic security forces. It can be argued that coping with the problem of desertion introduced a new dimension to the relationship between the Ottoman state and society. The state now needed to permeate deeper levels of society for security purposes, to capture deserters and to end the abuses which they propagated. But the state would also expect a greater contribution from society to solve the problem that threatened the manpower source of the army. In a sense, this meant a re-mobilization of popular support for the army, though in a narrower scale. And while legal sanctions, threats and punitive action were an integral aspect of all of these measures, the state created incentives and occasionally offered amnesty.

As far as martial law is concerned, the Ottoman military had as severe legal sanctions against desertion as any other belligerent country in the Great War. Although its implementation was quite complicated (as will be discussed below), the law regarding desertion was quite simple and tough. According to the second article of the Ottoman military law, the punishment for desertion was the death penalty.[150] But it became obvi-

[150] "Askerî Ceza Kanûnuna Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 24 Temmuz 1330/6 August 1914, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, p. 981.

ous during the war that legal sanctions and intimidation through threats of the death penalty were not always sufficient to keep soldiers in their ranks until the end of the war. Moreover, punishment usually concerned those who already escaped service, while a more immediate need was to keep them fighting. Therefore, the Ottoman military needed to take more effective preventive measures. These included newer set of restrictions, but the state also attempted to increase troop morale as it aimed to deter them from deserting.

Ottoman officers often lectured their soldiers about being a good soldier and exhorted them not to desert.[151] For example, an Ottoman military order, which was captured by the British on the Mesopotamia front, stated that "officers, when off duty, are to devote themselves to raising the morale of their men."[152] Such lectures not only emphasized the already prevalent beliefs that desertion was forbidden by religion,[153] but also included counter-propaganda themes which emphasized British maltreatment of prisoners of war. Similarly, lectures were also given by the religious functionaries of the army, namely the battalion prayer leaders (*tabur imamları*). These prayer leaders were expected to preach to the soldiers about "the evilness of desertion."[154] Moreover, sometimes special preachers were sent from the War Ministry to the units on the battlefield.[155] Attending such organized sermons was obligatory for the troops.[156]

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[151] Such lectures on "Ottoman patriotism" were occasionally given to soldiers in the Ottoman army during the war. See, for example, Güliz Beşe Erginsoy (ed.), *Dedem Hüseyin Atıf Beşe: Bir Cemiyet-i Osmaniye Askerinin Savaş Hatıratı* (Istanbul: Varlık, 2004), p. 175. Some British military intelligence reports also mention this. See TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–August 1918.

[152] TNA: PRO WO 157/785, March 1916.

[153] One of the frequently referred sources in this respect was the al-Anfal sura (verses 15–16) of the Quran: "O you who believe! When you encounter in battle those who disbelieve, do not turn your backs on them in flight. For whoever turns his back on them on the day of such an engagement—except that it be tactical maneuvering to fight again or joining another troop of believers (or taking up a position against another enemy host)—has indeed incurred God's condemnation, and his final refuge is the Fire; how evil a destination to arrive at!" It is quoted, for example, in İzmirli İsmail Hakkı, *Gazilere Armağan*, pp. 6–7.

[154] *Birinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türk Harbi, vol. 4, part 2: Sina-Filistin Cephesi* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1986), p. 762. Similar religious practices also existed on the other fronts; for an example on the Dardanelles front, see, Çöl, *Bir Erin Anıları*, p. 59.

[155] For some eyewitness accounts of such cases, see İzzettin Çalışlar, *Atatürk'le İkibuçuk Yıl: Orgeneral Çalışlar'ın Anıları* (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 1993), p. 55; Arıkan, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Bir Nefer*, pp. 41–42.

[156] Sami Yengin, *Drama'dan Sina-Filistin'e Savaş Günlüğü* (*1917–1918*) (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi, 2007), p. 79.

From time to time, more immediate measures could be added to such lectures, like the one happened in May 1918 on the Palestine front, when all the money that the troops had were collected from them. The idea was that "the tendency to desert would be checked by removing their means of subsistence."[157] But removing a soldier's means of subsistence did not always produce desirable results, and sometimes even backfired, as in the case of captured deserters Şâkir and Kâmil, who stated in their interrogations that they deserted because they ran out of their allowances and had no money left.[158] Desertions also occurred when the means of subsistence of a soldier's family was removed. This particularly happened in the case of those families which did not have any other adult male to support them. As explained in Chapter 2, the Ottoman state treated such families as a distinct social category (*muînsiz*) that needed assistance, and provided them with a monthly income. Interruptions in payments of this income apparently caused many desertions, as an Interior Ministry document stated. Therefore, the Interior Ministry implemented a severe measure in October 1916, ordering that those who were responsible for such interruptions would be treated as criminals contributing to desertions and sent to court martial.[159]

Preventive and punitive measures sometimes also affected soldiers' families. In fact, various practices show that, when they saw it necessary and thought it would serve the solution, Ottoman authorities tended to treat soldiers' families as an element of the army and to subject them to military law. And this was so in both positive and negative respects. For example, in October 1915 the Interior Ministry declared that those criminals who harmed and abused enlisted men's families were immediately to be sent to courts martial, and this would apply to the families of both dead and living soldiers.[160] But military measures concerning soldiers' families were not always protective, but sometimes punitive, especially when the family member in the army avoided conscription or deserted.[161]

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[157] TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

[158] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–110; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–115. When their routine provisions became irregular and scarce, Ottoman soldiers could purchase their basic needs such as bread, cheese, etc., from villagers or small town grocers nearby their camps. This practice of buying things with one's own money seems to have been quite common in the Ottoman army. For some interesting examples, see Ali Rıza Efendi, *Harb-i Umumide Hatırat-ı Askeriyem.*

[159] BOA, DH.UMVM., 124/42, 5 Muharrem 1335/1 November 196.

[160] BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 9/47, 21 Zilhicce 1333/30 October 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 79/34, 16 Safer 1333/3 January 1915. Also see ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1562, Dosya 14 A.

[161] Shaw, *The Ottoman Empire in World War I*, vol. 1, p. 169.

For example, as desertions reached an alarming level in his military zone as early as September 1914, the commander of XII Corps in Mosul, Fahreddin Bey, ordered that male relatives of deserters, such as fathers, uncles and brothers, were to be enlisted instead of them. On the other hand, Fahreddin Bey also reported that this measure was effective, but not effective enough to stop the problem entirely.[162]

Another measure which targeted deserters' families was forced relocation (*teb'îd*) and confiscation of properties. The Ottoman state at times resorted to this method and forced some deserters' families to leave their villages and towns for different places determined by the authorities. The places where such families had to migrate were usually less desirable and also strategically less important regions of the empire. Moreover, the properties of deserters' families were also sometimes confiscated.[163] But the available documents concerning this point do not make it clear exactly when the state chose to implement such measures, how it determined the places to be migrated to, and how widespread these measures were; there was no standard in this respect. The available examples show that they were applied to both Muslim and non-Muslim deserters' families.[164] However, as the reaction of the Ottoman Greeks in Ayvalık (a district of Hüdavendigâr) implies, it could be a more effective form of intimidation on non-Muslims. Ottoman authorities made a declaration concerning the Ottoman Greek population of Ayvalık on 27 January 1916 that families of Greek deserters, if they did not show up at recruiting offices within a specified time, would be deported to another place. This decision initially stirred up "a general reaction" among the public. However, in the wake of significant opposition from religious leaders in the region and the government of Greece, the Ottoman state decided to postpone its implementation.[165]

As understood from an Interior Ministry announcement made on 22 April 1917, forced migration could also be applied to those who provided

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[162] *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 84 (March 1984), document no. 1977, p. 43.

[163] Ibid.

[164] BOA, DH.UMVM., 124/116, 5 Receb 1335/27 April 1917; BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 12/51, 11 Cemâziyelevvel 1334/6 March 1916. On the other hand, the Interior Ministry stated in a telegram sent to Diyarbekir that local civilian officials were not authorized to decide such a punishment and that only the military commanders were authorized to make this decision. See BOA, DH.ŞFR., 91/266, 24 Zilhicce 1336/30 September 1918.

[165] BOA, DH.EUM.3.ŞB., 12/51, 11 Cemâziyelevvel 1334/6 March 1916. For more information on forced migration of the Ottoman Greeks during the war, see Akçam, "*Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuştur*," pp. 120–131.

shelter and support for deserters.[166] There are also examples about more brutal measures taken against deserters' families from time to time, such as burning the house of a deserter's family if he would not be captured for a long time.[167] Apparently, such severe methods were mostly used by the militia forces of the Special Organization.[168] The preventive measure against desertions that concerned deserters' families seemingly created a considerable effect on the Ottoman soldiers. An Ottoman deserter in British hands stated that "the chief consideration which prevents the Turks from deserting is the fear of reprisals against their families."[169]

In some extreme cases, authorities could blame an entire village for providing shelter for deserters and, accordingly, threaten to exile the whole village as a punishment. An interesting case in this respect occurred in the Kabakdağı village of Bolaman, a sub-district of Ordu (a district of Trabzon). This case is particularly interesting in the sense that it exemplifies how the line between support for and resistance to mobilization was often blurred at the local level. As understood from the documents, this was a Muslim Georgian village consisting of about 1,200 people who were resettled in this place after they had to emigrate from Çürüksü (formerly an Ottoman district in Batumi) when the latter was occupied by Russia in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1876–1878. Apparently, the Third Army Command threatened the village with exile to interior regions for "disregarding the orders of authorities and providing support for brigands and deserters."[170] It seems that regarding the deserters, the villagers were particularly blamed for providing shelter to those who originally hailed from the village or its vicinities.[171] Upon hearing the threat of exile and the news that the Third Army Command was planning to send a squad of gendarmes to the village, the villagers sent a telegram to the War Ministry on 19 November 1917 asking for annulment of any decisions taken for their deportation. In the telegram, Mahmud and Murad, who were the *imam* and *muhtar* of the village respectively, informed the War Ministry of this threat and denied the accusations on behalf of all the villagers. They stated that they had actually supported the Ottoman mobilization effort from

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166 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 76/243–47, 6 Şa'ban 1335/28 May 1917.

167 BOA, DH.EUM.2.Şb., 4/47, 23 Rebîulevvel 1333/8 February 1915; BOA, DH.EUM.2.Şb., 4/88, 9 Rebîulâhir 1333/24 February 1915.

168 Özel, "Çürüksulu Ali Paşa ve Ailesi Üerine Biyografik Notlar," p. 125.

169 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–September 1918.

170 "*Emr-i hükümete karşı lakayd ve eşkiyâyı ve firârîleri himâye ettiklerinden . . .*," ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2909, Dosya 451, Fihrist 3–6.

171 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2909, Dosya 451, Fihrist 3–3.

the beginning by "sending two hundred young men to the war, most of whom became martyrs and some became prisoners of war."[172] When the War Ministry requested an explanation from the Third Army Command about this issue, the latter explained that while they really made such an accusation against this particular village, the threat of deportation was false. The Third Army Command also explained that the villagers reacted this way because they became uncomfortable when the Third Army Command stationed a gendarme squad in the village to control their relations with brigands; their real concern, as was explained by the command, was to remove this squad from their village.[173] As a result, apparently the villagers were not deported, but the gendarme squad remained in the village.

Measures against desertions did not always work with intimidation and punishment. On the contrary, it involved considerable offers of incentives and rewards, aiming to promote collaboration. This collaboration was not only wished, but sometimes also needed, since the available gendarmerie forces sometimes did not suffice to cope with the problem. This was apparently the case in the Third Army zone in mid-1915. In a telegram that was sent by Enver Pasha to the Third Army Command on 20 April 1915, Enver Pasha underlined the point that where the gendarmerie was not sufficient and the use of regular military forces impractical, it would be useful to resort to the help of the local people in capturing the deserters in the region. He proposed that if a person from the local people turns a deserter ("whether Muslim or non-Muslim) over to the authorities, he would be rewarded with no less than a *lira*.[174] Moreover, the Interior Ministry declared on 19 September 1916 that those people who were helpful in capturing brigands and deserters would be granted cash rewards.[175] The Interior Ministry had already announced in 1915 that those who informed on deserters would be rewarded.[176] Any civilian who captured a deserter was promised a reward of no less than one Ottoman *lira*, as in the case of a peasant Hulusi from Kal'a-i Sultaniye on 14 June 1915.[177] Similar rewards were also granted to local administrators and members of domestic security forces. For example, Hürrem Sükûti Efendi was a section chief in the

[172] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2909, Dosya 451, Fihrist 3.
[173] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2909, Dosya 452, Fihrist 3–6.
[174] *Askeri Tarih Belgeleri Dergisi*, no. 83 (March 1983), document no. 1907, p. 91; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3741, Dosya 72, Fihrist 003–09.
[175] BOA, DH.EUM.VRK., 22/101, 21 Zilkâde 1334/19 September 1916.
[176] BOA, DH.EUM.MTK., 80/54, 28 Şevval 1333/8 September 1915.
[177] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2293, Dosya: 38, Fihrist: 5.

police department of Kastamonu, who was rewarded with a supplementary salary for his effective service in capturing deserters.[178]

The available examples show that the cash rewards were paid from the state's secret funds (*tahsîsât-ı mestûre*).[179] However, rewards were not always granted in the form of money. As a common practice which the Ottoman state had often employed to increase loyalty to its authority and to mobilize popular support for its causes, medals and decorations were granted for this purpose too. İsmail, a sergeant-major in the gendarme battalion of Karbala in Iraq, and Şevket Bey, a deputy officer and the commander of the gendarme unit of Zile (a district of Sivas) were just two examples in this respect, whose services in capturing deserters in their areas were appreciated by the state with granting them decorations.[180]

Gendarmes were the most commonly rewarded and decorated of those state employees who were recognized for their exceptional service in pursuing and capturing deserters. As is apparent from an Interior Ministry telegram sent by the minister Talat Pasha to the War Ministry on 14 November 1917, the state made a special effort to reward gendarmes for this purpose, thinking that rewards would increase their success in halting the problem of desertion.[181]

Punishment and Persuasion

According to the second article of the temporary appendix law added to the Ottoman Military Penal Law on 6 August 1914, desertion was to be punished with death:

> Those who desert during the mobilization from military service or from the recruitment centers or on their way to their divisions or duties will be executed in case they do not return until the end of the seventh day from the end of the day they deserted.[182]

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[178] BOA, DH.EUM.MH., 155/33, 9 Şa'ban 1335/31 May 1917.

[179] BOA, DH.EUM.MH., 116/86, 10 Rebîulevvel 1334/16 January 1916.

[180] BOA, DH.EUM.KLU., 3/16, 21 Zilkâde 1332/11 October 1914; BOA, DH.KMS., 44–2/2, 7 Ramazan 1335/27 June 1917.

[181] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2293, Dosya 38, Fihrist 20, 20–01; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2293, Dosya 38, Fihrist 20–06.

[182] "Askerî Ceza Kanûnuna Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, p. 981. Military law of every belligerent country during the war imposed death penalty on desertion, though the content and practice of the law varied. For an analysis on the British case, see Gerard Oram, *Military Executions during World War I* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 18–38. For a comparison of the British and German cases, see Christoph Jahr,

Although the act of abandoning service was defined as the crime of desertion only after seven days, the law also imposed punishment on those who returned within seven days. In this case, for each day a soldier spent away from his post, he was to be sentenced to one month's hard labor after the demobilization of soldiers of his age category; if he was returned to service within seven days after being captured by the authorities, the punishment was increased to two months for each day.[183]

Legal cases concerning military crimes and desertions were to be dealt with by courts martial.[184] Only courts martial were authorized to impose the death penalty on deserters. But it is understood from various documents that there were cases during the war in which some captured deserters were executed in some army zones without being tried by a court martial (*bilâ muhâkeme idâm edilmeleri*). Upon receiving the news of such executions, the War Minister Enver Pasha issued a communiqué to the army commands in December 1916, which stipulated that this was against the law and emphasized the necessity of a trial before any decision to a captured deserter.[185] Although as a routine procedure death penalties were subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers, wartime justice often turned into a "summary justice," and many decisions were actually made and executed by *ad hoc* courts martial called "special courts martial" (*dîvân-ı harb-i mahsûs*), which could be formed within depot regiments (*depo alayları*) and military supply station inspectorates (*menzil müfettişlikleri*). Such courts martial were to be composed of three members, one of which was a captain who would be the presiding judge, and the other two being a lieutenant and a petty officer.[186] Moreover, the Ottoman Military Penal Law permitted these types of courts after the mobilization. Another temporary appendix law added to the Military Penal Law on 12 November 1914 stipulated that a superior officer was entitled

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Gewöhnliche soldaten: Desertion und Deserteure im deutschen und britischen Heer, 1914–1918 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1998). For the English translation of the Italian army regulation on desertion dated 21 April 1918, see in TNA: PRO WO 106/813.

183 Ibid.

184 BOA, MV., 211/181, 9 Receb 1336/20 April 1918.

185 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5204, Dosya 2, Fihrist 001–193. A similar warning was also made by the Interior Ministry to the governor of Hüdavendigâr about the execution of some Armenian deserters in June 1916. See BOA, DH.ŞFR., 64/219, 3 Şa'ban 1334/5 June 1916.

186 The verdicts of these special courts martial were to be approved by division commanders or military supply station inspectors or chiefs of divisional recruiting offices. ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5204, Dosya 2, Fihrist 001–019. Also see "Askerî Ceza Kanûnuna Müzeyyel 24 Temmuz 1330 tarihli Kanûn-ı Muvakkata Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 20 Haziran 1332/6 July 1916, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 8, p. 1221.

to use his gun against his inferiors and men under his command under such conditions as when he needed to make them obey his orders or to prevent desertion.[187] Moreover, the gendarmes, who were responsible for pursuing and capturing deserters, were also ordered to shoot deserters "without hesitation" if they did not obey the call to halt and surrender.[188] And, Ottoman military regulations also included extremely severe treatment for collective disobedience (i.e. mutiny) during combat and stipulated that those who attempted mutiny with arms during combat would be regarded as enemy combatants and be treated accordingly.[189]

It is difficult to estimate how many Ottoman deserters were executed during the Great War, since the statistical data on this are either greatly lacking or have not been compiled yet. As in the other belligerent countries during the war,[190] executions of deserters were regarded by the Ottoman military primarily as exemplary punishments to deter potential deserters in the army and reestablish discipline among the troops. Some officers apparently thought that such executions would also raise troop morale,[191] while some others believed that shooting deserters would not bring any solution without eradicating the real reasons behind desertions.[192] But a more common belief was that executions of deserters would serve as an admonition (*ibret*) for the remaining troops.[193] Executions were usually in the form of shooting deserters by a firing squad, and they were carried out openly, in the presence of all the soldiers of the unit (usually the battalion) from which the convicted soldier deserted.[194] Although the trial and

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[187] "Askerî Ceza Kanûnuna Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," 30 Teşrinievvel 1330/12 November 1914, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 6, p. 1390.

[188] BOA, DH.ŞFR., 49/241, 24 Rebîulevvel 1333/9 February 1915.

[189] "*Esnâ-yı muharebede müsellehan ilân-ı isyân etmiş olanlar düşmandan madûddur.*" ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5204, Dosya 2, Fihrist 001–014.

[190] For example, Alan Forrest has stated that "in World War I, the French Army was more prone than its neighbors to shoot deserters as an example to others. Faced with mutinies and mass desertions, especially in 1917, the military turned to repression to reimpose the authority of the officers and, through them, the authority of the state." See Forrest, *Conscripts and Deserters*, p. 5.

[191] Ergün Göze (ed.), *Rusya'da Üç Esaret Yılı: Bir Türk Subayının Hatıraları, Anlatan Ahmet Göze* (Istanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1989), pp. 51–52.

[192] Kuntman, *Bir Doktorun Harp ve Memleket Anıları*, p. 122.

[193] Arıkan, *Osmanlı Ordusunda Bir Nefer*, pp. 135, 187.

[194] For several examples of the eyewitness accounts of such execution scenes, see Güneş N. Eğe-Akter (ed.), *Babamın Emanetleri: Ragıp Nurettin Eğe'nin Birinci Cihan Harbi Günlükleri ve Harbin Sonrası Hatıratı* (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 2006), p. 149; Erginsoy (ed.), *Bir Cemiyet-i Osmaniye Askerinin Savaş Hatıratı*, pp. 192, 200, 205–206; Yengin, *Drama'dan Sina-Filistin'e Savaş Günlüğü*, p. 10; Göze, *Bir Türk Subayının Hatıraları*, pp. 51–52; Sunata, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı Anılarım*, p. 445.

execution of a deserter was a military procedure to be carried out within the military, there are also examples showing that some executions were deliberately carried out publicly in civilian presence. It seems that this method was used when authorities wanted to intimidate potential deserters. For example, a telegram which was sent by the Interior Ministry to all governors on 27 May 1916 required that a few of the captured deserters were to be executed by hanging in their own localities.[195] A similar but more specific telegram was also sent to all governors on 21 October 1917, requiring that those who deserted more than once and were also involved in brigandage were to be executed nearby their hometowns or villages.[196] These examples suggest that executions of deserters were used to reestablish discipline and obedience not only in the military, but also at a more general level in society. More specifically, they were also used to deter those civilians who provided support for deserters.

On the other hand, the available evidence suggests that Ottoman authorities were not always so strict in implementing the military law. In many cases, authorities did not always rush to enforce the law even if the death penalty was decreed. As the shortage of manpower became more alarming, the death penalty for desertion was begun to be seen as the ultimate measure to be resorted only in really desperate cases. If there is even a little possibility to re-gain the deserter as a soldier who would be useful in the military, that possibility was usually pursued.[197] Therefore, the death penalty for deserters was sometimes delayed or substituted with alternative forms of punishment, at other times it was entirely annulled by amnesties.[198] Although summary justice and executions on the battlefield and under actual combat conditions never disappeared entirely until the end of the war,[199] there was always a possibility for a deserter to be re-employed as a soldier if he reported himself and turned himself in to the authorities.

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195 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 64/137, 24 Receb 1334/27 May 1916.

196 BOA, DH.ŞFR., 80/208, 5 Muharrem 1336/21 October 1917.

197 For a similar analysis in the German case, see Anne Duménil, "Soldiers' Suffering and Military Justice in the German Army of the Great War," in Jenny Macleod and Pierre Purseigle (eds.), *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 44–60.

198 This situation was also observed by the Dutch embassy as early as May 1916, which reported that "the army has replaced prison sentences with corporal punishment in the field in order not to deplete the strength of the army further." See Zürcher, "Little Mehmet in the Desert," p. 234.

199 TNA: PRO WO 157/785, March 1916.

Moreover, thanks to the amnesties, death sentences of many convicted deserters were reversed and changed to hard labor after they expressed regret in written statements. In such statements of regret, a more or less standard content is apparent. The accused usually confessed that they deserted despite their awareness of the penalty for desertion under the military law. They also gave reasons for their desertions, which usually involved private matters such as the death or illness of a family member, or illness of the deserter himself; reasons such as poor rations and other unendurable conditions were almost entirely never mentioned in such statements. Interestingly, claiming to have "acted out of ignorance" (*bir cahillik ettim*), deserters usually stated that their act was not a deliberate decision. The duration of hard labor punishment was determined as one month for each day a deserter spent away from his unit; and even in these cases, the modified punishment was to be imposed after demobilization.[200] However, if a pardoned soldier deserted once again, he was to be treated much more severely this time and he was almost certainly to face execution. Again, in an effort to intimidate potential deserters, the news of such executions was also published in the newspapers.[201]

What is more interesting and needs to be underlined regarding the punishment of deserters is that many cases of desertion actually never came to court martial; they were usually handled by unit commanders using their own methods of punishment. Especially when less serious cases were concerned, such as when a deserter who was captured right at the moment of his desertion or only a few days after the act near the front line, unit commanders often chose not to make such cases a legal matter to be tried at a court martial, and instead resorted to more immediate and minor forms of punishment. Beatings (*falaka*) in the presence of other soldiers were very common in this respect.[202] There were other forms of punishment too, such as the deployment of the captured deserter at the most dangerous sector of the front line.[203] Moreover, there were also

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[200] For various examples of the convicted deserters (including non-Muslims) stating their regret and asking for pardoning, see ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2321, Dosya 66, Fihrist 1–28; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–7, 10; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, 1–74, 75; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–111; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–116; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 69, Fihrist 3–3; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2321, Dosya 66, Fihrist 1–34, 35; ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2322, Dosya 71, Fihrist 1–140, 142.

[201] "Salben İdâm," *İkdâm*, 22 Mart 1331/4 April 1915; "Firâr İnfâzı," *İkdâm*, 21 June 1915; "İdâm," *İkdâm*, 16 Kanunisani 1333/16 January 1918; "İdâm," *İkdâm*, 24 Mayıs 1334/24 May 1918; "İdâm," *Tanin*, 24 Mayıs 1334/24 May 1918.

[202] Eğe-Akter, *Ragıp Nurettin Eğe'nin Birinci Cihan Harbi Günlükleri*, pp. 128, 149.

[203] Ibid., pp. 39–40; Göze, *Bir Türk Subayının Hatıraları*, p. 52. An enlisted man on the Gallipoli front, who attempted to maim himself to avoid fighting, was stationed at the most

some other practices within military units, which were meant to create ethical pressure on those who were not enthusiastic fighters. For example, prayer leaders of battalions refused to administer burial services for those soldiers who committed suicide.[204]

On the other hand, when methods of intimidation and punishment were not realistic and desirable, and when the state had no channel of interaction with deserters, another interesting measure that was applied by the Ottoman state was to form groups of intermediaries. These intermediaries would talk to deserters directly, conveying to them the expectations of the state and, more importantly, advise them to do the right thing according to those expectations.[205] Such groups were called "advisory commissions" (*heyet-i nasîha*), which usually included members from the ulema, religious people in charge such as prayer leaders, local notables and government officials. It seems that the role of religious discourse and men of religion, especially those from the lower ranks such as village prayer leaders, was regarded as particularly significant in such advice committees, which were also used by the state to increase the enthusiasm for military service among young boys of military age and those enlisting for the army.[206]

Attempts to Restore Order on the Home Front: Reorganization of the Ottoman Gendarmerie

The gendarmerie was the primary law enforcement force which was responsible for domestic security during the war, especially in the provinces. Pursuing and capturing deserters and brigands constituted one of its main responsibilities. The gendarmerie in the Ottoman Empire was not simply a provincial security force. It sometimes acted like an agent of "the citizen influencing and the citizen mobilizing state,"[207] and helped local populations cope with natural disasters and to carry out public works. The gendarmerie was one of the main institutions that made the Ottoman

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dangerous post of the front line as an alternative punishment. According to an eyewitness account, he performed an extraordinary service at this post and was decorated with a war medal. See Ahmet Nuri Diriker, *Cephelerde Bir Ömür: Ahmet Nuri Diriker Paşa'nın Hatıratı*, edited by Ahmet Diriker (Istanbul: Scala Yayıncılık, 2009), p. 57.

[204] Süleyman Nuri, *Uyanan Esirler*, pp. 92–93.

[205] BOA, DH.KMS., 49–1/18, 25 Muharrem 1337/31 October 1918.

[206] BOA, DH.İD., 180/52, 10 Receb 1332/4 June 1914. On the uses of advice committees after the armistice, see Mevlüt Çelebi, *Heyet-i Nasiha: Anadolu ve Rumeli Nasihat Heyetleri* (Izmir: Akademi Kitabevi, 1992).

[207] Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 83.

state visible outside its center; "it can be called a major infrastructural apparatus of the Ottoman state in its efforts to extend central governmental authority to distant provinces."[208] Besides its monitoring role, the gendarmerie also functioned as a major medium to legitimize state authority in the periphery and helped the central government elite infiltrate local power networks.[209] Therefore, the increasing number of deserter brigands posed a major challenge to this dual role of the gendarmerie. The problem of desertions not only undermined the public order in the provinces, but also threatened the legitimacy of the central authority in the eyes of local populations. Accordingly, dealing with the problem involved more comprehensive measures of reorganizing the power of the gendarmerie, since the extent of desertions rapidly exceeded the limits of an isolated security issue. In this respect, restoring order by eradicating the desertion problem would mean restoring the legitimacy of the central state.

In fact, the Ottoman gendarmerie was reorganized after the 1908 Revolution and reinforced with the establishment of mobile gendarme battalions to be used mainly against bands of brigands, which particularly haunted the Balkan provinces of the empire.[210] Soon after the revolution, all gendarme units throughout the empire were brought under the authority of the newly-established General Command of the Gendarmerie (*Umûm Jandarma Kumandanlığı*). According to the Temporary Law for the Gendarmerie dated 10 February 1912, the command was dependent on both the War and the Interior ministries. Since the commanding officers of gendarme units were to be appointed from the army ranks (its armed personnel was composed primarily of volunteers), the affairs regarding their training, discipline and promotion were to be governed by the War Ministry. In all other respects, the gendarmerie was the law enforcement force under the authority of the Interior Ministry.[211] However, the limits of this dual attachment were not clear, and whether the gendarmerie

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[208] Nadir Özbek, "Policing the Countryside: Gendarmes of the Late 19th-Century Ottoman Empire (1876–1908)," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 40, no. 1 (2008), p. 48.

[209] Nadir Özbek, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda İç Güvenlik, Siyaset ve Devlet, 1876–1909," *Türklük Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 16 (published separately), Istanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, 2004, p. 85.

[210] Halim Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta: Tarihi Gelişim ve Bugünkü Durum* (Ankara: Kanaat Basımevi, 1947), pp. 268–277.

[211] Ibid., p. 283. "Jandarmanın Vezâif ve Teşkilât-ı Esâsiyesiyle Cihet-i Merbûtiyeti hakkında Kararname," 25 Zilhicce 1335–13 Teşrinievvel 1333/13 October 1917, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 9, no. 323, pp. 757–759.

was part of the civil administration or of the military was a disputed point.[212] Although the gendarmerie regulation was rearranged in 1917 and the authority of the Interior Ministry over the gendarmerie corps was strengthened,[213] this matter always remained vague; and, in practice, the gendarmerie was more connected to the War Ministry.

According to the gendarmerie regulation that was in use through 1917, two-thirds of gendarme recruits and half of gendarme officers were to be put under the command of the War Ministry during the time of mobilization.[214] However, whereas the number of men enlisted in the gendarmerie remarkably increased during the war years (see Table 11), this stipulation still created a major manpower problem in the domestic security forces as the war became prolonged. The practice of transferring gendarme personnel to the battlefield considerably diminished the number of gendarmes available to maintain public order on the home front. Although the transferred gendarmes reinforced the Ottoman troops on the battlefield, some saw this as an imprudent decision "taken under the illusion that the war would not last long," which not only deprived the home front of sufficient security forces to defend itself against increasing crimes such as banditry, but also actually contributed to weakening the army, as insufficient numbers of gendarmes remained to pursue and capture the large numbers of deserters.[215] Some high ranking commanders directly attributed the problem of desertion and the state's inability to cope with it to this practice.[216]

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[212] Local gendarme commanders usually did not obey local administrators. For an example of such a conflict, see BOA, DH.İD., 138–2/21, 7 Cemâziyelevvel 1330/24 April 1912.

[213] Kemerdere, "Büyük Harpten Evvelki ve Sonraki Jandarmanın Ödevleri Arasında Bir Mukayese ve Jandarma Tarihçesi Hakkında Birkaç Söz," p. 43; Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta*, pp. 288–306.

[214] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 1487, Dosya 2/27, Fihrist 1–6; Alyot, *Türkiye'de Zabıta*, p. 286; Necdet Koparan, "Türk Jandarma Teşkilatı, 1908–1923" (MA thesis, Ankara University, 2007), appendix 1.

[215] Nurettin Hünalp, "Jandarmanın İlk Teşkilinden Bugüne kadar Muhtelif Bakımdan Geçirdiği Safahatı Kısaca Tetkik ve Mütalaa," *Jandarma Mecmuası*, no. 66 (1942), p. 28; A. Rifat Kemerdere, "Büyük Harpten Evvelki ve Sonraki Jandarmanın Ödevleri Arasında Bir Mukayese ve Jandarma Tarihçesi Hakkında Birkaç Söz," *Jandarma Mecmuası*, no. 43, pp. 42–43.

[216] Aziz Samih İlter, *Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Kafkas Cephesi Hatıraları*, p. 22.

Table 11. Number of men enlisted in the Ottoman gendarmerie (1879, 1912 and 1914–1918)[217]

Total number of men enlisted between 1914 and 1918	250,000
in 1912	32,441
in 1879	26,507

The problem of insufficient personnel is the recurrent point that was underlined by Ottoman authorities as one of the main reasons for the increase in the number of deserters roaming the home front (especially in Anatolia).[218] To cope with both the manpower problem within the gendarmerie and the disorder on the home front, the Ottoman state had to take additional measures during the war years. For example, several infantry regiments were transferred from various fronts to the home front, to be used as mobile gendarme battalions against bands of deserter-brigands. But since such infantry units were usually unfamiliar with the regions they were assigned to and untrained for domestic security purposes, their performance was far below the desired level. Besides, their provisioning became an additional burden on civilian populations and made life more difficult for them.[219]

With regard to the effective use of the gendarmerie corps in coping with the problem of desertion, more serious measures were required by 1916, when the problem had reached an alarming level. The General Command of Gendarmerie formed new units which were to be used exclusively in pursuing and capturing deserters. In an order issued by the Command on 19 June 1916 to all gendarme divisions, it was announced that within gendarme units in every province and sub-province, special pursuit forces should be formed with the most qualified gendarme personnel who had proven themselves to be skilled shooter, who were physically strong in long pursuit actions under hard conditions. These forces would be called "the pursuit squads" (*tâkib müfrezeleri*). They would be armed with Martini and Mauser rifles and sufficient ammunition. The order made it clear

[217] Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, p. 243; Özbek, "Policing the Countryside," p. 51; *Jandarma Evamir Mecmuası*, no. 14 (15 Kanunievvel 1328/28 December 1912), p. 3; Koparan, "Türk Jandarma Teşkilatı, 1908–1923," appendix 12.

[218] See, for example, BOA, DH.İD., 180/16, 4 September 1915.

[219] Hünalp, "Jandarmanın İlk Teşkilinden Bugüne kadar Muhtelif Bakımdan Geçirdiği Safahatı Kısaca Tetkik ve Mütalaa," p. 37.

that these were exclusively to be used against deserters and brigands, and they should not become involved in ordinary local issues.[220]

The plan that was specified by the above-mentioned order regarding the distribution of new rifles and ammunition presents us with significant clues about the general state of the desertion problem in the middle of the war (See Table 12). The plan immediately implies that the new formation within the gendarmerie actually targeted mainly the Anatolian provinces, excluding eastern Black Sea and northeastern Anatolian areas which were under Russian occupation at this time. The action plan does not include the combat zones and the Arab provinces.[221] This situation suggests that Ottoman authorities considered coping with the problem of desertion as mainly an Anatolian issue. Two explanations can be made in this respect.

Table 12. The plan of arming the pursuit squads, (19 June 1916)[222]

Province and sub-province	Rifles (Mauser)	Ammunition (in caissons)
Aydın	300	54
Ankara	200	36
Konya	100	18
Edirne	100	18
Kastamonu	85	14
Muğla	60	10
Antalya	60	10
Hüdavendigâr	51	9
Dersaadet	50	9
İzmit	50	9
Karahisar-ı Sahib	30	5
Kayseri	30	5
Niğde	30	5
Kütahya	25	5
Bolu	25	5
Çatalca	25	4
Eskişehir	20	4

[220] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2293, Dosya 38, Fihrist 20, 20–01.

[221] On the other hand, there were also attempts during the later phases of the war at forming similar pursuit squads in some other provinces that the above list does not include. For example, on planning to form pursuit squads in the Adana region in 1918, see ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3741, Dosya 72, Fihrist 006–07. For the attempts in Sayda and Sur (outside Anatolia) in 1918, see ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3741, Dosya 72, Fihrist 003–02; for other localities on the Sinai-Palestine and Syria fronts, see ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3741, Dosya 72, 003–09.

[222] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 2293, Dosya 38, Fihrist 20.

First, given that the majority of the Ottoman army was constituted by Anatolian Muslims and also given that most of the deserters usually tended to go and hide nearby their towns and villages, this overwhelming focus on Anatolia is not that surprising. But this is only one aspect of the picture. Secondly and perhaps more importantly, the plan reveals an area where the infrastructural power of the Ottoman state could be sufficiently effective compared to other regions still theoretically under its control at this time. The Ottoman gendarmerie organization was not powerful enough to penetrate every corner of the empire. Due to insufficient manpower and logistical capabilities as well as poor transportation and communications infrastructure, it was effective only in the regions relatively close to the center and where segments of the population (namely, Muslim Turkish) supported the CUP government's nationalist modern state perspective. In this respect, the state did not form any squads in the Kurdish-populated southeastern Anatolian provinces either. The main reason for this is, most likely, the largely ineffective level of the Ottoman conscription system in these regions. Pursuing and capturing deserters under these circumstances were quite difficult, and accordingly, forming pursuit squads for that purpose was unrealistic.

Given the fact that more rifles and ammunition (and larger squads) were needed in the regions where the problem of deserter-brigands was mounting, the number of new rifles and caissons which were planned to be distributed to the newly formed pursuit squads in the Anatolian provinces also give us an idea about the areas with a heavy concentration of deserters. It can be observed that more deserters concentrated in the central and mid-western Anatolian provinces than the other regions. The province of Aydın occupies a prominent position in this respect.[223] One likely reason of this prominence is the specific topographic layout of the province; Aydın's mountains and forests provided natural shelters for deserters. But more importantly, the fact that brigandage had already flourished in the province since the nineteenth century meant that deserters could find established bands to join. As the agricultural system of the province was integrated with European capitalism, more and more small peasantry became landless and poor, and this situation constituted a pool of manpower that could be exploited by brigandage. The relatively high

[223] This distribution was also confirmed by a British military intelligence observation made in July 1915 that a greater number of Ottoman deserters, both Muslims and Christians, were deserting to "the *vilayet*s of Karput (Harput), Adana, Brussa (Hüdavendigâr), Aiden (Aydın), Angora (Ankara) and Syria." See TNA: PRO WO 157/693, July 1915.

population of the region also contributed to this prominence. On the other hand, the existence of a relatively rich agricultural and commercial life in the region also provided deserter-brigands more opportunities for survival, opportunities which could be exploited by use of arms.[224] The existence of an extensive brigand life in this region even constituted its own popular culture, which created mythical brigand characters on whom many half fictional and factual stories were told.[225]

The formation of new gendarme units exacerbated the manpower problem in the Ottoman mobilization effort. The gendarmerie faced this problem even before the war, as early as February 1914; and the immediate solution that had been proposed was resorting to volunteers where the enlisted men did not suffice to complete the required personnel number of the gendarme units.[226] In fact, the Regulation for the Personnel Recruitment of the Gendarmerie dated 1914 already allowed that when the existing number of personnel was not enough to carry out pursuit missions against deserters and brigands, volunteers could be recruited from among the local population to be employed in such missions.[227] This practice of employing volunteers (*milis*) from local populations continued during the Great War, especially during its later phases.[228]

The same preferences of the state in accepting volunteers from certain social groups, which has been discussed in Chapter 3, were at work

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[224] On the social history of brigandage in the Aegean region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Sabri Yetkin, *Ege'de Eşkıyalar*, third edition (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2003). Yetkin's approach to the issue of brigandage has been highly influenced by a Hobsbawmian "social banditry" perspective, which sometimes goes as far as attributing a romantic dimension to it. A more recent study on Aydın in the late Ottoman Empire tries to look at the issue from a more critical and balanced perspective. See Yapucu, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Bir Sancak: Aydın*, pp. 169–210. It should also be noted that Eric Hobsbawm himself has presented a more critical overview of his social banditry perspective in a long introduction which he wrote for the new edition of his classical book in 2000. See Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, Introduction.

[225] For a literary reconstruction of the famous brigand leader Çakırcalı Efe's life, who lived in the Aydın region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, by a famous modern Turkish writer, see Yaşar Kemal, *Çakırcalı Efe*, seventh edition (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2008).

[226] BOA, DH.EUM.EMN., 55/18, 29 Rabîülevvel 1332/25 February 1914.

[227] *Jandarma Efrâdının Sûret-i Tedârikine dair Nizâmnâme* (Istanbul: Matbaa-i Askeriye, 1330/1914), pp. 7–8. It was originally stipulated that the number of volunteers employed should not be more than ten percent of the existing number of personnel.

[228] For example, The War Ministry wrote to the Yıldırım Army Group in 1918 that it was appropriate to employ fifty local volunteers in each pursuit squad to be used in capturing deserters in the Adana province (especially in the sub-provinces of Maraş and Ayıntab). The employment procedure would be carried out by the local recruiting offices. See ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3741, Dosya 72, Fihrist 006–07.

here as well. Perhaps it can be further argued that Ottoman authorities attempted more overtly to "Turkify" the gendarmerie as the main internal security force and generally avoided enlisting ethnic Armenians and Greeks. For example, the War Ministry issued a warning as early as at the beginning of the war, which stated: "if there are any Armenians enlisted in the mobile or central gendarme units, they should be excluded from the active service, and the same procedure should also be applied to the Greek enlisted men."[229]

Amnesty for Deserters

As has been mentioned above, the shortage of manpower was a major reason for why the domestic security forces were unable to cope with the problem of desertion. In an attempt to overcome the manpower problem, Ottoman authorities designed an interesting method towards the end of the war, which would not only contribute to the solution of the manpower problem in the gendarmerie, but also be used as an effective means of convincing deserters to surrender and return to service. Based on the advice of the General Command of the Gendarmerie, the Interior Ministry circulated an announcement to all local administrative units on 21 September 1918, stating that the deserters surrendering of their own will could be enlisted as gendarmes if they met the necessary criteria for eligibility. The announcement specified the necessary criteria for eligibility as follows: i) the surrendered deserter should have enlisted in the army when the mobilization was declared and committed the act of desertion afterwards; ii) the deserter should by no means have become a brigand or had contact with brigands; iii) it should be ascertained whether the deserter would be useful as a gendarme in pursuing brigands and capturing deserters; iv) local authorities and gendarme commanders, who would make the decision, should agree on the point that employing the deserter as a gendarme would be suitable; v) the deserter should be physically fit to become a gendarme.[230]

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[229] "*Seyyar veya merkez jandarma birliklerinde kullanılmak üzere silah altına alınmış Ermeniler varsa hizmet verilmemesi, Rumlar hakkında da aynı işlemin yapılması . . .*" See *Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri Tarihi, vol. 10*, p. 206.

[230] BOA, DH.UMVM., 124/182, 15 Zilhicce 1336/21 September 1918. In fact, it is difficult to say that this method was entirely original. Similar methods and tactics to make brigands comply with state authority and to use them as an already armed force in the service of the state can also be found in the Ottoman Empire in earlier periods. For example,

Issuing such an announcement and offering such an option to deserters not only suggest that the manpower shortage in the Ottoman armed forces was at an alarming level towards the end of the war, but, perhaps more importantly, also show that in times of urgent need, the state regarded the deserter as someone whose soldierly qualities could still be restored. The deserter could be put back in service at such times, provided that he did not commit a graver—unmilitary—crime, such as banditry, which would make that restoration very difficult, though not entirely impossible. This pragmatic offer was also made to the deserters outside Anatolia. For example, deserters and draft-evaders in Saida and Sur were also planned to be employed in pursuit squads in 1918.[231] Employing surrendered deserters in pursuit squads was especially used to pursue non-Muslim deserters, and the available examples suggest that they were particularly intimidating for the non-Muslim deserters.[232]

In fact, the practice of employing former deserters in the ranks of the gendarmerie can be considered within the larger context of amnesties issued by the state several times during the war to return Ottoman deserters back to service. As the large number of desertions exacerbated the already deteriorating manpower shortage of the armed forces, the state no longer insisted on punishing deserters; instead, it chose to act in a pragmatic way and tried to gain them back. When the manpower need was pressing and the state's ability to pursue and capture the large numbers of deserters was not at a satisfactory level, pardoning, not punishing, was conceived of as a more effective means to give a second chance to those who deserted.

Three amnesties (*afv-ı ʻâlî*) were issued by the sultan during the Great War. In fact, the first of these amnesties came as early as the declaration of mobilization. A temporary appendix to the Military Penal Law, which was issued on 6 August 1914, specified that while any enlisted man who deserted from his rank after the declaration of mobilization would be punished with the death penalty, all the existing deserters, draft evaders and also those who still did not have birth records and thus were unregistered in recruiting offices would be pardoned if they surrendered to the closest

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thanks to an amnesty issued during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, many brigands in the province of Aydın entered the service of the state and joined the army. See Yapucu, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Bir Sancak: Aydın*, s. 206.

231 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 3741, Dosya 72, Fihrist 003–02.

232 For an example of the use of former Muslim deserters against non-Muslim deserters, see Sotiriou, *Farewell to Anatolia*, p. 80.

recruiting office in their regions within a specified time after the law was announced in all regions. The specified time was initially announced as three days for those who were in the country, ten days for those who were abroad.[233] But since the authorities thought that many existing deserters and draft evaders in rural areas either did not understand the scope of the amnesty or could not hear the news in time due to communication problems, it was extended to fifteen days for those in the country, with further explanations in newspapers emphasizing that the amnesty really pardoned all previous misdeeds concerning avoiding military service.[234] The amnesty also offered that surrendered deserters and draft evaders could get the chance, if they were eligible, to apply for exemption from service by paying the fee (*bedel-i nakdî*) within one month after the issue of the law.[235] The main aim of this pardon was to remobilize those who had deserted during the Balkan War.

The second amnesty was issued on 28 June 1915,[236] when it was realized that the war would last longer than it was expected at the beginning. It came at a time when the Ottoman armed forces had been suffering heavy losses on the Caucasus and Dardanelles fronts; desertions had also become increasingly common during 1915. The amnesty law not only declared that all the deserters and draft evaders would be pardoned by the sultan if they surrendered within thirty days from the announcement of the law in all regions, but also expressed that the amnesty would also cover those soldiers who previously had been convicted and jailed. Furthermore, civilians who were convicted for providing support for deserters were also pardoned.[237]

The third amnesty was issued towards the end of the war, on 15 July 1918, when the problem of manpower shortage was at its peak. When the amnesty was issued, it was announced that it was granted on the occasion of the accession of Sultan Mehmed Vahdeddin (Mehmed VI),[238] who came to the throne on 4 July 1918, after the death of Sultan Mehmed Reşad (Mehmed V) on 3 July. Issuing amnesties on such occasions existed in

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233 "Askerî Ceza Kanûnuna Müzeyyel Kanûn-ı Muvakkat," p. 981.

234 "Bakayâ Askeriye Hakkında Bir İzâh," *İkdâm*, 14 Ağustos 1330/27 August 1914.

235 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5766, Dosya 1, Fihrist 004–01.

236 BOA, DH.UMVM., 123/116, 18 Ramazan 1333/30 July 1915.

237 "Askerî Ceza Kanûnuna Müzeyyel 14 Ramazan 1332 tarihli Kanûn-ı Muvakkatda Mu'ayyen Cürümlerle Maznûn ve Mevkûf ve Mahkûm Olanlar hakkında Afv-ı 'Âlî Kanûn-ı Muvakkati," 15 Haziran 1331/28 June 1915, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 7, p. 630; BOA, DH.UMVM., 123/116, 8 Ramazan 1333/20 July 1915.

238 ATASE, BDH, Klasör 5763, Dosya 9, Fihrist 003–04.

Ottoman state tradition, but in this case actual war conditions were much more important than the tradition. Similar to the previous amnesty, this one also declared that all the deserters would be pardoned if they reported personally to the nearest recruiting office in their regions (if abroad, to the nearest Ottoman consul) within a fortnight of the announcement of the amnesty. It was also announced that the amnesty would extend to all crimes committed by deserters during the period of their desertion, but with a significant exception. The amnesty would not apply to those who committed crimes of treason (*hıyânet-i harbiye*) and who deserted to the enemy side.[239] The last point, which was absent in the previous amnesties, points to the increasing desertions to the British side on the Palestine front in the last year of the war and suggests that the Ottomans took the issue very seriously. The Council of Ministers later added that the amnesty would also include civilians who assisted deserters, but this would be valid on the condition that the deserters in question surrendered.[240]

Manpower Problems at the End of the War and Afterwards

As to the question of whether these amnesties were effective or not, it is clear that they had significant repercussions at least in the Anatolian landscape. The last amnesty, the scope of which was larger, apparently produced a greater influence on deserters. The extensive reception of this amnesty by deserters was also observed by British military intelligence. British authorities confirmed that general satisfaction had been expressed by the Ottoman state at the successful results of the amnesty: "From the end of the first week in August onwards, all the papers contain, almost daily, announcements of the surrender of notorious brigands and their bands in various parts of Asia Minor, particularly in the *Vilayet* of Brussa [Bursa]."[241]

However, at a general level, despite the attempts to reorganize the gendarmerie to cope with the problem of desertion, the available documents

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239 "Firâr, Davete 'Adem-i İcâbet ve Tecâvüz-i Müddet Cerâimini îkâ' eden Küçük Zâbitan ve Onbaşı ve Neferâtın Cülûs-u Hümayûn Münasebetiyle Afvları hakkında Kararname," 15 Temmuz 1334/15 July 1918, *Düstûr*, series II, vol. 10, p. 553; *İkdâm*, 19 Temmuz 1334/19 July 1918; "Askerlik Cerâimi hakkında Afv," *Tanin*, 19 Temmuz 1334/19 July 1918.

240 BOA, MV., 212/128, 4 Zilkâde 1336/11 August 1918.

241 TNA: PRO WO 157/735, April–August 1918, "September 25, 1918: Political and Economic Intelligence Summary, Press Supplement, No 2."

do not hint at any substantial success on the part of the Ottoman gendarmerie in eradicating the problem. Moreover, although many incentives were offered to both local officials and civilians to encourage them to collaborate with the state in this goal, the result was still far away from the desired level. In spite of partial success, the problem of desertions continued to climb through the end of the war. When the Ottomans surrendered and signed the Mudros Armistice on 30 October 1918, the total number of the men under arms was 560,000 according to the official statistics.[242] But, as has been mentioned above, the number of deserters reached almost the same level at the same time.

The problem of desertion continued in Anatolia after the Great War. The end of the Great War did not mean the end of war in Anatolia, as a Turkish resistance emerged in the face of Entente and Greek occupation of the region. This resistance increasingly turned into a larger scale "national struggle" directed from a newly formed political leadership in Ankara. The National Struggle attempted to re-establish the Turkish army under its authority, even though the majority of the troops had been demobilized with the Mudros Armistice.[243] The restructuring of the Turkish army by the Ankara government reinitiated a mobilization and recommenced conscription in Anatolia by its own authority. In the earlier stages, this initiative had great difficulty recruiting men in Anatolia. The Ankara government's new call to arms after the demobilization order of the Ottoman state created confusion among the eligible men who had already grown tired of war, and many chose not to comply with it. This situation created an additional mass of deserters in Anatolia, where there were already a considerable number of deserters at the end of the Great War.[244] Tackling the problem of desertion in Anatolia and re-establishing a functional recruitment system constituted the main priority of the National Struggle in the process of creating a standing army.

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[242] ATASE, BDH, Klasör 62, Dosya 309A, Fihrist 005. Erickson's much higher number, 1,095,000, as has been noted before, is probably the total number of all men who were theoretically under arms at this date. See Erickson, *Ordered to Die*, pp. 242–243.

[243] The Ottoman government in Istanbul issued an ordinance for the demobilization on 5 November 1918. But its implementation was never smooth. Some Ottoman commanders resisted it and refused to demobilize the troops under their command. But still a considerable number of soldiers were demobilized, and the total number of men in the Ottoman army after the Armistice, which was now conceived primarily and only an internal security force, declined to as low as around 100,000. See Zekeriya Türkmen, *Mütareke Döneminde Ordunun Durumu ve Yeniden Yapılanması (1918–1920)* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001), pp. 71–79.

[244] Mevlüt Bozdemir, *Türk Ordusunun Tarihsel Kanakları* (Ankara: A.Ü. Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982), p. 103; Avcıoğlu, *Milli Kurtuluş Tarihi, vol. 3*, pp. 970–982.

In its effort to cope with the problem of desertion, the Ankara government issued the Law on Deserters" on 11 September 1920 and established the Independence Tribunals (*İstiklâl Mahkemeleri*), which acted like courts martial with nearly unlimited authority.[245] The Ankara government applied very strict measures against deserters, the main symbol of which was the death penalty that was readily given by the Independence Tribunals. Between 1920 and 1922, they decreed about 1,500 death penalties for deserters.[246]

However, while the problem of desertion posed a major challenge to the Turkish National Struggle and the Ankara government applied strict measures against deserters, it should be noted that the security forces of the Ankara government, which were actually the continuation of the Anatolian provincial gendarmerie that had been reorganized during the Great War, were more successful in pursuing and capturing deserters. The fact that the Independence Tribunals decreed so many death penalties also implied that more deserters were captured and brought to court. The problem never ceased completely, but after an initial period of confusion, the Ankara government was able to establish its own relatively effective conscription system and develop gendarme units to carry out recruitment. In this respect, it is worth noting that the number of troops in the Turkish standing army was raised to 78,000 within 28 days of the Battle of Sakarya (23 August–13 September 1921); that number was 23,000 in previous months. Moreover, while the number of deserters in the Western Front zone (namely the Aegean region) was 30,809 in June 1921, it was reduced to 4,400 in the month of August of the same year—a remarkable feat.[247] Only between August and September 1921, more than 12,000 deserters were caught in central Anatolia (the zone of the Central Army) and they were transferred to the Western Front during the National Struggle.[248]

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[245] Ergün Aybars, *İstiklal Mahkemeleri: Yakın Tarihimizin Gerçekleri*, second edition (Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1998), pp. 23, 34–36, 52–53; Rıdvan Akın, *TBMM Devleti (1920–1923)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), pp. 164–196.

[246] Aybars, *İstiklal Mahkemeleri*, p. 165. This number is even more remarkable when it is compared to the total number of death penalties given to deserters in Germany and Britain throughout the Great War. While the British courts martial decreed totally 269 death penalties, the German courts martial gave only 18 death penalties during the four years of the war. The Turkish National Struggle experience really stands out in this respect. On the numbers of death penalties for deserters in Germany and Britain, see Jahr, *Gewöhnliche soldaten*, p. 18.

[247] *Aybars, İstiklal Mahkemeleri*, pp. 33, 147.

[248] Mustafa Balcıoğlu, *Belgelerle Milli Mücadele Sırasında Anadolu'da Ayaklanmalar ve Merkez Ordusu* (Ankara: Yükseköğretim Kurulu Matbaası, 1991), p. 204. For a similar

The relative success of the Ankara government in remobilizing the Anatolian population for another military venture in the immediate wake of the Great War owed a great deal to the Ottoman state's reorganization of both the recruitment system and the gendarmerie in Anatolia. In this sense, there was considerable continuation between the mobilization effort during the Great War and remobilization during the National Struggle period. The infrastructure of the latter was actually prepared during the former. It can be said that the process which resulted in the creation of the Turkish nation-state actually began during the Great War. Of course, the details of this continuation require additional in-depth archival research.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the limits of Ottoman mobilization during the Great War and analyzed the problem of desertion as the ultimate form of resistance of the people to the state's war effort. It has been shown that the extent of the problem was so wide that it constituted a major factor which undermined the Ottoman war performance on the battlefield. Moreover, while nearly every ethnic or religious group of the empire was represented in the problem, the majority of deserters were Anatolian Muslims and Turks, who also formed the main manpower pool of the Ottoman armed forces. While there were many specific reasons for individual acts of desertion, it has been argued that at the general level the problem of desertion could be considered as a one-sided termination of the tacit contract between the state authority and the enlisted man regarding the compulsory military service. Factors such as constantly deteriorating living conditions on the battlefield, the disappearance of hope for victory, feeling betrayed by the authorities, bad treatment by commanders or unbearable physical and mental exhaustion played an important role in this termination. This chapter also elaborated on the "lifestyle" of deserters and tried to explore how they survived after they deserted.

Another important contention here is that the problem of desertion did not remain merely a military issue to be dealt with by only military authorities, but also became a major social problem requiring measures on the part of the state authority in general. The effort of coping with the problem opened up new channels for the state to further penetrate

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process in the region of Kastamonu, see Doğu Ergil, *Milli Mücadele'nin Sosyal Tarihi* (Ankara: Turhan Kitabevi, 1981), pp. 231–232.

into society. The state used both incentives and punitive measures to encourage the collaboration of local civilians and remobilize deserters. An important part of this process was the re-organization of the gendarmerie as the main internal security force in provincial Anatolia. While all these measures and efforts to reorganize produced little success in dealing with the problem during the Great War, they prepared a reinforced infrastructure for the remobilization of the Anatolian population during the National Struggle period which culminated in the creation of the Turkish nation-state.

CONCLUSION

This book has focused on the Ottoman mobilization of manpower during the First World War. As in all the belligerent countries, the total character of the war effort in the Ottoman Empire led to constant interaction between the battlefront and the home front. The successful and permanent mobilization of men also required the state to exercise greater control over many aspects of society. The requirements of a large-scale and permanent mobilization effort pushed the state to become more centralized, more authoritarian and also more nationalist. At the same time, I have tried to demonstrate that the state became more dependent on the people for the war effort. With this dependence, social actors developed effective responses to the state's increasing demands. Their own expectations and priorities vis-à-vis those of the state came to play a determining role in their responses to the mobilization. Under wartime conditions, this interaction constituted a kind of tacit social contract between the state and those segments of the population which were targeted by the state's policies of mobilization. Based on how their own expectations and priorities corresponded with state policies, these responses constituted a wide spectrum of action ranging from voluntary support of the war effort to open resistance. In turn, the state responded by revising its mobilization policies and reformulating new mechanisms of control at the local level. In examining the Ottoman mobilization of manpower from various aspects, my aim has been twofold: through an examination of the CUP's efforts to deal with the challenges of permanent mobilization, I have demonstrated the role such efforts played in the broader transformations of state-society relations in Anatolia during this period.

I have shown that the outbreak of the war was received with a certain enthusiasm in Ottoman society, but that this enthusiasm was actually a result of an organized attempt executed by a collaborative effort of both the CUP government and CUP supporters, who mostly consisted of middle-class and urban Muslim-Turkish social groups. This coalition dominated the Ottoman public sphere through its semi-official voluntary associations, which served to suppress opposition to the pro-war policies of the CUP government. Censorship and martial law also contributed to this suppression. The declaration of mobilization and the call to arms took place in this social milieu, and, as a result the state did not face any major

political reaction. An extensive oral propaganda and a proto-nationalist religious discourse helped spread the call to arms more efficiently to provincial Anatolia.

In order to maximize the available manpower potential for the war effort, the Ottoman state had to "re-occupy" Anatolia: the success of any manpower mobilization was dependent on a more efficient penetration of provincial Anatolia. The actual process of mobilization required a well-established conscription system that worked efficiently at the local level. While reforms to the conscription system had been initiated after the Balkan defeat, the scale of mobilization during the Great War necessitated an almost complete overhaul of the existing system. This process involved the reestablishment of the conscription system at the local level through recruiting office branches in the districts, which worked in collaboration with local civilian authorities and local notables in order to maximize the available manpower. However, deficiencies in infrastructure hindered the implementation of the system in certain regions, particularly in Kurdish and tribal regions in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. The Ottoman state tried to overcome the shortcomings of the conscription system through a reliance on old imperial methods of recruitment, which were supplemented by certain modern conscription techniques, and the creation of alternative recruitment categories such as volunteer units. Volunteers from Kurdish-populated regions played an important role in compensating for the insufficiency of the conscription system, as did volunteer units comprised of certain Muslim groups recently re-settled in Anatolia, such as the *muhâcir*, Circassians and Laz. While prisoner volunteers allowed Ottoman authorities to carry out more informal military actions that were improper for the regular units, religious volunteer units provided a useful propaganda tool. The formation of these units also helped to create new bonds between the state and certain Muslim Anatolian groups. In a sense, these bonds, some of which would be further consolidated and reformulated during the National Struggle of 1919–1922, constituted a basic building block of the emerging Turkish nation-state.

Furthermore, the long duration of the war placed greater manpower demands on the state, which in turn necessitated a permanent mobilization on the home front. The Ottoman state responded to this challenge by forming an extensive network of paramilitary youth organizations in provincial Anatolia, which sought to convince unschooled peasant boys to support the mobilization policies of the CUP government and, more practically, to physically prepare them for the actual war before they reached the age of military service. In this sense, local branches of the Ottoman

Youth League were conceived of as agents of the state authority at the provincial level which would greatly help state authorities in the militarization of the home front during the war.

However, the participation of people in response to these particular strategies did not occur at a satisfactory level for the state. Perhaps more importantly than infrastructural deficiencies, a major problem was reluctance and resistance on the part of people to mobilization. It is true that the state's call to arms sometimes received voluntary support from pro-CUP social groups and those who considered such volunteerism as a way to promote their social, economic and political status in society. It is also true that oral and written propaganda, and other mobilizing mechanisms, such as peer pressure and local cultural traditions, convinced many people to join the war effort. And since military service was compulsory, many people complied with the law. But, as the war was prolonged and the conditions of military service increasingly deteriorated, many people openly resisted the state's call to arms. In fact, as we have seen in the case of desertions, many people, who initially supported and fully participated in the mobilization, became open resisters if their expectations were not realized during course of the war. As has been argued, under wartime conditions, the state's constant demands and increasing dependence on the people led to the formation of a reciprocal relationship between the state and the people who were targets of its mobilization policies. I have called this reciprocity a tacit contract, in which the state continued to assert its claims and tried to increase its control capacity. At the same time, the target population responded in various ways which forced the state to revise its policies.

Over the course of the war this tacit contract was gradually undermined through the state's failure to provide for the basic needs of people, as well as its inability to cast the war as just and winnable. The surge of resistance against the mobilization was indicated by the mounting number of desertions. The problem of desertion revealed the limits of Ottoman military mobilization. While deserters came from every ethnic and religious group, the largest segment was composed of very backbone of the Ottoman military, namely Anatolian Muslims. The extent of the problem was so wide that it turned into a major social issue on the home front. Bands of deserter-brigands became prominent elements in rural Anatolia through their disruption of state authority and their damage to socio-economic activities. Therefore, military measures were insufficient to address the problem; it was also considered an internal security issue, and more extensive and intensive measures needed to be taken on the

home front. Such measures involved both positive incentives and punitive methods. Ottoman authorities sought to collaborate with local people in dealing with the problem. As the main instrument of internal security in provincial Anatolia, the gendarmerie was greatly restructured in this process. In terms of the human dimension, local gendarme ranks were filled mainly by Anatolian Muslims, most prominently by Turks. Desperately in need of manpower in the armed forces, the state sometimes also needed to compromise with deserters, reducing the punishment they were given and sometimes offering full pardons to restore deserters to the army again.

In the case of both voluntary support and resistance, this tacit contract was negotiated mainly between the CUP-dominated Ottoman state and the Anatolian Muslim population. The Anatolian Muslim population not only constituted the main source of manpower in the Ottoman armed forces, it also represented the demographic base behind the CUP government's nationalist perspective. From a pragmatic stance, the CUP-dominated state wanted to include non-Muslim Anatolians in the manpower mobilization. However, it always tended not to permit these segments of society to enter into the tacit contract. By excluding non-Muslim Anatolians from this tacit agreement while seeking their participation in the war effort, the CUP-dominated state prevented them from negotiating their expectations with the authorities and providing an input to the policies of the state. In this way, the Ottoman conscription system had a discriminatory character towards non-Muslims. They were largely employed in unarmed service from the beginning of the war. The widespread reluctance among Anatolian non-Muslims to participate in the war effort, and their resistance in the form of draft-dodging and desertion consolidated the CUP government's distrust towards them. The collaboration between the state and Anatolian Muslim groups during the war functioned to marginalize further these "distrusted" elements at the social level. Moreover, even when that collaboration was absent and Anatolian Muslim groups showed resistance, the state's control measures and attempts at remobilization still privileged the Anatolian Muslim population and more specifically the Turkish element.

The Ottoman conscription system was always incomplete. The Ottoman war effort ended in a defeat and the Ottoman Empire practically dissolved at the end of the war. But the Ottoman mobilization of manpower achieved certain objectives and played a major role in reshaping Anatolia's social infrastructure in the years immediately preceding the Turkish National Struggle of 1919–1922. First of all, despite major difficulties, the

Ottomans continued to supply enlisted men for the battlefield until the end of the war. Secondly, in addressing the limits of its control capacity at the local level across provincial Anatolia, the state tried to reestablish a reinforced internal security mechanism which facilitated a remobilization of manpower during the National Struggle period. And, thirdly, as a major factor in reshaping state-society relations in Anatolia, the process of manpower mobilization contributed to the nationalist homogenization of the Anatolian population and played an important role in creating the demographic basis of the Turkish nation-state. Many historians think that the Ottoman/Turkish Great War actually ended not in 1918, but in 1922. In this sense, the National Struggle is an extension of the Great War in the Anatolian context. I would revise this assertion and suggest that the Turkish National Struggle actually began during the Great War.

As increasingly in-depth studies of other aspects of Ottoman mobilization during the Great War become available, the points that have been discussed in this book will certainly be approached from a broader and more multi-dimensional perspective. Manpower mobilization was only one dimension of the general mobilization process, and this book has focused mainly on Anatolia and its Muslim population. In order to see a more complete picture, we need to have specific analyses of how the mobilization of manpower was implemented and received in other areas and among other segments of the population. A complete picture of Ottoman mobilization during the Great War will only be realized after the issue is approached with new studies from a multi-dimensional perspective including economic history, agricultural history and women's history.

Such a broadening in our perspective will surely shed more light on the transition from the end of the Ottoman Empire to the emergence of the Turkish nation-state in Anatolia. But equally importantly, approaching the Ottoman Great War experience from geographically and demographically more diverse perspectives will help us to better understand the reshaping of the Middle East at the end of the Ottoman era. Last, but definitely not least, such a broadening will also facilitate the integration of Ottoman Great War experience into the broader history of the war.

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