

GREEK OTTOMANS IN THE 1908 PARLIAMENT

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: Second Constitutional Period, Greek Ottoman deputies, Committee of Union and Progress, Ottomanism, dominant nation

This thesis is an attempt to question some common assumptions on the idea of Ottomanism and development of Turkish nationalism. This is done through an examination of the case of the Greek Ottoman deputies in the 1908 Parliament (1908-1912). Benefiting from the relatively liberal atmosphere of the time, Greeks and Turks engaged in revealing discussions both in the Chamber of Deputies and the press. The primary aim of this thesis is to arrive at a general understanding of the period by following these discussions. Different ways the principle of Ottomanism was interpreted by different groups will be especially illuminating for the purposes of this study. Debates taking place in the Chamber of Deputies which concerned the Greek Ottoman community will be analyzed along with their reflections in the Turkish-Ottoman and Greek-Ottoman press. This study is not a study of political history narrating the relevant developments in the period, but rather a study that prioritizes a narration of a fierce struggle made through words. The overall result of this evaluation will necessitate a reconsideration of generally accepted hypotheses about the Second Constitutional Period, specifically about the Ottomanist ideology and the stance of the Greek Ottomans on it.

ÖZET

OSMANLI'NIN RUM MEBUSLARI (1908-1912)

Uğur Peçe

Tarih, Master Tezi, 2007

Tez Danışmanı: Selçuk Akşin Somel

Anahtar Kelimeler: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi, Rum mebuslar, İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti, Osmanlılık, millet-i hakime

Bu tez Osmanlılık düşüncesi ve Türk milliyetçiliğinin gelişimi meseleleri hakkındaki genel geçer varsayımları sorgulama uğrunda bir denemedir. Bunu yaparken, 1908 Meclis-i Mebusan'ına (1908-1912) seçilen Rum mebusların örneğinden hareket edeceğiz. Dönemin görece özgürlükçü ortamından faydalanan Rumlar ve Türkler, gerek Meclis-i Mebusan'da gerekse de basında oldukça çarpıcı tartışmaların içerisine girdiler. Bu tezin öncelikli amacı, söz konusu tartışmalardan yola çıkarak dönemle ilgili genel bir fikre varmaktır. Osmanlılık prensibinin değişik gruplarca farklı yorumlanma biçimleri, bu çalışmanın amacı düşünüldüğünde, bize oldukça yol gösterici olacak. Meclis-i Mebusan'da cereyan eden ve Rum toplumunu ilgilendiren tartışmalar, Türkçe ve Rumca basındaki yansımalarıyla değerlendirilecek. Bu çalışma, dönemin siyasi gelişmelerinin incelemesini temel almaktansa, kelimeler üzerinden yapılan çetin bir mücadelenin anlatısını sunmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu değerlendirmeden çıkacak ana sonuç ise İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi ile ilgili genel kabul gören hipotezlerin, özellikle de Osmanlılık ideolojisi ve Rumların bu ideoloji karşısındaki duruşlarına ilişkin olanların, tekrar gözden geçirilmesini gerekli kılacaktır.

Στον Έρωτα...

Ασκα...

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INTRODUCTION

The July Revolution of 1908 brought many hopes for different groups in the Ottoman Empire. After an autocratic rule which lasted three decades during which a strong web of spies and draconian censure on the press prevented the carrying out of open opposition movements against the regime, the hour of freedom finally came from the mountains of Macedonia. Or, people thought it came. The *Tanzimat* reforms that took the first steps in establishing representative institutions and paved the way for their consequent blossoming with the advent of the parliamentary system, and the influential opposition movement of the Young Ottomans starting in the 1860s set up the background to the Young Turks' movement. The day 23 July 1908 (10 July 1324 in the old calendar) marked a new beginning for the peoples of the Ottoman Empire. Under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the Young Turks became the most powerful partners in the administration of the Ottoman Empire. As evident in Babanzade İsmail Hakkı's words, one of the notable figures within the CUP and deputy for Baghdad, for the Ottomans and the Orient 10 July meant what 14 July did for the Western World: "10 July is like 14 July for us...14 July signified an awakening and progress for the West. 10 July marks the beginning of our salvation" (*10 Temmuz bizim 14 Temmuz'umuzdur...14 Temmuz Garp için bir sahife-i intibah ve terakki olmuştu. 10 Temmuz ise Şark için bir mebde-i felah olmak mahiyetini gösteriyor*).¹ It was the era of hope. It was the era of new beginnings. This was so, not only for the Turks but also for all the communities living in the Empire. When the Turks under the guidance of the CUP believed that they would put an end to the upsetting spiral of events the Empire was in, they exemplified the last ring in the chain of the old

1 Babanzade İsmail Hakkı, "10 Temmuz" (10 July), *Tanin*, 10 July 1326 / 23 July 1910.

Ottoman tradition which assumed the task of “saving the state.” Every community had believed that there was something promising for itself in the Revolution. The euphoria during the early days of the Revolution when hodjas embraced priests and deep cleavages that had divided the society were put aside for a certain time, sufficed to engender the belief that things would never be the same again. Could the hopes and dreams of different communities be reconciled with each other? This is the question.

Unfortunately, it turned out that domestic and international parameters of the time would not allow the realization of the promises of the Revolution, namely liberty, equality and justice (*hürriyet, müsaavat, adalet*). The reasons for this are many and complicated enough not to be searched for in this study. However, the historians with the power of altering the past can come up with miscellaneous explanations that allocate different weights to certain events. Some would attach more importance to external developments, the power struggles between the Great Powers and their repercussions in the Ottoman Empire, while some others would regard the domestic developments as more decisive factors. Since history entails different truths and the same history could be written anew as its narrator changes, we might expect different accounts that conflict with each other. Perhaps in studying history of extraordinary times we will never find “the truth” *per se* but we will converge to it, or more importantly we will learn the most in the course of our unending desperate search for “the truth”. When we take a brief glance at the historiography on the period, the common cliché puts the greatest part of the blame on the shoulders of the non-Muslim communities and points out that the Ottomanist project failed due to the incorrigible chauvinistic attitude of the non-Turks. According to this cliché, which is not alien to high school students in Turkey, the Turks had been struggling to save the Ottoman Empire while the others were working in the opposite direction. It was first non-Muslim communities which acquired their national consciousness and then acted accordingly, i.e. worked with the aim of breaking away from the state. These non-Muslims were then followed by the Albanians and Arabs who were the latecomers in betrayal. In the face of all these separatist movements, there was nothing left for the Turks but repeating the others’ example and emerging as nationalists during the final years of the Empire.

We have to note that this cliché was also supported by some of the most authoritative names studying the Second Constitutional Period. The first example to be cited in this respect is Feroz Ahmad who argued that the Greek Ottoman community was a monolithic community and because it was accustomed to live under the authority

of the Patriarch, it was not surprising that they resisted the changes the CUP wanted to impose on the society. According to Ahmad, the CUP's Turkish nationalism was absent at the beginning and their main concern was to work for Ottomanism by following an integrative attitude towards all the non-Turkish elements. Furthermore, he argues that "Implicit in the attitude of the Greek community was its total identification with Athens."² Although his student Kansu disagrees with Ahmad as to the character of the 1908 Revolution, he seems to be in agreement with him regarding, especially, the Greeks' political stance in the new regime. He conceives of the post-Revolutionary political arena as composed of two main blocks: the Unionists and anti-Unionists. He then goes on to argue that while the Unionist block represented progressive ideas, the opposing block was characterized by counter-Revolutionary ideas. In the latter block he also places the Greeks, especially conservative and even clerical when it comes to the question of community privileges. Therefore, "Essentially conservative, and blaming the CUP for its political shortcomings, the Greek community was not expected to support the Unionists."³ However, as Kechriotis shows, there were different views within the Greek community regarding the position of the Ottoman Empire and the Greeks' status in it. And these differences found their expressions in a web of relationships that did not remain confined to the boundaries of the Greek community.⁴ The following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate this non-monolithic character of the Greeks in the special case of the Greek deputies. A couple of remarks as to the political ideology of the Young Turks would be appropriate to make at this point. Ahmad portrays a picture which complies with the generally accepted view in the literature. Karpat joins this view arguing that Christians' political demands "[s]haped the context in which the Young Turk leaders eventually began to portray themselves as the friends of the most oppressed and underdeveloped group – the Turks, the last ethnic

² Ahmad, Feroz, "Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York: 1982, pp. 402-9.

³ Kansu, Aykut, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, Leiden; New York; Köln: Brill, 1997, p. 240.

⁴ Kechriotis, Vangelis, "Greek-Orthodox, Ottoman Greeks or Just Greeks? Theories of Coexistence in the Aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution," *Études Balkaniques*, no. 1, 2005, pp. 51-71.

group to discover its ethnicity.”⁵ On the other hand, in his studies on the Young Turks in opposition, Hanioglu examines such Unionist journals as *Şura-yı Ümmet*, *Mechveret Supplément Français*, and *Türk*, and concludes that in all these three nationalism as an idea was applauded. Therefore, by late 1907 the leading figures in the organization appreciated the delicacy of their position if they were to continue propagating Turkish nationalism. For this reason, they employed the Ottomanist ideology as a tactical move in order to hold on to the power in the multi-national Ottoman Empire.⁶ Hanioglu’s studies are extremely important in this respect. But since his analysis revolves around the time before the CUP came to power, studies scrutinizing the challenging times after 1908 are strongly needed. One of the aims of this study is to come to terms with this cliché of Turks’ being a latecomer in espousing nationalism.⁷

The chronological span of this study is confined to the period which started with the proclamation of the Constitution on 23 July 1908 and came to an end when the Chamber of Deputies was dissolved at the beginning of 1912. The reason for choosing this specific period is significant in the sense that it allows us to track the discussions in the Chamber of Deputies and in the press of the time, during which the advent of a relatively liberal atmosphere facilitated our job to observe and interpret different attitudes maintained by diverse political formations. The main actors in this study are the Greek Ottoman deputies who were elected in the 1908 general elections. The Greeks sent some 24 deputies to the Chamber of Deputies out of a total of 288.⁸ Here, it would be useful to explain what is meant by the usage of certain terms. The word Greek is used to denote Greek Ottomans, i.e. *Osmanlı Rumları*, and unless we specify that what we actually mean are the citizens of the independent Greek Kingdom, the word Greek

⁵ Karpat, Kemal H., *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith, and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 326.

⁶ Hanioglu, Şükrü, “Turkish Nationalism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908,” in Fatma Müge Göçek, ed., *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002, pp. 90-95. For a more extensive coverage of his ideas see Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

⁷ For a similar story narrated through the works of the famous story writer Ömer Seyfeddin see Uğur Peçe, “The Story of a Writer’s Transformation: Ömer Seyfeddin before and after the Balkan Wars (1912-1913),” Unpublished paper presented at the 22nd MEHAT Conference, 11-12 May 2007, The University of Chicago. This tactical move of employing Ottomanism though believing in Turkish nationalism is examined through a comparison of his works before and after the Balkan Wars.

⁸ These figures are not certain. For the election results see chapter 1.

will stand for the members of the Greek Ottoman community. Another caveat is related to the word “parliament”. The parliamentary life in the Ottoman Empire was composed of two different bodies. One was the Chamber of Notables (*Meclis-i Ayan*) and the other was the Chamber of Deputies (*Meclis-i Mebusan*). In this study we will only deal with the second chamber and the word Ottoman Parliament will signify the Chamber of Deputies. The Chamber of Deputies had more extensive powers, and a representative character, as its members were elected not appointed, and what is more, witnessed more significant and revealing discussions as compared to the other chamber. A further distinction as to the classification would make the matters easier to grasp. Neither the Turks nor the Greeks were monolithic in terms of political convictions. Inside the Turks there were groupings like Unionists, Liberals and Monarchists and contrary to the general view the Greeks were not always acting in unison as some of them were closer to the ruling party while the majority of them always remained in opposition. However, in order to simplify matters when we say “Turks”, it would stand for those in the dominant faction, i.e. the CUP. Similarly, when we say “Greeks”, it would signify the dominant group represented by the Greek deputies, a group vehemently opposing the CUP.

Although the main actors of this thesis are politicians, the study itself does not present a strictly political history of the time. There were many events, establishing new political parties, changing centers of power, struggles between different institutions of the state, *et cetera*, that could occupy hundreds of pages.⁹ However, this study is rather a preliminary attempt at a discursive analysis arrived through a close scrutiny of the relevant texts. Therefore, it is based more on the primary sources of the time rather than narrating an account based primarily on the secondary literature. The minutes of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies (*Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi*) are taken as the principal primary source. It is also the most telling primary source on the subject as it presents the most immediate account on our actors. In covering the significant aspects of the time, speeches delivered by the deputies in response to certain bill proposals or independent debates are juxtaposed with the projections of these debates in the press. There are three primary sources to be taken from the Second Constitutional press. Two of them were published in Turkish while one of them was in Greek. And the choice as to these newspapers was not made haphazardly since all of them have direct links to our

⁹ For a detailed political history of the period see, Aykut Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey: 1908-1913*, Brill: Oxford University Press, 1992.

subject. The most widely used among these three sources is the newspaper *Tanin* (Echo). It started to be published in Istanbul from August 1908 onward. Its utmost significance emerges from the fact that it was the mouthpiece of the CUP. It was a daily which came out with its outspoken editor Hüseyin Cahid's editorials. Another significant characteristic about it was that Cahid was elected deputy for Istanbul in the 1908 general elections and this naturally attributed a novel aspect to his editorials in the sense of being representative of the official Unionist positions. Indeed, when he expressed his opinions about a certain issue, the most common pronoun he chose, happened to be "we" instead of "I". However, one must approach the extent of the representative character of Cahid's editorials with prudence. The CUP was not a monolithic group and inside it there were various factions that ascribed different weights to the ideas of Turkish nationalism, Islamism and Ottomanism. *Tanin's* relevance stems from the fact that its arguments generally converted to the faction disposed to Turkish nationalism. Most of the time, the content of Cahid's editorials was about domestic politics, though he also wrote on foreign affairs, social and economic matters. It is interesting, however, that such an outspoken writer was not one of the most visible deputies taking to the floor of the parliament. Indeed, the occasions when he delivered a speech were rare compared to many others.¹⁰ The second newspaper was *Sada-ı Millet* (The Voice of the Nation) published in Istanbul from October 1909 until June 1910 when its editor Ahmed Samim, known for his harsh criticisms against the CUP, was assassinated. The most crucial link that we can establish between this study and *Sada-ı Millet* is that the Greek deputy for Istanbul Cosmidis Efendi was its owner. The daily's stated objective was "[t]o create a sincere harmony between different Ottoman elements that had been separated by historical hatred, racial animosities and ignorant traditions and therefore living as divided" (*[b]irbirinden tarihi kinler, kavmi nefretler ve cahilane adavetlerle ayrılmış ve müteferrik yaşamakta bulunan akvam-ı Osmaniye beyninde bir itilaf-ı samimi hasıl edip*).¹¹ And finally, the Greek Ottoman newspaper *Politiki Epitheorisis* (Political Review) was a weekly published in Greek whose first issue came out in 1910 in Istanbul. It is quite important for our purposes as it was the mouthpiece of Greek deputies who were working together with the Society of

¹⁰ Perhaps the reason for this was that the quality of his speech did not match that of his pen as Rıza Nur claims in his memoirs. See Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, vol. II, Istanbul: Altındağ Yayınları, 1968, pp. 328-29.

¶ Editorial, "İzah-ı Maksud-ı Meslek" (Explanation of the Aim of Our Program), *Sada-ı Millet*, 17 January 1910.

Constantinople (SC – *Organosis Konstantinoupoleos*). The Greek deputies from Serfidje, Boussios and Vamvakas and the head of the SC, Souliotis, published their articles in this weekly. Therefore, it is quite revealing to follow the arguments expressed under the roof of the parliament in light of what was written in these three important papers.

In attempting to achieve one of the major aims of this study, i.e. to challenge the argument that the Turkish nationalism was dormant before the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), I need to present with all its starkness the main leitmotiv of this study. It is very important to bear this leitmotiv in mind while following the events narrated in this thesis. This is the idea that the Turks are the dominant nation (*millet-i hakime*) in the Ottoman Empire. In his editorial dated 7 November 1908 Hüseyin Cahid did not shy away from asserting that:

[t]his country will become a Turkish country. Yes, we will all unite under the banner of Ottomanness, though the structure of the state will never change at the expense of the particular interests of the Turkish nation and no action will be taken against the vital interests of the Muslim element...All those Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians and Muslim elements are entitled to a brotherly treatment under the principles of equality, justice and liberty though forming a state within a state cannot be tolerated...in this country the dominant nation is and will be the Turks.¹²

This passage does not leave any doubt as to the invalidity of the idea that the Turks lacked a national consciousness in the Ottoman Empire, at least before the Balkan Wars. Another strikingly revealing passage from his editorial dated 31 August 1909 testifies that Hüseyin Cahid did not change this line of argument. That the leading Unionists did not reprimand him implies that the idea of dominant nation also found acceptance among other members of the CUP:

[t]hey would have at once Turkified all the Ottoman elements, if this had been left to their choice and if they would have possessed the ability to do so. There should be no doubt in this. The Young Chinese, the Young Hottentots would do the same, if they were in Young Turks' place. There is no need to deny this natural desire. But we certainly know that the materialization of this desire is

¹² “[b]u memleket Türk memleketi olacaktır. Osmanlı namı altında hepimiz birleşeceğiz fakat devletin şekli hiçbir zaman Türk milletinin menfaat-i hususiyesi haricinde tahavvüle uğramayacak, Müslim unsurun menafi-i hayatiyesi hilafında hareket olunamayacaktır...Osmanlı namı altında yaşayan Musevilere, Ermenilere, Rumlara, Bulgarlara, hasılı bütün anasır-ı Müslimeye dahi müsavat, adalet, hürriyet kaideleri dairesinde muamele-i uhuvvetkarane gösterilir. Fakat hükümet içinde hükümet teşkiline göz kapayamazlar...memlekette millet-i hakime Türklerdir ve Türkler olacaktır.” Hüseyin Cahid, “Millet-i Hakime” (The Dominant Nation), *Tanin*, 25 Teşrin-i Evvel 1324 / 7 November 1908.

impossible. What should be done then? If it is impossible to detach people from their languages, ethnicities and religions, then a common bond beyond these must be found so as to unite them all. And this is the way the Young Turks thought. They put aside their emotions and took this direction with calmness. That is because their interest dictated them to strengthen the state.¹³

As evident from this passage, the Young Turks acquitted themselves of the accusations of Turkifying the other elements by pointing out that they would not follow such a policy not because they believed that it was wrong but because they knew that it was impossible. It was also acknowledged that they embraced Ottomanism not because they believed in it, but in order to use it to realize their aims. Therefore, we clearly understand that the choice of Ottomanism was a tactical move and the strong nationalist feelings were not stranger to them.

In the first chapter of this study, a presentation of a short account of events before the opening of the Ottoman Parliament on 17 December 1908 will be made. It, in a way, sets up the background to the parliament and prepares us to follow, in a more informed way, the discussions inside the parliament as to be narrated in chapters two and three. The primary attention in chapter one will be given to the 1908 elections. Before covering the first real elections in the history of the Ottoman Empire, an important section on the question of dominant nation is included. The importance of this section stems from the fact that it provides us with an illuminating account of the CUP's self-perception as well as its perception of the non-Muslims. Then, some general aspects of the general elections will be provided and then, the SC and its political activities during the electoral process will be shortly examined followed by an account of the Greeks' grievances regarding the elections.

After presenting a series of historical developments paving the way for the parliamentary life in the Ottoman Empire and narrating the electoral process with all its novelties, excitements and quarrels, in the second chapter we enter the corridors of the

¹³ “[e]ğer ellerinden gelseydi, kendilerinin ihtiyarına terk edilmiş olsaydı bugün Osmanlı İmparatorluğu dahilindeki bütün akvamı bir dakika bile kaybetmeden Türk yaparlardı. Bunda hiç şüphe edilmemeli. Genç Türklerin yerinde Genç Çinliler, Genç Hotantolar olsa onlar da böyle isterlerdi. Kalpten pek tabii olarak gelen bu arzuyu saklamaya lüzum görmeyiz. O halde ne yapmalı? Madem ki hiçbir ferdi lisanından, milliyetinden, dininden ayırmak kabil değildir o halde bunların fevkinde bir rabıta-ı müştereke bulalım, bu vasıta ile hepsini birbirine bağlayalım. İşte Genç Türkler böyle düşündüler. Hissiyatı bir tarafa bırakarak itidal-i dem ile bu yola saptılar. Çünkü kendilerinin menfaati bu merkezde, bu devleti kuvvetlendirmekte idi.” Hüseyin Cahid, “İttihad-ı Anasır” (The Union of the Ottoman Elements), *Tanin*, 18 August 1325 / 31 August 1909.

parliament. The parliament witnessed many significant debates, all of which are hard to be evaluated in a single study. Therefore, in the second chapter, main issues of discord between the Turks and Greeks in the parliament are taken into consideration under three important headings. First, the question of Crete's decision to unite with Greece will be handled. Its unilateral decision to unite with Greece before the Ottoman Parliament started to convene caused a crisis between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, with its implications projected inside the parliament. The section that will follow revolves around the issue of participation of Greeks in the administration of the state. Here we will give an ear to the Greeks' complaints about the underrepresentation of the Greek element in state employment. The final section of the chapter is devoted to the highly contentious issue of the "privileges" of the Greek community as centered in the office of the Patriarch. In covering this issue, the main attention will be given to the specific area of community education.

The final chapter of this thesis is perhaps the most important chapter. In this chapter, the story of the extension of conscription to the non-Muslims of the Empire is narrated. It is quite important because this policy put an end to an ages-old inequality between the Muslims and non-Muslims. Although the *Tanzimat* reforms were successful in introducing the principle of equality in many respects, the most obvious area where it failed was in the introduction of universal military service. In theory, the promises of the Revolution were to materialize thanks to equality in rights and duties with the advent of this bill on conscription. However, there were doubts in the minds of the Greek deputies as to the application of this principle that they indeed welcomed in theory. In this chapter, first a historical account of events regarding the service of non-Muslims in the Ottoman army is presented. After this overview the main contours of the discussion will be followed organized in a couple of sub-sections.

CHAPTER I

ON THE WAY TO THE PARLIAMENT OF 1908

The first chapter of this study will attempt to present an account of events before the opening of the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies on 17 December 1908. In this sense, it will prepare us for the significant discussions in the parliament that we will follow in the second and third chapters. In order to better grasp the significance of the opening of the Ottoman Parliament after a long suspension of three decades, the historical antecedents of this major happening will be briefly examined in the first section. In this effort, the primary emphasis will be devoted to the set of developments that exemplified the establishment of certain institutions based on representative logic, thus paving the way for the eventual introduction of parliamentary life into the Ottoman political culture. The section that would follow this historical narration will revolve around the question of dominant nation, a term employed to describe the special position of the Turks in the Ottoman Empire by one of the leading Unionists, Hüseyin Cahid. This section is quite important not only to appreciate the developments narrated in this chapter but also those in the coming chapters, as it gives us a revealing idea with respect to the self-perception of the CUP. The section that follows will briefly cover the first real general elections in the history of the Ottoman Empire during the autumn of 1908. After describing some basic aspects of the general elections, two sub-sections will focus on the case of the Greek Ottomans in these elections. Firstly, a secret organization in the name of the Society of Constantinople which assumed the role of directing the Greek electoral activities will be shortly scrutinized and the vision of the founder of it,

Athanasios Souliotis, will be taken into consideration. Second, an important matter of the Greeks' grievances regarding the elections which occupied the press of the time and posed serious challenges to the CUP will be examined. Finally, a short section on the account of some post-election events will serve as our passage to the next chapter which starts our parliamentary discussions.

1.1. The Beginnings of the Road in the Nineteenth Century

The opening of the parliament at the end of 1908 was a major happening in the modern history of the Ottoman Empire. Major it was but not unprecedented. The first chamber of deputies, representing diverse constituencies of the vast empire, was inaugurated in 1877. However, this parliamentary experience did not last more than just one year. The major difference of the 1908 parliament as to the quality was that, although Ottomanism as an official ideology made its strong presence felt in both chambers, the latter witnessed more polarized ideas and groupings. The basic leitmotiv in the history of the Ottoman Empire, as developed in the nineteenth century, was the conviction, on the part of the ruling elite, that to make sure the survival of the state, reforming it by following the examples presented by Europe was imperative. The former attitude of resisting the idea of a superior European civilization and holding on old Ottoman institutions had to be abandoned when they were proven to be outdated by the military predominance of the empire's European neighbors. Within the context of this understanding, a series of significant reforms started before the *Tanzimat*, continued with a vengeance in the *Tanzimat* period and did not end, but changed character and emphasis, under the reign of Abdülhamid II.

In evaluating the Ottomans' attempts at adopting the principles and institutions of the European civilization, the representative component of such institutions could not be disregarded. Therefore, any narration of the nineteenth century reforms in the empire must give the due importance to the chain of novelties embodying a representative spirit. In this attempt, one should not lose sight of the big picture this great empire presented and it should be kept in mind that the ruling elite had to take into account the heterogeneous structure of this entity. This multi-national and multi-religious structure of the empire posed tough challenges as to the administration of it. This difficulty had been recognized in all the three major reform documents of the nineteenth century. In the *Gülhane* Edict of 1839 the emphasis of just treatment of all the subjects of the

Sultan was put while a more groundbreaking and less ambiguous document of the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856, for the first time, brought in a strong emphasis of equality between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects of the Sultan. This trend was culminated in the declaration of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* in 1876 which officially proclaimed every Ottoman subject equal in rights and duties. One could reasonably sense in these documents that aimed at equality between Muslims and non-Muslims a desperate effort on the part of the Ottoman state elite to preserve the empire by infusing equality between Muslims and non-Muslims. For a multinational entity like the Ottoman Empire, they had thought that spreading these egalitarian principles, to be further buttressed by respective representative institutions, could be a panacea to the ills of the empire by creating a bond of allegiance around the secular idea of Ottomanism.¹⁴

The document which started the era of *Tanzimat* in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire is the *Gülhane* Edict of 1839. It granted guarantees of security for life, a regular system of tax collection and again a regular system of conscription. It acknowledged the provision of security for property and life essential for the preservation of the state and stated that “those enjoying a complete respect for their security will not depart from being loyal to the state and will act affectionately for the good of the country and the people.” The edict vowed to extend these securities and principles of good administration to all the Ottoman subjects regardless of their religion or sect.¹⁵ Although the reform edict did not specifically mention new institutions to carry out these promises, by promising to bring in good governance and mend the irregularities of the bad-old days, it implicitly embodied the seeds of the new institutions. To transform these abstract principles into practice was left to the *Tanzimat* bureaucrats who did not lose any time to lay the foundations of such institutions.

The *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856 was promulgated following the Crimean War. An important motivation behind this decree was to undermine Russian claims to the right of protector of the Orthodox population in the Ottoman Empire, a claim qualifying as one

¹⁴ For an illuminative account of the challenges that the nineteenth century Ottoman reformer found himself in and accelerating pace of the history, see İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001.

¹⁵ “...emval ve emlakinden emniyet-i kâmilesi olduğu halde dahi hemen kendü işi ile ve tevsi-i daire-i taayyüşiyle uğraşıp ve kendüsünde günbegün devlet ve millet gayreti ve vatan muhabbeti artıp ana göre hüsn-i harekete çalışacağı şüpheden azadedir.” Gözübüyük, Şeref & Kili, Suna, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri, 1839-1980*, Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Yayınları, 1982, pp. 3-6.

of the reasons for the Crimean War and other earlier troubles with Russia as well.¹⁶ The document also aimed at strengthening the place of the Ottoman Empire in the European club which guaranteed its integrity and independence. The edict reiterated the principles of guarantee for life and property to be applied equally for every Ottoman subject. The specific emphasis on the Muslim and non-Muslim equality was notable:

The guarantees promised on our part by the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of *Gülhane*, and in conformity with the *Tanzimat*, to all the subjects of my empire, without distinctions of classes or of religion, for the security of their persons and property, and the preservation of their honor, are today confirmed and consolidated, and efficacious measures shall be taken in order that they may have their full entire effect.¹⁷

However, there was more to the edict than a mere reiteration of the principles in the former one. First of all, the principle of equality between Muslims and non-Muslims was quite evident. Another important difference stems from the fact that the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856 explicitly included clauses regarding the principle of representative bodies. Whereas one of the most distinguished historians of the Middle East, Albert Hourani, regards the constitution of 1876 as the harbinger of the representative government¹⁸, Davison disagrees with him and instead searches for the roots of it in the reform edict of 1856. He specifically alludes to three aspects which exemplify the idea of representative institutions. First of all, the document states that existing provincial councils should be restructured so as to ensure a better functioning of them. Second, it refers to the revision of non-Muslim *millet* organizations in order for laymen to have some control over the secular affairs of their communities. Finally, it stipulates that representatives of the non-Muslim *millets* be incorporated into the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Meclis-i Vâlâ-ı Ahkâm-ı Adliye*) whenever the deliberated subjects concerned all Ottoman subjects. The realization of these promises did not take long and

¹⁶ Hurewitz, J.C., *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, 1535-1914*, vol. I, Princeton, New Jersey: Van Nostrand, 1956, p. 149.

¹⁷ “*Gülhane’de kıraat olunan hatt-ı hümayunum ile ve Tanzimat-ı Hayriyem mucibince her din ve mezhepte bulunan kaffe-i tebaa-i şahanem hakkında bilaistisna emniyet-i can ve mal ve mahfuziyet-i namus için taraf-ı eşref-i padişahanemden va’d ve ihsan olunmuş olan teminat bu kerre dahi tekit ve teyit kılındığından bunun kâmilin fiile çıkarılması için tedabir-i müessirenin ittihaz olunması...*” See Gözübüyük&Kili, *ibid*, p. 8; Hurewitz, *ibid*, p. 150.

¹⁸ Hourani, Albert, “The Decline of the West in the Middle East,” in Richard H. Nolte, ed., *The Modern Middle East*, New York: Atherton Press, 1963, p. 37.

within a few months' time some members of the non-Muslim *millet*s were appointed to the *Meclis-i Vâlâ* as representatives.¹⁹

Reorganization of non-Muslim *millet* organizations, the rising power of the lay elite within them and the writing of new constitutions in the 1860s reinforced the convictions present among some Turks as to adopting representative institutions. A group of young bureaucrats who were disillusioned with the policies of Ali and Fuad Pashas initiated a serious opposition movement which came to be known as the Young Ottomans. Their primary goal was to make a synthesis of classical Islamic values with that of modern principles of the European civilization. Utilizing recently available medium of newspapers as the means to expound and spread their arguments, they “opposed the centralizing activities of the state and wanted to establish in Turkey those political institutions which, at an earlier time, had been devised in the West as ideal checks against the encroachments of the state.”²⁰

After the *Bab-ı Ali* decided to take strong action against propagations of the Young Ottomans and sent them to places of internal exile, the movement took another form. Mustafa Fazıl Pasha invited them to Paris and started financing their activities in Europe. Through newspapers they published in Paris, London and Geneva, they continued to propagate their ideas which found their circulation inside the empire via foreign post-offices operating in the country. The label with which they came to be known was *Jeunes Turcs* that was translated into Turkish as *Türkistan'ın Erbab-ı Şebabı*. Although after the death of their archnemesis Ali Pasha in 1871, almost all the members of the movement started to return to the Ottoman Empire and accepted governmental posts offered to them. The influence of their ideas could be felt, first, in the document of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* and later in the Young Turks in opposition during the reign of Abdülhamid II.²¹

The *Kanun-ı Esasi* of 1876 was a document of primary significance and, in a sense, the apex of the *Tanzimat* reforms and the principle of Ottomanism. The most prominent figure in the old Young Ottomans movement, Namık Kemal, was one of the members

¹⁹ Davison, Roderic H., “The Advent of the Principle of Representation in the Government of the Ottoman Empire,” in William R. Polk & Richard L. Chambers, eds., *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The nineteenth century*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 101.

²⁰ Mardin, Şerif, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, Syracuse University Press, 2000.

²¹ Zürcher, Erik J., *Turkey: A Modern History*, London: I. B. Tauris, 2004, pp.66-70.

of the drafting commission which also included six non-Muslim members while Midhat Pasha was the head of the commission.²² The document declared every subject of the Sultan as Ottoman whatever the creed or nationality he was of (Article 8). The clause important for the establishment of representational institutions was the Article 42 which stipulated a parliament divided into two houses: a Chamber of Deputies (*Meclis-i Mebusan*) and a Chamber of Notables (*Meclis-i Ayan*). If we look into the respective articles for the Chamber of Deputies, the important one for our purposes in this study, we see that the Article 65 specifies the election of each deputy by fifty thousand males, the Article 69 sets the term of the parliament at four years and the Article 71 states that each deputy will represent not only his own constituency but all the country.²³

The elections for the first Ottoman Parliament had been held without an electoral law. Instead, the provisional electoral regulations that laid down the election of deputies by administrative councils in the provinces had been observed. The Porte specified the number of delegates from each province and the governors determined the non-Muslim-Muslim ratio. The most noteworthy product of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* materialized with the opening of the Ottoman Parliament on 19 March 1877, with Ahmed Vefik Pasha presiding as the president. The proportion of non-Muslim deputies in the first Ottoman Parliament was more than one third of the total (47 / 119). This proportion was going to surpass the one for the ethnic minorities in the Russian Duma after 1905. According to Tanör, important roots of this phenomenon are to be found in the internal dynamics of the Ottoman Empire. He points out that though one should not disregard the crucial international dimension of this fact, the main explanatory factor behind it is the traditional *Tanzimat* idea that allocates a significant room to non-Muslims provided that they show their secular allegiance to the Sultan and state.²⁴ The parliament's particular aspect of including many diverse Ottoman elements under its roof prompted Shaw to term it as "a truly Ottoman institution".²⁵ However, the days of this notable institution were numbered when the Russo-Turkish War broke out the same year. With the Russian troops threatening the capital, Abdülhamid II prorogued the constitution and parliament,

²² Kuntay, Mithat Cemal, *Namık Kemal: Devrinin İnsanları ve Olayları Arasında*, vol. II, İstanbul: Maarif Basımevi, 1956, pp. 75-79.

²³ Gözübüyük & Kili, *ibid*, pp. 27-42.

²⁴ Tanör, Bülent, *Osmanlı-Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri (1789-1980)*, İstanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1996, p. 119.

²⁵ Shaw, Stanford J. & Shaw, Ezel Kural, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. II, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977, p. 182.

thus gave an end to the short experiment of constitutional monarchy, beginning his autocratic rule to last three decades until the coming of the Young Turks with the July Revolution of 1908.

1.2. The CUP and the question of “dominant nation”

The proclamation of the constitution and the upcoming elections to determine the composition of the Chamber of Deputies posed a riddle that lingered in the minds of the notable figures within the CUP. The question was how to sustain the self-image which was formed in the influential Young Turk circles when they were in open opposition in Europe or in covert opposition within the empire. This self-image was related to the conviction that attributed the distinguished position of dominant nation to the Turks among all the other nations that formed the Ottoman Empire.²⁶ The idea of a dominant nation did not seem easy to propagate openly in the presence of all the other nations of the empire who should not be satisfied with being relegated to a group of second-class citizens. Their cooperation with the Young Turks in Europe and the extremely joyous and enthusiastic aurora that captured the first days of the July Revolution had been motivated by their hope of being equal partners in governance outside a framework composed of a dominant Turkish nation which would dominate the others. The ruling cadre of the CUP must have been wise enough to appreciate the absolute necessity of propagating the ideology of Ottomanism in an effort to keep the empire intact with all its ethnic elements. The first occasion that this was put to test came out with the 1908 elections. In his memoirs Hüseyin Cahid acknowledges the perceived danger felt by the CUP on the part of the Turkish element of the empire. He confesses that the regime *per se* that they had been struggling for decades was the cause of the challenge. A regime of constitutional monarchy had been thought of granting the right of representation in proportion to population. However, what this principle would mean in practice was that the Turkish element would not achieve a numerical dominance in the Chamber. Fortunately for the CUP, in the electoral law there was not any clause stipulating that elections be carried out in accordance with demographic proportion. Nevertheless, there was something that was more than capable of posing as a source of worry for the CUP. The Turks of the empire had not acquired any significant experience when it comes to

²⁶ See Şükrü Hanioglu (2002).

the electoral process while non-Muslims, especially the Greeks, were quite experienced in this regard thanks to the representational institutions they incorporated into their *millet* structures. Because they were working too hard for the elections and they already reached an internal consensus as to whom to vote, thanks to the directives given by the Phanar, they stood the chance of making a surprise at the expense of the Turks in case they fail to unite in electing the Turkish candidates. The greatest danger that a parliament not dominated by the Turks was to arise from Cahid's assumption that it was only for the Turks that the Ottoman Empire was a real fatherland (*vatan*):

Hence, reserving the right to decide on the country's future must have been in Turkish hands. But how come could we harmonize this necessity with the principles of the newly-proclaimed Constitution? If constitutional government meant the government by majority rule, then how would it be possible to keep an element which did not possess a majority governing the state?²⁷

We first come across the question of dominant nation in an editorial by Cahid, where he answered to the accusations directed by one of the most outspoken Greek Ottoman newspapers, *Proodos* (Progress), as to the electoral infractions. Cahid included a part of the article which appeared in the columns of *Proodos*. It seems to have been written with a rather aggressive tone that questioned the conduct of the CUP against the Greeks in the elections. It asserted that what the Greek community asked for was not but their legitimate rights. They asked for a fair representation in proportion to their population and in accordance with their history in the Ottoman Empire. It even claimed that during Abdülhamid's autocratic rule their rights were not subject to this sort of violation. It ended its accusations by pointing out that despite the fact that the Young Turks owe much of their success to the Greeks, they chose to cooperate with others (it is not specified with whom but probably what is meant is the Armenians) and declare their antagonism to the Greek community. Cahid points out that these arguments cannot be termed anything short of an ultimatum by the Greeks given to the Turks. How dare could they give an ultimatum to the Turks? It seems that they have forgotten where they stand because:

As if the dominant nation in these lands has been the Greeks, and again as if it has been they who had been working to the point of sacrificing their lives for

²⁷ “Şu halde memleketin yazgısına egemen olmak ve en temelli kararı almak hakkı Türk'ün elinde bulunmalıydı. Ama bu zorunluluğu, yeni duyurulmuş meşrutiyet ilkeleriyle nasıl kaynaştırabilirdik? Meşrutiyet çoğunluğun hükümeti olduğuna göre, çoğunluğu olmayan bir unsuru hükümetin başında tutmak nasıl olabilirdi?” Hüseyin Cahid, *Siyasal Anılar*, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1976, pp. 40-42.

liberty, they now condescendingly invite us to be partners in political life while we happen to show ungratefulness.²⁸

If we are to choose an adjective for this editorial, a good one would be “contradictory.” It is so for two reasons. First of all, at the beginning of his opinion piece Cahid proclaims the primary aim of the new regime: it will confer upon all the Ottoman elements the same degree of civic and political rights so as to create a solid equality and brotherhood in the country. However, the overtone in the article falls short of matching this notion. It is hard to say that Cahid regards the non-Muslim elements in equal terms with the Turks. He rather perceives the current state of freedoms as motivated by “the Young Turks’ decision to extend them their embrace of friendship with noble-mindedness” (*Genç Türkler...gayrimüslim vatandaşlarına kemal-i ulivv-i cenabla aguş-u muhadenetlerini açtılar*). Here is a relationship based on inequality and the decision to confer on the others something good. It is a patronizing relationship based on giving the others a hug for shelter not a hand to shake. Second, when Cahid accuses *Proodos* of grandiose ideas as if the Greeks were the dominant nation in the Ottoman Empire and the logical consequences of it (i.e. inviting others to be participate in political life in a gracious way), the acceptance of the role and position of dominant nation renders the Turks in a position to offer others political rights with strings attached.

There is still one question waiting to be asked at this point. To what extent is it possible to mention the CUP as representative of the Turks? Asking this question is important because the preceding passage assumes the CUP as the sole representative of the Turks in the Ottoman Empire and puts this political organization in a position where its interests are coalesced with that of the Turks. Of course, the Young Turks in opposition were not a monolithic group though it was the CUP who emerged victorious from their struggle in opposition. Therefore, the political struggle during the time of the 1908 elections materialized with the CUP assuming the right to represent the Turkish element and engaging in negotiations with other ethnic groups. When we scrutinize the pages of *Tanin* in September 1908 we come across many articles or reports with respect to the different political programs of the ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire. For our

²⁸ “Öteden beri bu kıtada millet-i hakime sanki Rumlar imiş, hürriyeti iktisab için hayatlarını feda ederek çalışanlar sanki onlar imiş, şimdi lütfen bizi de hayat-ı siyasiyeye teşrik ediyorlarmış ve biz nankörlük gösteriyormuşuz!” Hüseyin Cahid, “Rum Matbuatı” (The Ottoman Greek Press), *Tanin*, 14 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 27 October 1908.

purposes, suffice it to take a glance at the political programs of the Greeks and the Turks and juxtapose them against each other. In his editorial dated 3 September 1908 Cahid starts examining the Greek program submitted to the Unionist Headquarters in Salonika. Although he expresses his reservations as to some of the demands raised by the program his main objection turns out to be directed to the publication of such a document in the name of “the Greeks’ Program.” He argues that with the coming of the CUP, which is working only for the interest of the whole Ottoman lands and all Ottomans, the publication of any political program under national denominations would be nothing but dividing the country and inhibiting the union of the Ottoman elements.²⁹ Having read his ideas about the political programs based on ethnic denominations and before passing on to the CUP’s political program one should reasonably expect the same line of reasoning from Cahid. However, in order for us to touch on the topic of dominant nation it should be the opposite and indeed it is. This time on 25 September 1908 Cahid brings into his column the political program of the CUP. The inclusion of the word Ottoman in its title, “The Political Program of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress” (*Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti’nin Siyasi Programı*), first gives the impression that this program came out without referring to any ethnic group in the empire. However, reading the editorial leaves no doubt at all that the words Ottoman and Turkish were used interchangeably. Although it came out with the Ottoman adjective it will indeed signify the political program of the Turkish element:

Because today all the Turks are united around the CUP, established this committee for their focal point to join together and continuously worked so as to strengthen it. On the other hand, although our fellow citizens from the non-

²⁹ Hüseyin Cahid, “Rumların Programı” (The Greeks’ Program), *Tanin*, 21 August 1324 / 3 September 1908. As to the content, the program demands, among others things, needed amendments in the *Kanun-ı Esasi* so as to improve it to match the standards in the modern countries, necessary amendment of the electoral law to ensure a proportional representation in the assembly and the observance of all the privileges of the Patriarchate and the rights of the Ottoman Greeks stemming from them. Cahid agrees with the need to amend the Constitution while he strongly opposes the Greeks’ view that the electoral law needs to be amended so as to ensure proportional representation. He rather argues that the ultimate aim of the Young Turks’ regime is to make sure that each Ottoman element should not necessarily vote with ethnic considerations, though he leaves the door wide open for negotiations between the CUP and the non-Muslim communities until the electorate reaches this political maturity. Finally, with regard to the privileges of the Patriarchate he states that if what is meant by the word “privileges” is the rights of every Ottoman citizen as stipulated in the *Kanun-ı Esasi*, then there is no need to mention this. However, if the privileges mean something other than these constitutional rights, this is unacceptable then.

Muslim elements also joined the CUP, the Turkish majority in the committee enables us to term its program as the program of the Turks.³⁰ Juxtaposing these respective editorials written by the unofficial spokesman of the CUP renders a revealing picture. While Cahid strongly disapproved the political programs that came out with ethnic titles and asserted the need to get rid of such labels in order to unite around the program of the CUP, he then found no diffidence in declaring the identical character of Ottoman and Turkish programs, thus in a way rendering Ottoman and Turkish indistinguishable.

The question of dominant nation culminated with Cahid's editorial dated 7 November 1908. Whereas in other examples the idea that the Turks were the dominant nation even after a revolution that came with the promises of equality and brotherhood we came across this term as small allusions interspersed inside the main text, what was distinct about this editorial was that this idea of the dominant nation made it to the title this time. The title of the editorial, "The Dominant Nation" (*Millet-i Hakime*), clearly demonstrated that the crux of the relationship between the Turks and non-Turks was to depend on not a principle of equality as propagated in the euphoria of the July Revolution and thereafter, but the acceptance of the special position ascribed to the Turkish element. It seems that the elections that were underway prompted Cahid to publish this editorial. Cahid reminded his audience that since the parliament was the location of decision-making in a constitutional regime, achieving a parliamentary majority was a question of life and death for the Turks. However, the road on their aim should not pass through applying the electoral law in an arbitrary fashion, as such moves that violate laws could not be tolerated with the advent of the new regime. Therefore, he suggested that the Muslim electorate should form a united front and cast their ballots accordingly. He attempts to wake up them to the imminent danger of failing to secure a majority in the parliament due to their lack of appreciation of the extreme importance of the elections as compared to the non-Muslim elements. Then, he declares

³⁰ "Çünkü umum Türkler bugün Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti etrafında birleşmişler, merkez-i istinad, nokta-ı tecmi olmak üzere bu cemiyeti vücuda getirmişler, günden güne tahkime çalışmakta bulunmuşlardır. Diğer taraftan, Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti'nde anasır-ı gayrimüslimeye mensub Osmanlı vatandaşlarımız da dahil iseler de ekseriyet Türklerde bulunduğu için cemiyetin programı Türklerin programı olmak sıfatını haizdir." Hüseyin Cahid, "Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti'nin Siyasi Programı" (The Political Program of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress), *Tanin*, 12 September 1324 / 25 September 1908. As to the content, he chose to emphasize the necessity of a united system of education and bringing in the compulsory instruction of Turkish in primary schools.

the second danger that could arise after the elections even if the Muslims should gain a parliamentary majority. He argues that the failure to act in unison on the part of different ethnic elements within the Muslims could pose the same threat for the country. He regards the formation of different factions based on race as extremely harmful to the state. In fact, what he means is that aside from the necessity to avoid the formation of intra-Turkish factions, an Albanian or Arab faction should not be formed either. As, in a former quotation, he employed Turkish and Ottoman interchangeably, here Cahid employs Turkish and Muslim interchangeably. Taken together with the preceding sentences, this is quite evident from the way he concludes the following long but extremely important and illuminating quotation which offers striking insights:

Today the Young Turks offer the same level of political rights to their fellow non-Muslim citizens as the case for the Muslims. They consider the complete upholding of the principle of equality as the foremost component of their program. But does the fact that non-Muslims will enjoy the same rights with the Muslims mean that this country will become a Greek, Armenian, or Bulgarian country? No, this country will become a Turkish country. Yes, we will all unite under the banner of Ottomanness, though the structure of the state will never change at the expense of the particular interests of the Turkish nation and no action will be taken against the vital interests of the Muslim element...let us suppose that the issue of the annexation of Crete by Greece comes to the agenda and the Greeks hold an absolute majority in the Ottoman Parliament. How many Greek deputies who will not disapprove this move and not even offer to forsake some territory around Ioannina could someone expect to find?...All those Jews, Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians and Muslim elements are entitled to a brotherly treatment under the principles of equality, justice and liberty though forming a state within a state cannot be tolerated...in this country the dominant nation is and will be the Turks.³¹

³¹ “Bugün Genç Türkler gayrimüslim vatandaşlarına da Müslim unsuru kadar hukuk-u siyasiye temin ediyorlar, kanun nazarında suret-i katiyyede müsavat kaidesine riayet edilmesini mesleklerinin en birinci şerait-i cümlesinden olarak ileriye sürüyorlar. Fakat gayrimüslimler de müslimler kadar hukuka nail olacaktır demek acaba bu memleketin Rum memleketi yahud Ermeni memleketi yahud Bulgar memleketi olacağı demek midir? Hayır, bu memleket Türk memleketi olacaktır. Osmanlı namı altında hepimiz birleşeceğiz fakat devletin şekli hiçbir zaman Türk milletinin menfaat-i hususiyesi haricinde tahavvüle uğramayacak, Müslim unsurun menafi-i hayatiyesi hilafında hareket olunamayacaktır...farz edelim ki Osmanlı parlamentosunda ekseriyet-i mutlaka Rumlarda bulunsun ve Girit’in Yunanistan’a ilhaki meselesi müzakereye konulsun. Bunu tecviz etmeyecek ve hatta Yanya taraflarından da araziye terk etmeye kalkmayacak Rum mebuslarının miktarı insaf edilsin acaba kaç baliğ olur?... Osmanlı namı altında yaşayan Musevilere, Ermenilere, Rumlara, Bulgarlara, hasılı bütün anasır-ı Müslimeye dahi müsavat, adalet, hürriyet kaideleri dairesinde muamele-i uhuvvetkarane gösterilir. Fakat hükümet içinde hükümet teşkiline göz kapayamazlar...memlekette millet-i hakime Türklerdir ve Türkler olacaktır.” Hüseyin Cahid, “Millet-i Hakime” (The Dominant Nation), *Tanin*, 25 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 7 November 1908.

The unambiguous utterance of the idea of dominant nation in the most influential newspaper of the CUP absolutely qualifies as the crux of the arguments and as a leitmotiv of this study. The fact that this idea was espoused by a name like Hüseyin Cahid, who assumed the role of the main propagator of the CUP, and would serve as a Unionist deputy from Istanbul, leaves no doubt as to the importance of this fact. As briefly elaborated in the introduction, a similar tendency as to the privileged position attributed to the Turkish element in the Ottoman Empire was already on the surface well before the July Revolution. The difficulty and novelty of the post-Revolutionary time, however, arose from the more challenging task of keeping this multi-national empire intact while accommodating this idea of dominant nation which was an anomaly inside the Revolutionary discourse. And in the end, this difficult togetherness was proved to be unsustainable, a result quickened through further alienation of the non-Muslims, especially Greeks and Armenians, and non-Turks, especially Albanians and Arabs, of the empire.

1.3. The Elections in 1908

After the restoration of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* the next step was to hold elections that would start the parliamentary life in the Ottoman Empire after a delay of three decades. The issue of the elections started occupying the Ottoman public in August 1908 and continued to stir up flaming discussions and events in the months to come. The electoral process which would determine the political future of the empire was accompanied by international crises of the first degree. Austria-Hungary announced its formal annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria declared itself an independent kingdom and Cretan assembly gave its unilateral decision to unite with the Greek Kingdom. Although these international crises diverted some part of the attention from the process of the elections, the issue still found a very extensive coverage in the Ottoman press of the time.

During the sittings of the first Ottoman Parliament an electoral bill had been drafted, though not ratified by the Sultan. Having waited more than thirty years, this draft was finally ratified as the Provisional Law on Election of Deputies (*İntihab-ı Mebusan Kanun-ı Muvakkati*) and put into practice. Consequently, the elections of 1908 were carried out in accordance with this provisional law and the directions describing

how to implement it.³² In accordance with this law, elections would be held in two stages. In the first stage, primary voters (*müntehib-i evvel*) in each administrative district (*nahiye*) would select secondary voters (*müntehib-i sani*) who would, in turn, vote for the candidates to be elected to the parliament in line with the number(s) specified for a particular electoral district (*sancak*). Voting would not be carried out on ethno-sectarian basis and voters would not elect representatives for their own community but for all the Ottomans. Every Ottoman male older than twenty five years of age, holding Ottoman nationality, paying some taxes to the state and not working as a servant under anybody at the time of elections was eligible to vote as a primary voter.³³

In the euphoria of the Revolution and the newly-acquired freedoms of the press and political associations, the empire witnessed very lively electoral campaigns where large crowds attributed them an air of festivity. Ali Fuad Türkgeldi, who was serving at the time as the Secretary to the Grand Vizier (*Sadaret Mektupçusu*), had every opportunity to observe the electoral process from his office at the Sublime Porte:

As the elections for any electoral zone of Istanbul would be carried out, the electoral urns embellished with green and red flags would be brought before the Sublime Porte and speeches would be delivered. And as the deputies elected in the provinces would come to Istanbul, the cars decorated with flags would take them to the Office of the Grand Vizier. At the same time, people from all classes would make noisy demonstrations each and every day in front of the Sublime Porte...In brief, this state of affairs continued until the opening of the Chamber of Deputies, leaving the vicinity of the Sublime Porte full of clamoring crowds.³⁴

There were two rival political groups working to make a festival of their own out of this air of festivity. The CUP that had been relying on its huge prestige in the July Revolution was the most powerful organization. Although it did not participate in the elections as a political party proper, it acted more than like a political party. It supported the candidates who embraced its political program and engaged in negotiations with

³² For the text of this document see Tarhan Erdem, *Anayasalar ve Seçim Kanunları, 1876-1982*, Istanbul: Milliyet Yayınları, 1982, pp. 138-52.

³³ See the Articles 1, 2, 11 and 22 of the Provisional Law on Election of Deputies in *ibid*, pp. 138, 140, 142; Article 71 of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* in Gözübüyük & Kili, *ibid*, p. 36.

³⁴ “İstanbul’da intihabat icra kılındıkça her dairenin intihab sandıkları allı yeşilli bayraklarla donatılarak cemiyetle Bab-ı Ali önüne getirilir ve nutuklar irad olunurdu. Taşralarda intihab olunan mebuslar da İstanbul’a geldikçe bayraklarla tezyin olunmuş arabalara bindirilip Daire-i Sadaret’e getirilirdi. Bir taraftan da sunuf-ı muhtelifeden bir takım halk metalib-i gûna gûn ile Bab-ı Ali önünde mitingler yaparlar ve gürültü ederlerdi...Velhasıl şu hal Meclis-i Mebusan’ın küşadına kadar devam edip Bab-ı Ali’nin önü bir gün kalabalıktan ve gürültüden hâlî kalmadı.” Ali Fuad Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1951, p. 10.

diverse ethnic groups of the empire to find a common ground for political action. The political organization which worked to challenge the CUP was the Party of Ottoman Liberals (*Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası*). Although it was not formally established by Prince Sabahaddin, it was representing his ideas of decentralization and private initiative (*adem-i merkeziyyet ve teşebbüs-ü şahsi*). While the newspaper *Tanin* was the mouthpiece of the CUP, *İkdam* was backing up the Liberal Party, and especially its idea of decentralization was popular with many non-Muslims who were fearful of the CUP's centralist and dominating tendencies.³⁵ However, because the Liberal Party was a latecomer in the election campaign (Sabahaddin had returned to the country in September) and it could not boast of the carrying out of the Revolution unlike the CUP, its chances were slim. Proving those who did not give much credit to it, the Liberals could not manage to send their candidates to the parliament. While the only deputy elected on the Liberal ticket was Mahir Sait from Ankara, such prestigious Liberal candidates from Istanbul as the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha and Ali Kemal (who was the editor in chief of *İkdam*) could not enter the parliament. However, as Akşin notes, this landslide elections victory of the CUP was misleading as it later became evident that many names elected on the Unionist ticket started acting independently of the CUP.³⁶

The elections did not simultaneously take place at different towns. For example, when Trabzon elected and sent its deputies to the capital, the Istanbulites had not elected their deputies yet.³⁷ The elections in the capital started towards the end of November and carried on during the first days of December. A major quarrel took place as to the Liberals' sympathies with the Greek political campaign and in his editorial dated 9 December 1908 Hüseyin Cahid accused Prince Sabahaddin of promising unacceptable concessions to the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate. Referring to the visits he

³⁵ Georgios Skalieres, the son of a prominent banker in Istanbul with contacts in Greece, points to some evidence of the support for the Liberals on the part of the Greek Kingdom. Also in his correspondence with Stephanos Skoulouides, a former banker in Istanbul and later deputy in the Greek Parliament and prime minister for a short time in 1916, Skalieres maintained that Prince Sabahaddin's followers represented the hopes of better relations between Greece and Turkey. In another correspondence, Skalieres claimed that when the Liberal Party was established the incumbent government as well as the opposition agreed to support it. See Thanos Veremis, "The Hellenic Kingdom and the Ottoman Greeks: The Experiment of the Society of Constantinople" in Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi, eds., *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, Princeton; New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1999, p. 188.

³⁶ Akşin, Sina, *Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki*, Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1987, p. 108.

³⁷ Koçu, Reşad Ekrem, "Türkiye'de Seçimin Tarihi, 1877-1950", *Tarih Dünyası*, vol. I, no. 5, 15 June 1950, p. 181.

paid to the Greek and Armenian patriarchs, Cahid attacked Sabahaddin by claiming that he offered support to the Patriarchate which, he thought, was “a state within a state.” He also attacked Sabahaddin’s program of decentralization asserting that it would cause the country to break up.³⁸ Sabahaddin answered to *Tanin*’s editor by publishing a pamphlet and clarifying his position. He pointed out that the mentioned privileges of the Phanar were already stipulated in the *Kanun-ı Esasi* and maintained by the CUP itself as well in its political program. He strongly ruled out Cahid’s argument as to the political nature of these privileges. The Prince accused the zealous Unionist of muddying the waters and alienating non-Muslims of the empire by aggrandizing the matter. He went on stating that:

Our opponent himself must be well aware that, under these conditions, attempts at abolishing the privileges of the Patriarchates would cause bloodshed between Muslim and non-Muslim Ottomans, and consequently would trigger the intervention of the Europeans. Since he was well aware of this fact, Midhat Pasha had included this guarantee in the *Kanun-ı Esasi* and the CUP also incorporated that clause into its program as it shared the same conviction...for the sake of the good of the country, publications that would further detach non-Muslims from us should be avoided.³⁹

Indeed, Prince’s program of decentralization had struck a chord with many non-Muslim groups in the empire who were anxious about the CUP’s centralist tendencies. And the issue of the privileges of the Phanar and alleged violations of them by the future ruling CUP was destined to cause long and fierce discussions both in the parliament and in the press. However, as Kayalı points out, in the elections, local reputation of the candidates and the support provided by the CUP turned out to be more decisive than rival political programs.⁴⁰

³⁸ Hüseyin Cahid, “İntihabat Entrikaları” (The Election Conspiracies), *Tanin*, 26 Tesrin-i Sani 1324 / 9 December 1908.

³⁹ “Muarızımızın kendisi de pek iyi bilirler ki bu şartlar içinde Patrikhanelerin imtiyazlarını kaldırmağa teşebbüs etmek, müslim ve gayrimüslim Osmanlı unsurları arasında birçok kan dökülmesine ve neticede ecnebilerin işlerimize müdahale etmelerine sebebiyet verir. Bunu Midhat Paşa hakkıyla takdir ettiği için Kanun-ı Esasi’ye o maddeyi koymuş, aynı hakikati İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti anladığı için o da bu imtiyazları programına almıştır...bize zaten ısınmamış olan müslüman olmayan unsurların büsbütün uzaklaşmalarına sebep olacak neşriyattan vatan menfaati namına olsun ictinab etmelidir.” Prens Sabahaddin, “Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Adem-i Merkeziyet Hakkında İkinci Bir İzah (Another Explanation about the Private Initiative and Decentralization),” in Ege, Nezahet Nurettin ed., *Prens Sabahaddin: Hayatı ve İlmi Müdafaaları*, İstanbul: Güneş Neşriyatı, 1977, pp. 173-77.

⁴⁰ Kayalı, Hasan, “Elections and Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 27, no. 3, August, 1995, pp. 271-72.

1.3.1. The Society of Constantinople

The main figure behind the Society of Constantinople (SC) was Athanassios Souliotis who was sent to the Ottoman capital early in 1908 by Athens. His primary objective was to organize and direct Greek activities against the threat coming from the Bulgarian committees. Before coming to Istanbul he had already gained experience on a similar mission he carried out in Salonika through another secret organization. He was also to work with the aim of preserving the national character of the Istanbulite Greeks who were under the threat of the French cultural dominance. He defined the accompanying cosmopolitanism among the Greeks as the greatest danger for the preservation of the Greek national character. He worked to prevent the Greek families from sending their children to the popular French Catholic schools and encourage the Greek shopkeepers to use Greek letters in their shop signs.⁴¹ However, his early days at the Ottoman capital witnessed a major happening which was destined to create a great inspiration in Souliotis heart and mind. For Souliotis, the early days of the July Revolution and the brotherly atmosphere accompanying it, signified a novel beginning in the common history of the Greeks and Turks:

[t]he nations of the Balkan Peninsula and Asia Minor share too many similarities with each other, much more than our fanatical upbringing and education make us believe the opposite...The new regime was an opportunity. Its declaration created a brotherly atmosphere among Turkey's nations, i.e. all the nations of the Orient, and constitutional liberties should facilitate the Hellenism of Turkey to determine and actually follow a political program whose ultimate aim would materialize as the cooperation of the states and nations of the Orient.⁴²

With the advent of the new regime, the hope of formally participating in the Ottoman government in accordance with the numerical and economic strength of the Greek element in the empire and influencing the policy through deputies to be sent to the parliament came out. The extraordinary character of the early developments following the Young Turks Revolution incited ideas of novel projects and dreams in people's

⁴¹ Veremis, Thanos & Boura, Caterina, *Αθανάσιος Σουλιώτης-Νικολαΐδης, Οργάνωσις Κωνσταντινουπόλεως* (Athanassios Souliotis-Nikolaidis, The Society of Constantinople), Athens: Dodoni Press, 1984, pp. 47-49.

⁴² “Αλλά τα έθνη της Βαλκανικής Χερσονήσου και της Μικράς Ασίας είμαστε πολύ συγγενικά, πολύ περισσότερο συγγενικά από όσο η φανατική ανατροφή και εκπαίδευση όλων μας μας κάνει να νομίζουμε...Το νέο πολίτευμα ήταν μια ευκαιρία. Η ανακηρυξή του έκανε μια ατμόσφαιρα συναδέλφωσης των εθνών της Τουρκίας, όλων δηλαδή των ανατολικών εθνών, θετικώτερα δε οι συνταγματικές ελευθερίες ευκόλυναν τον Ελληνισμό της Τουρκίας να ορίσι και να ακολουθήση φανερά ένα πολιτικό πρόγραμμα, ένα πολιτικό πρόγραμμα που τελικός σκοπός του θα ήταν ο συνασπισμός των εθνών και των κρατών της Ανατολής”. *Ibid*, pp. 61, 63.

minds. Some were in favor of a closer cooperation with the Greek Kingdom, while some even thought of connecting two centers of Hellenism, i.e. Athens and Constantinople, via the Phanar. The togetherness of people of different religions and races on the streets and celebrating the coming of the liberties in joy and enthusiasm prompted some to entertain the idea of co-ruling the empire. When Prince Sabahaddin returning from Europe stopped at Piraeus en route to Istanbul, those who were for a closer cooperation between the two entities had given him a very warm welcome.⁴³

Souliotis acknowledges that he was brought up with the dream of *Megali Idea* like all those in his generation. However, the Greek defeat at the hands of the Ottomans in 1897 and the increasingly threatening activities of the Bulgarians in Macedonia had forced him to change his convictions. He came to appreciate the special character of the Balkan and Anatolian peninsulas which were strongly coveted by the imperialistic struggle between Great Powers. The divided character of these areas, where different nations lived at a great distance from each other, and the unending struggles between them were strengthening the hands of the Great Powers. Things that he witnessed in the summer of 1908 encouraged him to take action in order to put his ideas into practice. The salvation of the Eastern peoples would depend on the formation of an alliance against foreign powers. However, he was fully aware of the difficulties posed by different languages, confessions and the Turks' traditional perception of the non-Muslims as *reyas* (subject peoples).⁴⁴ However, in spite of all these difficulties that need to be overcome, Souliotis' romantic inclinations kept him on this track by emphasizing similarities among Eastern peoples, not differences that make it impossible to form a common front against the imperialistic encroachments. Despite all the similarities in many respects, it was hard to grasp the lack of understanding and cooperation among them. He was asking whether there was any difference in appearance between a Turkish clerk selling tickets at the Sirkeci Station and a Greek one doing the same job at the Omonoia Station. And if one takes a glance in a given afternoon on the Galata Bridge at those who were going to Istanbul from Pera or vice versa or taking the steamers to the Princes' Islands or to the Bosphorus, would he be able to distinguish between Turks, Greeks and Armenians if he does not hear them speaking their own distinct languages? However, he could easily tell a European, for

⁴³ Augustinos, Gerasimos, *Consciousness and History: Nationalistic Critics of Greek Society, 1897-1914*, New York: Boulder, 1977, p. 131.

⁴⁴ Veremis & Boura, *ibid*, pp. 60-62.

example a German officer, from others even if he is in Turkish uniform. What is more, this extreme similarity was not only limited to physical appearance but beyond:

The extent of commonality between different Eastern peoples is verified by the great number of words they have in common for everyday life, like *pancur* (παντζούρι), *ocak* (τζάκι), *kanat* (κανάτι), *eglence* (γλέντι), *fincan* (φλυτζάνι), *mangal* (μαγκάλι), *karak* (καπάκι) and *tencere* (τέντζερες)...coming from Turkish. However, more revealingly, the words used to describe sentiments like *huzur* (χουζούρι) and *keyif* (κέφι) that cannot be removed from these peoples' languages because there is a common feeling.⁴⁵

This romantic idea accompanied his vision for an Eastern alliance that he envisioned as a strategic bulwark against imperialism. The SC continued its activities after the elections were carried out and more than half of the Greek deputies embraced its line of action and worked together with Souliotis until the Ottoman defeat in the Balkan Wars put a decisive end to Souliotis' projects of the cooperation between the Eastern nations in general and between the Greeks and Turks specifically. After harsh realities of the time put an end to his vision, he was to write to his comrade Dragoumes that, "It is a pity and a waste of all that we have done!"⁴⁶

Even though the SC continued its activities after the elections,⁴⁷ now it would be relevant to mention the special role the SC assumed during the elections of 1908. In narrating the events during the early days of the Revolution, Souliotis expresses their desire to cooperate with the Young Turks and ensures them that they will strongly support the preservation of the empire provided that the government respects the national and religious character of the Greek community. In case their attempt at cooperation with the CUP does not materialize, they will then try to approach other groups, non-Muslims who do not cooperate with the Young Turks as well as Muslims who dislike their opinions and policies.⁴⁸ During the elections the SC assumed the complete responsibility through its organ of Political League (*Politikos Syndesmos*). There were also attempts at forming a Greek-Armenian electoral alliance. The SC was able to bring together some notable names from both communities under the roof of a

⁴⁵ "Πόσι συγγένεια υπάρχει μεταξύ των διαφόρων Ανατολικών Εθνών το δείχνουν οι πολλές λέξεις που έχουν κοινές, για την καθημερινή μάλιστα ζωή, όπως: παντζούρι, τζάκι, κανάτι, γλέντι, φλυτζάνι, μαγκάλι, καπάκι, τέντζερες...από την Τουρκική. Αλλά περισσότερο ακόμη οι έννοιες που έχουν κοινές όπως: χουζούρι, κέφι, που δεν μπορεί να βγουν από την γλώσσα του κάθε Έθνους γιατί είναι το αίσθημα κοινό." *Ibid*, p. 136.

⁴⁶ Veremis, *ibid*, p. 189.

⁴⁷ Souliotis narrates that his office was used like a political school where the member deputies attended and exchanged opinions on the issues they would discuss in the parliament. Veremis & Boura, *ibid*, p. 82.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 63-64.

Committee for Solidification of Greek-Armenian Relations for which a very active future deputy, Cosmidis, was also a member. For a couple of times, they even went to the Sublime Porte to protest about the electoral fractions. However, this initial cooperation remained limited and fell short of forming an electoral alliance between the Greeks and Armenians. Souliotis saw the failure of this rapprochement to develop into a formal electoral alliance as caused by the fact that in the majority of locations throughout the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian minority was heavily outnumbered by the Turkish majority, thus forcing them to enter an electoral alliance with the CUP and accept their every demand. According to Souliotis' account, when the fractions and violent behavior of the CUP and certain government officials reached extremes, there were some within the Greek community who expressed their opinion as to the withdrawal from the elections. However, the SC did not see this as a wise option since it would facilitate the election of the Bulgarians and Vlachs at the expense of the Greeks. Therefore:

Even if we elected not the half of the deputies that we were entitled to, we still had to fight in the elections so as to show that we will not accept the inferior position that Young Turks wanted to impose on us since the beginning of the Constitution.⁴⁹

1.3.2. The Greeks' grievances

Because the CUP wanted to make sure that the elections be carried out under its own control, it was in favor of negotiating with non-Muslim groups in order to decide on the number and names of the candidates to be sent to the parliament. During the negotiations the major argument that came up between the negotiating committees was the Greeks' insistence for proportional representation. In covering the election time, Ahmad concludes that "all elements in the empire were fairly well-represented and satisfied with their representation." However, he excludes the Greeks from this satisfaction and adds that "they complained against the irregularities committed by the Committee at their expense."⁵⁰ True that they protested against the way the elections

⁴⁹ "Κι' αν ακόμι δεν εβγάζαμε παρά τους μισούς από όσους είχαμε δικαίωμα βουλευτές, έπρεπε ν'αγωνισθούμε στις εκλογές για να δείξωμε ότι δεν εννούμε να δεχθούμε την υποτέλεια εις την οποίαν ήθελαν να μας βάλουν οι Νεότουρκοι ευθύς εξ αρχής του Συντάγματος". *Ibid*, pp. 75, 78.

⁵⁰ Ahmad, Feroz, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908-1914*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969, p. 28 & f.n. 3. Ahmad's inaccurate observation regarding proportional representation seems to have been taken granted by others too. For example, Shaw notes that "all the *millet*s were represented in proportion to their actual population" in Shaw & Shaw, *ibid*, p. 278.

were carried out but Ahmad omits the greatest reason for their complaints: the lack of proportional representation. In one of his editorials in *Tanin*, even Hüseyin Cahid acknowledges the lack of it as the major rift. Written as an answer to non-Muslims' grievances about the elections, Cahid reminds them that the electoral law was not designed to elect deputies in proportion to the demographic presence of the ethno-sectarian groups. He then explains the situation with an example where he takes the case of a hypothetical district (*sancak*) comprising a couple of neighboring sub-districts (*nahiye*). One of these *nahiyes* is assumed to be composed solely of Greeks numbering fifty thousand, while others of Armenians of one hundred thousand. If the election of deputies was to be carried out on the basis of the population in the *nahiyes*, two Armenian deputies and one Greek deputy were to be elected. However, as the electoral law took *sancaks* as basic electoral units, the case should proceed differently. He notes that *nahiyes* are units which decide on the secondary voters who later on come to the *sancak* center. In accordance with Cahid's demographic assumption, in the *sancak* center Greek secondary voters would be doubled by the Armenian secondary voters. Therefore, this *sancak* would not manage to send any Greek deputy to the parliament, in spite of a significant demographic presence of the Greeks. Considering the fact that in the majority of *sancaks* the Muslim element was superior in number to the non-Muslims, negotiations with the CUP proved to be decisive.⁵¹

An important difficulty in this regard emerged when the elections in the capital were underway. The Greeks were insisting to get their share of deputies in proportion to their population. The grievances reached the level of a serious crisis when the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Joachim III did not get any satisfying answer from the Sublime Porte regarding the matter and threatened to boycott the elections. The CUP decided to play the role of mediator. On 23 October a joint delegation of two Turks and a Greek visited the Patriarch and offered him proportional representation in the assembly. He accepted the offer and appointed two delegates to settle the issue with the CUP.⁵² This meant three, not two as was the case before, deputies for the Greeks out of a total number of twelve deputies for Istanbul. At first, it seemed that the Turkish and Greek committees negotiating the matter would reach an agreement. However, according to *Tanin's* report, Greek delegates expressed their disappointment at the rejection of the

⁵¹ Hüseyin Cahid, "İntihabatta Gayrimüslim Unsurlar" (The non-Muslim Elements in the Elections), *Tanin*, 13 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 26 October 1908.

⁵² Ahmad (1982), pp. 407-8.

Patriarchate's objections to the Ministry of Interior regarding the electoral fraud in Kırkkilise and Ioannina. They decided to halt the negotiations saying that Joachim III asked them to withdraw from the negotiations as a move to protest the decline of his petition.⁵³ In the end, failing to conclude the negotiations with the CUP, the Greeks managed to send only two deputies to the parliament. Cahid pointed out that it was the Greeks who failed to grab the chance of electing three deputies, a chance given by the Muslims as a sign of their good intentions. He likened them to "small children who clamor and pout for nothing. They refuse to join those who eat fruits and sweets before their eyes, though they regret deep inside" (*Bazı çocuklar bir hiç için gürültü çıkararak somurturlar, gözlerinin önünde yemişler, tatlılar yendiği halde yemeğe iştirak etmezler fakat içlerinden nadim olurlar*).⁵⁴

The Greeks' complaint that they were not fairly represented in the elections was partly caused by the fact that there were many who were not allowed to vote in the elections as it was compulsory to present their identity cards (*tezkere-i Osmaniye*) at the polls. However, a part of the responsibility for underrepresentation laid with the Greek community. The annual censuses that would be held to estimate taxes and recruits were generally characterized by the underrepresentation of the Greeks. In these population registers the state had to count on the lists submitted by the leaders of the *millet*s. As the military exemption tax (*bedel-i askeri*) was a tax collected on a communal, not individual, basis there were incentives on the part of Christian communities to understate the size of their populations.⁵⁵

⁵³ Hüseyin Cahid, "İntihabat Meselesi ve Rumlar" (The Question of the Elections and the Greeks), *Tanin*, 20 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 2 November 1908. In this editorial, Cahid answers to the objections expressed by the Phanar. Regarding Kırkkilise, he says that the government's investigation proved the Phanar's objections wrong. However, as the CUP went to the points of extreme as to its desire to achieve accord, it proposed to form a commission composed of one member of the Committee and one to be chosen by the Greeks. However, it did not materialize. Regarding the case of Ioannina, on the other hand, the Phanar insisted that Greeks working under the Muslim landowners to be able to vote in the elections. It was not possible, Cahid points out, as these workers were not paying any taxes, thus not eligible to vote.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Ahmad (1982), p. 407. The question of underrepresentation in the parliament was to produce further controversies and incite some authorities to take necessary actions to determine the size of the Greek population in the Ottoman Empire. For instance, Alexandris points out that between 1910 and 1912 Greek consular authorities cooperated with the Phanar so as to carry out a detailed census of Ottoman Greeks in Thrace and Anatolia. See Alexis Alexandris, "The Greek Census of Anatolia and Thrace (1910-1912): A Contribution to Ottoman Historical Demography," in Dimitri

Narrating the events of the election days, Kansu accepts the existence of some infractions but argues that “the almost complete absence of such complaints on the part of the Jews and Armenians rendered it probable that the infractions were unimportant.”⁵⁶ Then Kansu sums up his account but draws a problematic picture where he contradicts his own argument. He points out that, unlike Armenians, the Greeks were not satisfied with the election results and adds that:

[t]hough their failure had largely been their own doing. After a brief period of excitement, the Greek community had come to regard the Revolution with more skepticism than any other non-Muslim community, the result being that it did not gain as much from the Revolution as other Christian groups, such as the Armenians, which had lent the movement their support.⁵⁷

When he was mentioning the question of infractions he had concluded that they were not important. To prove his case he had alluded to the absence of objections on the part of the Armenians.⁵⁸ However, how can one expect that the Armenians, who were in close cooperation with the CUP during the elections, would raise their voices and accuse the Unionists with infractions and fraud? Should it be the nature of a relationship based on electoral cooperation and understanding? Of course, it should be the Greeks who would complain against the fraud as it was they who were not in really good terms with the CUP while preparing for the elections. So the logic of Kansu’s conclusion links the absence of fractions to the cooperation with the CUP.

One cannot help but get surprised at coming across the same assessment made by the Unionist press of the time with respect to the CUP’s relations with the Greeks

Gondicas and Charles Issawi, eds., *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, Princeton; New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1999, pp. 45-76. However, McCarthy argues that there was not any real Greek census in the Ottoman Empire as “The common sense should indicate to any researcher the unlikelihood of an army of Greek censustakers fanning out across Anatolia and Thrace, counting all the inhabitants.” See Justin McCarthy, “Greek Statistics on Ottoman Greek Population,” *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Autumn 1980, vol. 1, no. 2, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Kansu (1997), p. 208.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 240.

⁵⁸ Including the Jews would not serve any of our purposes. They were a small group to be represented with only a couple of deputies in the Chamber of Deputies. They were in close cooperation with the CUP and especially their deputy for Salonika, Emmanuel Carasso, was an influential name in the Unionist circles, an importance that was not matched by any other non-Muslim deputy. While it is true that the Greeks in the parliament were to be those who would cause much headache to the Unionists, the Unionist relations with the Armenians, as the second biggest non-Muslim element of the empire, were not always free of discord. However, the Jewish deputies were not going to involve in any issue concerning their ethnic or religious status and rights, unlike the other two.

and Armenians in the electoral process. When the problems between the Turkish and Greek election committees arose, the mouthpiece of the CUP, *Tanin*, employed a revealing tool of comparison. The comparison was between the Greeks and Armenians, and the revealing aspect about it was that it gave us a strong idea as to the way the Greek and Armenian communities was perceived and portrayed in the Unionist circles. This did not remain specific to the time of the elections but continued to be so inside the parliament and in the Unionist press in the years to come as well. The first notable example of this came out in one of Cahid's editorials where he opposed the arguments put forward by the Constantinopolitan daily *Proodos*. Its main complaint was that the CUP has turned its back on the Greeks who had assisted them in their struggle for freedom against the *ancien régime*. However, to their chagrin, what fell to their share was nothing but betrayal as the CUP did not choose them to cooperate but others. It seems that what really incited Cahid to anger was the Greek paper's assertion that even in the time of autocracy they witnessed fewer violations of their ages-old rights. He stresses that *Proodos* must be indebted to the freedom fighters, thanks to whom it has now the freedom of expression and explains:

If it had not been for the heroes of the Rumelia and the Armenian volunteers, today *Proodos* would have been still pondering in vain and desperation. Perhaps for its own aims the old state of affairs was preferable since it is for sure that in the old regime it was the Greeks who suffered the least, while those who suffered most were the Armenians and Turks.⁵⁹

The election of second voters started on November 18 in Istanbul and the voting at Pera attracted severe criticisms of the Greeks who accused the CUP of violating the electoral law and making infractions. On 22 November over twenty five thousand demonstrators marched to the Sublime Porte and protested against the elections at Pera. They demanded from Kamil Pasha that the Pera elections be revoked. This request was rejected but the voting period was extended for eight more days.⁶⁰ Perhaps the demonstration did not produce desired results to placate the Greeks, but it certainly produced enough reasons to infuriate the editor of *Tanin*. He had found a perfect opportunity to set the two non-Muslim communities against each other in order to praise the Armenians for their conduct while denigrate the Greeks for the demanding stance

⁵⁹ “*Ermeni fedaileri, Rumeli kahramanları iddiası olmasaydı bugün Proodos arpacı kumrusu gibi hala düşünecekti. Belki kendisinin emelinde o hal daha muvafik geliyordu. Çünkü inkar olunamaz ki, idare-i sabıkada en az mutazarrır olan unsur Rum unsuru, en çok mutazarrır olanlar da Ermeniler ve Türklerdi.*” Hüseyin Cahid, “Rum Matbuatı” (The Ottoman Greek Press), *Tanin*, 14 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 27 October 1908.

⁶⁰ Veremis & Boura, *ibid*, pp. 79-80.

they took in their negotiations with the CUP. His main target was the respective ecclesiastical authorities of these two communities. The attitude demonstrated by the Armenian clerics while the electoral urns were being carried over the shoulders in the streets had to set an example for the Greeks:

On the one hand, the notables of the Armenian clerics were walking side by side and in partnership with their Muslim counterparts so as to prove good intentions and honest aims on their part. On the other hand, the heads of the Greek clerics were encouraging and provoking ignorant masses to go marching to the Sublime Porte, against the administration and law, in a way to prove their intention to stir up disturbances in the country.⁶¹

The crux of the grievances was on the Greeks' insistence for proportional representation that was not accepted by the CUP. When Cahid made this big demonstration of Greeks the theme for one of his editorials, he delineated the boundaries of the rights and demands claimed by the others. This demonstration was nothing about claiming rights (whether genuine or imagined rights) but troublemaking:

If the non-Muslim elements do not nurture bad intentions for this country but instead only ask for rights and justice then the Muslim element would always extend its embrace of brotherhood and collaboration to them. But if they enter a dead-end alley, like the Greeks do, we would despisingly turn our heads away from them and say 'Do as you wish!'. If today the Turks who offer them, out of their noble-mindedness, two deputies get fed up with their arrogant behavior, then they would not anymore feel obliged to act in a way to please the others!⁶²

While covering the question of dominant nation in the section 1.2., we came across similar examples that hinted at the way the Greeks, or the non-Muslims in general, were perceived in the Unionist circles. Here again we have the idea of a patronizing political cooperation between the CUP and the other groups. Here we need to remind ourselves that at the beginning, the tentative agreement between the CUP and the Greeks for Istanbul elections had granted three deputies to be elected from the Greek list. However, now it became evident that even the chance of getting two deputies elected was really a

⁶¹ "Bir tarafta hüsnüniyet ve halis amala delalet edecek surette Ermeni rüesa-ı ruhaniyesi rical-i ilmiye-i İslamiye ile yanyana, müttefiklik yürüyor, diğer tarafta Rum rüesa-ı ruhaniyesi memlekette iğtişaş çıkaracak yolda cahil halkı teşvik ve tahrik ederek Bab-ı Ali civarına, hükümete, kanuna karşı nümayişe gönderiyor!" Hüseyin Cahid, "Yaşasın Asker" (Long Live the Soldiers), *Tanin*, 10 Tesrin-i Sani 1324 / 23 November 1908.

⁶² "Anasır-ı gayrimüslime bu vatan hakkında su-i niyet beslemeyip de yalnız hak ve adalet isterlerse Müslim unsur her vakit kendilerine aguş-u uhuvvet ve teavününü açar. Fakat Rumlar gibi çıkmaz yola sapacak olurlarsa onlar da 'Siz bilirsiniz!' diyerek istihfafkarane başını çevirir. Bugün kemal-i alicenab ile kendilerine iki mebus veren Türkler gördükleri bu şumarık muamelattan bizar olurlarsa bu haturnüvazlığa da sonra kendilerini mecbur addetmezler!". *Ibid.*

chance in the literal sense of the word. It is a chance for the Greeks, as Cahid implies that, “they do not have to feel obliged to negotiate in the future.” The right to determine who gets how many, seems to have been monopolized by the CUP and others could be minor partners in this provided that they do not raise serious objections. Another interesting point as to the passage is the way the denominations of Muslim and Turk are used. Similar to the instance to be seen while elaborating on the question of dominant nation, this passage too tells us that he rather chooses to employ these interchangeably. At the beginning he chooses to say “the Muslim element” thus giving the impression that it is not peculiar to the Turks, but later on he starts using the ethnic label of “the Turks” in lieu of a more inclusive religious denomination.

However, complaints about the electoral fractions did not remain limited to the Greeks. In an effort to prove that there were illegal and unfair actions on the part of the Greeks, *Tanin* started spreading its own claims. One of these appeared on 6 November 1908 when the Greeks’ claims about the illegal activities of the CUP had reached intense levels. It reported an incident based on a letter allegedly received from a famous figure in Kozani from Macedonia. The letter was about unacceptable actions of the Greeks in the *sancak* of Serfidje. As the Vlachs of the region, who were traditionally under strong pressure of the Greeks, were in minority and unable to elect any deputy from their own community, they had turned to the Muslim element and decided to support them. Seeing this, however, the Greeks had started exerting spiritual pressure on them via their bishops. Furthermore, in order to secure both deputies that Serfidje was entitled to, the Greeks formed a strong alliance around two candidates, one of them is the famous or rather infamous Boussios, and through extreme pressures and threats, they forced one of the independent-minded Greek merchants to renounce his bid in the elections.⁶³ With such examples, the Unionist newspaper was trying to emphasize the role of the Phanar in the elections and calling on the Greeks to free themselves from the clutch of the Patriarchate. If they would be able to free themselves from its clutch, the address they should end up would certainly be the CUP that was being accused of similar actions by the majority of the Greek press in Istanbul and by the SC.

⁶³ “İntihabat Meselesi ve Rumlar” (The Question of the Elections and the Greeks), *Tanin*, 24 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 6 November 1908.

1.4. After the Elections

In the section 1.2.1 we saw that the Greeks' complaints about the electoral fraud had even reached the level where some notables inside the Greek community started mentioning the option of withdrawal from the elections. However, in the end an agreement was reluctantly concluded with the CUP. Although the original deal of electing three deputies from Istanbul had been cancelled, in the new compromise the negotiating committees decided on the election of two Greek deputies proposed by the Patriarch Joachim III. In total, the Greek Ottomans managed to send twenty four deputies to the parliament.⁶⁴

The parliament that emerged out of the 1908 elections was different from the first Ottoman parliament of 1877. The elections for the latter had been held without an electoral law, while in 1908 the law drafted in the first Ottoman parliament was taken as the basis for the elections. In the first parliament there were some provinces that were not represented, whereas all the Ottoman provinces were more or less represented by sending deputies to the assembly in 1908. The total number of deputies in the Chamber of Deputies formed in 1908 more than doubled that of the first parliament. However, this numerical change did not materialize with regard to the Muslim and non-Muslim ratio. While in the first Ottoman parliament 40% of the Chamber of Deputies was composed of non-Muslim deputies, this ratio was much smaller in the Ottoman parliament of 1908.⁶⁵ According to the data provided by Ahmad and Rustow a total of 288 deputies entered the Ottoman parliament in 1908. Out of 288, there were 147 Turks, 60 Arabs, 27 Albanians, 24 Greeks, 14 Armenians, 10 Slavs and 4 Jews.⁶⁶ Even if we only take the Turkish deputies, we will see that they formed 51% of the assembly. A much higher percentage that we would get with the inclusion of Arabs and Albanians, the great majority of them was Muslim, indicates the changing balance of Muslim and

⁶⁴ Boura, Catherine, "The Greek Millet in Turkish Politics: Greeks in the Ottoman Parliament," in Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi, eds., *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, Princeton; New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1999, p. 195. While Souliotis gives the total number of Greek deputies as 23, Ahmad and Rustow give it as 26. See Veremis & Boura, *ibid*, p. 81 and Ahmad, Feroz & Rustow, Dankwart A., "İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Meclisler, 1908-1918," in *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 4-5, 1976, p. 247.

⁶⁵ Tanör, *ibid*, p. 119.

⁶⁶ Ahmad, & Rustow, *ibid*, p. 247. Their research gives the number of Greek deputies as 26. However, my findings are in agreement with that of Boura's.

non-Muslim representatives in this period as compared to the first Ottoman Chamber of Deputies. The shrinking boundaries of the Ottoman Empire at the expense of the Christian element (mostly Slavs and Vlachs) with the defeat against the Russians in the 1877-78 War is quite decisive though not sufficient by itself to account for this new balance. One has to take into account also the changing political dynamics with the coming of the CUP which was certainly favoring the Turkish element. Contrary to the generally accepted view, the Greek deputies did not represent a monolithic block. For instance, Ahmad & Rustow argue that almost all the Greek deputies desired the establishment of a great Hellenic state.⁶⁷ However, even the Unionist paper *Tanin* denies their claim. Towards the end of 1910, the cleavages inside the Greek group intensify and we see the names of Carolidis (Izmir), Aristidi (Izmir), Nallis (Monastir), and Mammopoulos (Ergiri) on the side of the Unionists.⁶⁸

In spite of all the complaints and possible fractions during the electoral process, the elections of 1908 were extremely important in the modern history of the Ottoman Empire. Because for the first Ottoman Parliament no electoral process had been experienced, the elections of 1908 were indeed unprecedented and signified the beginning of a true democratic experience with, of course, all its deficiencies and defects. Arrival of deputies in Istanbul from all around the vast empire filled the hearts of the city dwellers with excitement and joy. They gave the representatives of the Ottoman nation a warm welcome with Ottoman flags in their hands accompanied by music and applaud. The parliament's first sitting took place on 17 December 1908 at the *Dârülfünun* building at Ayasofya, where thousands of curious Ottomans had gathered outside to witness this extraordinary happening that promised a better future for their empire:

[w]hen the deputies met, the great church-mosque of St. Sophia was crowded inside with visitors, while the outer courts were equally crammed with people. I endeavoured to get in, but amidst the tens of thousands who were present concluded that I must forego that pleasure.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 254.

⁶⁸ "Rum Mebusları" (The Greek Deputies), *Tanin*, 5 Tesrin-i Sani 1326 / 18 November 1910. The formation of a Greek Party during this time is another proof to the non-monolithic structure of the group of the Greek deputies. According to Boura, only 16 out of 24 Greek deputies agreed to join the party. See Catherine Boura, "Οι Βουλευτικές εκλογές στην Οθωμανική Αυτοκρατορία," *Deltio Kentrou Mikrasiatikon Spoudon*, 4, 1983, p. 77.

⁶⁹ Sir Edwin Pears, *Forty Years in Constantinople*, London: Herbert Jenkins, 1916, p. 253.

Before they convened at the parliament the representatives of the Ottoman nation had been to the Deputies' Club at Nuruosmaniye and then to the Ministry of War at Bayezit, finally to be taken to the chamber. 115 cars were used to take the deputies to their final address. During the opening ceremony a music band played the following piece composed in honor of the Chamber of Deputies:

The Ottomans became victorious today
Soldiers conquered the country again.
Bayonets opened the way to deputies
Long live Niyazi, long live Enver.

Martyrs' silhouette in the heavens
As if applauding Kemal's spirit
Alas today he didn't see this
Our dear, beloved patriot.

Red flags covering the clouds
Our joy reaching the skies
The tyrants begging the tyrannized
Such a Judgment Day, oh my God!

Rise up Midhat, your time has come.
May your glory dominate the world
Come and stand before these deputies
With your children, now may you live!

The above piece is striking as it helps us grasp the spirit of the time when the parliament after an impatient suspense that lasted thirty long years finally convened and many saw it as the only hope to mend the old and weak empire. While Resneli Niyazi and Enver Bey were extolled as the heroes of the Revolution, Namık Kemal and Midhat Pasha were not forgotten for being the main sources of inspiration of these young Young Turks.⁷⁰

1.5. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we started with the antecedents of the 1908 parliament found in the nineteenth century history of the Ottoman Empire. The series of reforming acts starting with the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856, and the proclamation of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* twenty years later, and the opening of the first Ottoman parliament that immediately followed it were taken as the main elements in this formation of representative institutions. We also saw that the 1908 elections and the parliament that followed, radically differed from the constitutional experience of 1877-78. First of all, the 1908 elections signified the real beginning of parliamentary life in Turkey in spite of all its shortcomings. It was with the 1908 elections that for the first time people throughout the country elected, in two stages, those who would represent them at the chamber. After a long period of autocracy characterized by a heavy censorship of the press and curbing of political freedoms, people were indeed thirsty for the word liberty and they ascribed an air of festivity and celebration to the electoral process.

This cheerful atmosphere that accompanied the general elections should not divert our attention from, perhaps, the most important character of these elections. It stemmed from its special aspect of providing the long-awaited occasion to materialize what the Young Turks in opposition before the July Revolution were propagating. In this sense, these elections posed an opportunity that different political projects had been impatiently anticipating. For the CUP which represented the dominant faction within the Young Turks, it was an opportunity to save the empire by extending equal political rights and duties to every community in the empire,

⁷⁰ “Osmanlılar bugün oldu muzaffer / Fethetti yeniden vatanı asker / Açtı mebuslara yolu süngüler / Yaşasın Niyazi, yaşasın Enver / Gökyüzünde şühedanın hayali / Alkışlıyor sanki ruh-i Kemal’i / Ah ölmeden görmeliydi bu hali / O kıymetli muhterem vatanperver / Al bayraklar bulutları sarıyor / Şenliğimiz asumana varıyor / Mazlumlara zalimler yalvarıyor / Hey Allahım bu nasıl ruz-i mahşer / Uyan Midhat uyan geldi zamanın / Tutsun dünyaları şöhret ve şanın / Sen bulun önünde şu mebusanın / Artık yaşa evladınla beraber”. Koçu, Reşad Ekrem, *ibid*, pp. 181-82.

though without disregarding the special place that must be reserved to the Turkish element. However, the major problem was caused by different understandings of the concept of equality. The CUP saw the elections as a struggle that should never be lost to the non-Turks of the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish element was the dominant nation and therefore it could never jeopardize its position by accepting the Greeks' demands as to the proportional representation. The CUP's understanding of equality was based on the acceptance of the non-Muslims' active participation in the political arena on condition that the Turks would never relinquish the bridles of the state mechanism. It was dangerous to allow the two elements to compete in real equal terms (for instance, allowing proportional representation in the assembly because of the inherent risk of losing a Turkish majority) due to persistent distrust shown to the non-Muslim elements. Therefore, in order to better grasp the backstage of the events taking place during the elections, one should certainly refer to the idea of dominant nation. A rival that emerged from the Young Turk movement was the faction that followed the liberal ideas of Prince Sabahaddin. It was radically different from the CUP's centralist outlook, which always prioritized the Turkish element over other elements constituting the multi-national empire, and therefore gained the sympathies of the non-Muslims. However, it completely failed in the elections. As far as the Greeks were concerned, Souliotis' secret organization was trying to find common ground with the CUP. However, after the initial euphoria passed away, it started getting disillusioned with its attitude towards the Greeks who were insisting on proportional representation. However, the CUP and SC shared one thing in common, that they both aimed at preservation of the Ottoman Empire. However, their means were totally unacceptable to each other. The inherent policy of the CUP, as will be seen in the coming chapters, stipulated the preservation of the privileged position of the Turks via the preservation of the Turkish character of the state, in spite of a propagated policy of Ottomanism in theory. The state would always remain as a Turkish state although non-Turks would be given extensive political rights provided that they recognize the Turkish character of the state. However, as we have seen and will see, in their approach to the non-Muslims, the CUP chose to maintain a patronizing attitude that implied that cooperation with them was motivated by its noblemindedness. This was unacceptable as far as the Greeks were concerned since they regarded the state as a common heritage and emphasized the historical role of the Greeks within it, as recognized by all the Sultans after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453. What the SC suggested, instead, was the preservation and strengthening of the state only through granting a real political equality to the Greeks, and other non-Turks as well. The mere mentioning of the theme of dominant nation was sufficient

to remind them that the old system of uneven rights between different Ottoman elements had not passed away yet.

CHAPTER II

INSIDE THE PARLIAMENT: MAIN ISSUES OF DISCORD

Having provided a series of historical developments that paved the way for the introduction of a parliamentary life and an account of the first real elections in the Ottoman Empire in 1908, this chapter is about what happened inside the parliament. Saving one of the major issues, i.e. the extension of military service to the Ottoman non-Muslims, to the next chapter, this chapter will revolve around some other major discussions that directly concerned the Greek Ottoman deputies. The format will be the same as it is in the following chapter. We will take the discussions in the Chamber of Deputies as our central point that will be extended and enriched by following their projections in the relevant pages of the press of the time. The scope of this study does not allow us to deal with every issue debated in the parliament, though they concerned the Greek Ottoman community. Therefore, an inevitable need to follow a selective approach emerges. Accordingly, in the first section the Cretan question which had both internal and external aspects will be shortly examined. The crisis starting with Crete's unilateral decision to unite with Greece on 6 October 1908, although not formally approved by the latter, kept the political atmosphere uneasy and tense for four years. In the section that follows, our focus will shift to a domestic event and we will try to grasp the main contours of the debate revolving around the participation of the Greek Ottomans in the government service. The final section will be the broadest section of this chapter where the highly contentious question of the "privileges" of the Greek *millet* will be taken into consideration. Because the issue of privileges by itself is such an extensive one, our discussion will be specifically centered on the repercussions of this discussion in matters related to the community education.

2.1. The Cretan Question

The Ottoman Empire was face to face with extraordinary international developments while the general elections for the Chamber of Deputies were underway in 1908. These events had such an importance that much of the attention that must have been exclusively devoted to the elections had to be diverted outside the empire's boundaries. The series of events started on 5 October when the autonomous Bulgarian principality declared its independence. Before the Ottoman State could come to terms with the implications of this development, the very next day came two more major blows when Austria-Hungary declared its annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Cretan assembly proclaimed its union with the Greek Kingdom. Among these three events the one which generated the utmost reaction was Crete's unilateral decision to unite with Greece. Although we saw the most extensive and influential commercial boycott in the history of the Ottoman Empire following the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Habsburgs, it actually turned out to be the easiest to admit in the end. Austria-Hungary suffered a great deal in this commercial protest and had to compensate for this act of belligerence.⁷¹ Those who thought that the ties between the Ottoman Empire and Bosnia-Herzegovina were already weakened were not a minority and the extent of surprise was not that large when the decision was formally proclaimed.⁷² However, the case of Crete was much different. First of all, emotional ties with the island were strong. The Ottoman forces had taken great pains to capture the island from the Venetians, after perhaps the longest siege in the military history that lasted twenty one years from 1648 to 1669. The ever-present argument that the Ottomans gave too many martyrs during the siege marked the basic line of this emotional factor. There was more to the Cretan question than the existence of an emotional link. Crete had a remarkable strategic importance. The Ottomans had lost Cyprus to the British three decades ago and now Crete was the last post in the Eastern Mediterranean where the Ottoman state had some sovereign rights guaranteed by the Great Powers. Although the Ottoman Empire had lost its complete sovereignty on the island, it was nevertheless a part

⁷¹ For an extensive analysis of this boycott see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *1908 Osmanlı Boykotu*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2004.

⁷² This was the case on the Habsburg side as well. Austria's last prime minister Heinrich Lammasch stated in a letter to *The Times*, dated 10 November 1908 that "[t]he proclamation...has changed nothing in the world of reality of things, that it has put an end only to a mere fiction...Turkey has lost nothing; on the contrary, it has regained, in consequence of the withdrawal of our troops out of the territory of Novi Bazar, the unlimited exercise of sovereignty in these regions." Quotation is in Mason, John W., *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire 1867-1918*, London; New York: Longman, 1997, pp. 105-6.

of the administrative equation. However, its possible annexation by Greece would mean that it would lose even its current limited rights and Greece would gain an upper hand in the Eastern Mediterranean.⁷³

Because these international developments coincided with the holy month of Ramadan, the cabinet was not convening and Kamil Pasha invited his ministers and arranged a meeting at his home. When he asked his Minister of War whether the army was able to fight, the answer he got was not heartening. Rıza Pasha answered that the soldiers did not even have shoes to wear.⁷⁴ Apart from the poor situation of the army, there were probably the considerations of keeping the armed forces inside the country to put down any possible armed reaction against the young regime.⁷⁵ Therefore, the solution to the Cretan crisis had to be found in a peaceful way. At the same time, there was much saber rattling going on, especially in the Unionist press under the leadership of *Tanin*. Some Greek newspapers published in the Ottoman lands only added fuel to the fire and *Tanin* did not miss the opportunity to use this to attack the Greek Ottoman press. In the early days of the crisis its target was *Proodos*, which incorporated the translation of a piece extracted from an Austrian newspaper, which reported Austria's supposed guarantee that Crete would be annexed to Greece. Rather than the content of the report, its title prompted Hüseyin Cahid to declare the aim of the Greek Ottoman press as propagation of the Greece's interests and prevention of a strong union between the Greek Ottomans and Turks. The title chosen by *Proodos* was "A Good News."⁷⁶ And it was through the editor in chief of *Tanin* that the Cretan issue was first brought to the parliament. During the first working days of the parliament Hüseyin Cahid submitted a petition to ask the Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha to give an explanation to the assembly regarding the foreign policy of the government. The last part of the Grand Vizier's speech was dedicated to the Cretan question where he declared that the decision of the Cretan assembly was not approved by the island's guarantor states and Greece did not choose to favor it either. He defined the future policy that the government would follow and pointed to the negotiations to be held with England, France,

⁷³ For an account of the Cretan crisis till 1908, see Ayşe Nükhet Adıyeke, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Girit Bunalımı (1896-1908)*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2000.

⁷⁴ Türkgeldi, Ali Fuad, *ibid*, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁵ Ahmad (1969), p. 25.

⁷⁶ Hüseyin Cahid, "Rum Matbuatı" (The Ottoman-Greek Press), *Tanin*, 28 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 10 November 1908.

Russia and Italy in order to find a workable solution without violating the Ottoman rights on Crete.⁷⁷

The Cretan question occupied a special place among other issues discussed in the parliament because it, in a sense, carried a potential of testing the Greek Ottomans' allegiance in the presence of this crisis. Unlike the Armenians or Jews, the case of the Greek Ottomans was different as there was an independent neighboring state with which they could theoretically identify themselves with respect to race and religion. Therefore, it created a tense situation where some non-Greeks got alerted in the face of the crisis. That this event was taking place inside a triangle of the Ottoman Empire, Greek Kingdom and autonomous Crete with repercussions within the Ottoman lands due to strong Greek presence, allows us to regard it not only as an event concerning foreign affairs of the empire but also an internal one. For this reason, it was an incident where the internal and external spheres intersected. Another two-dimensional aspect of this event arose from different areas where the reactions to it could be observed. First, one could scrutinize its implications as far as the people on the street were concerned. Second, its projections in the Ottoman parliament could be traced. Because this study confines itself inside the parliament and takes as its main actors the Greek deputies, the first dimension, i.e. social dimension, will only be mentioned to the extent it found its reflection within the Ottoman assembly. And its first reflection came with telegrams sent from all around the country and read at the parliament. Senders of these telegrams were not limited to Muslims or Turks. Some of them included Greek names together with the other ethnic groups and some were written exclusively by Greeks. Some were telegrams sent by ordinary people of a certain town and some were by the notables of a certain place. For instance, the telegram from Soma, a town in the Western Aegean region with a large Greek population, which emphasized the strenuous efforts during the Cretan siege and declared that the example of Bosnia-Herzegovina would not be repeated, was signed by a priest in the name of Teodoros as the representative of the Christian population of the town. In another telegram from one of the major port-cities in the Black Sea, Samsun, alongside the name of the mufti of the town, mayor's name, Yorgaki, was also present. Yet another telegram was from Balıkesir, a town in the Marmara region, was written in the name of the Greeks of the town who asserted that "Following the demonstration organized in Balıkesir, the loyal Greek community declares its willingness to die for the country together with all the other Ottomans, in case the sovereign

⁷⁷ *Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Ceridesi* (MMZC – Minutes of the Ottoman Parliament), p. 80 (17 Kanun-ı Sani 1324 / 30 January 1909); pp. 164-70 (31 Kanun-ı Sani 1324 / 13 February 1909).

rights of the Ottomans in Crete are violated” (*Balıkesir’de icra olunan miting neticesinde eğer Girit hakimiyet-i Osmaniye hilafına bir taarruza duçar olur ise bütün Osmanlılarla birlikte Rum cemaat-i sadıkanın da vatan uğrunda elbirliği ile ölmeye hazır olduklarını ayrıca arz eyeriz*).⁷⁸

In the summer of 1909 as written by Cahid in his editorial, the relative calm of early months when Greece maintained a calm stance was lately taken over by a completely different atmosphere where the word war started to be uttered. He presented the president of the Greek parliament Ralli’s words as a proof to the changing atmosphere. Cahid was reporting that while talking about Crete, Ralli labeled it as “Our Island” and openly stated that all the Greeks living in the Ottoman Empire were supporting his claim. Then Cahid interpreted his words as nothing but a claim that the Greeks in the Ottoman lands were living under the name of Ottoman though they were emotionally attached to Greece, the logical consequence of this being that they were in favor of Crete’s union with Greece. Cahid continued to claim that many in Greece were actively trying to detach the Greek Ottomans from other Ottomans through certain actions. However, those who, in reality but in vain, suffer would always be the Greek Ottomans because of this external campaigning.⁷⁹

Cahid’s early writings regarding the question of dominant nation and such excerpts from provocative reporting of the Greek Ottoman press would render the Greek deputies in a difficult position in the Ottoman Parliament. They would feel obliged to make an explanation and convince the others of their Ottomanness. The deputies were taking their turns to deliver patriotic speeches from the floor of the parliament. For instance, the petition written in Arabic by a deputy from Yemen was translated into Turkish and read from the floor of the parliament, declaring that the people of Yemen were ready to sacrifice their lives if the course of events would call them to the holy duty. And an Albanian deputy gave a speech describing the historical significance of the island by highlighting the great number of Albanian martyrs during the Cretan siege in the 17th century. In this atmosphere of passionate patriotic speeches, those who were especially expected on the floor were the Greek deputies who were to “prove” their allegiance to the Ottoman State. At this point it would be important to remind ourselves what Hüseyin Cahid argued when he wrote about the question of dominant nation in the preceding chapter:

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, p. 571 (16 July 1325 / 29 July 1909).

⁷⁹ Hüseyin Cahid, “Türkiye ve Yunanistan” (Turkey and Greece), *Tanin*, 27 July 1325 / 9 August 1909.

[I]et us suppose that the issue of the annexation of Crete by Greece comes to the agenda and the Greeks hold an absolute majority in the Ottoman Parliament. How many Greek deputies who will not disapprove this move and not even offer to forsake some territory around Ioannina could someone expect to find?⁸⁰

This passage is from one of his editorials where he defended the position of dominant nation of the Turkish element in the Ottoman Empire. It had been written more than one month before the opening of the parliament and expressed deep suspicions as to the sincerity of the Greeks' allegiance to the Ottomanness. As a small minority in the parliament, the Greeks did not propose anything that could disrupt the *status quo* in the island. A deputy from Salonika, Artas Yorgaki, expressed that he shared the views articulated in the telegrams and asked the government to give an ear to the public opinion.⁸¹

In order to find a political solution to the crisis between Greece and the Ottoman Empire, no significant steps were taken and the problem between the two states never fell out of importance in the press of the time and it would occasionally appear on the parliamentary agenda. Although a great deal of bravado and calls for war was continuing at full speed on the part of the Unionist press, the government was reluctant to undertake a military action. Perhaps a commercial war could be tried. Following the successful example of the boycott of the Austrian goods, the idea of boycotting the Greek goods emerged as a feasible option. If a powerful empire was forced to relinquish some of its claims and take some action in favor of the Ottomans, a weak neighbor could be more easily forced to action. This was the idea behind the boycott and the CUP was again an important actor especially in the organization and management of this protest. The boycott movement against Greece first started in 1909 when the Ottoman porters refused to unload the Greek goods. However, these early actions lacked an able leadership, thus the scope of the boycott was not that extensive. In the spring of 1910, preparations for a better organized boycott were almost completed and the *Tanin* was calling on the porters to perform their duty like they flawlessly did in the past. Proponents of this policy claimed that the boycott would have much more detrimental effects on the Greek national economy than the Ottoman one. The total value of Greek exports to the Ottoman Empire had a value of 6 million, while Ottoman Empire's exports to Greece amounted to 13 million. And this figure was taken as the indicator for a more difficult situation on the part of the neighboring country, as far as the smaller economy of Greece was concerned.⁸² When the

⁸⁰ Hüseyin Cahid, "Millet-i Hakime" (The Dominant Nation), *Tanin*, 25 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 7 November 1908.

⁸¹ MMZC, pp. 571-87 (16 July 1325 / 29 July 1909).

⁸² "Yunan Aleyhine Türkiye Boykotu" (Turkish Boycott against Greece), *Tanin*, 28 May 1326 / 10 June 1910.

Cretan issue occupied the parliamentary agenda in April 1911, the boycott was well underway. A Greek deputy for Serfidje, Boussios' main argument was that the events took a different turn and exceeded the legitimate boundaries of the problem. According to Boussios, the government did not grasp the real nature of the problem and with the aim of punishing Greece, it supported the boycott although this caused much damage as far as the Greek Ottoman community was concerned. Because the Greek Ottomans were in control of the trade between the two countries, the real burden of this boycott fell on their shoulders. He argued that Greece with a population of around 2,5 million people could not pose any threat to the Ottoman Empire where the population of people belonging to the same race was almost double. Since the Greek Kingdom was so tiny, no way it could entertain an aggressive policy on its own against the Ottoman Empire.⁸³ One week later, in another parliamentary sitting Izmir deputy Carolidis made similar comments and claimed that the responsible forces behind the Cretan problem were not Greece but Crete and the Great Powers. Like Boussios, he also pointed out that the exaggerated level of excitement over the issue was preventing that a reasonable solution be found. He concluded his speech by calling on the government to assuage those who were encouraging people to boycott the Greek goods and asked it to develop friendly relations with Greece.⁸⁴ The editorial which came out in *Politiki Epitheorisis* dated 17 October 1910 made a similar assessment. It stressed the necessity of diagnosing the real roots of the Cretan problem. In the first place, the editorial examined the Ottoman position on the island. The Ottoman government preferred an autonomous Crete and it thought that the autonomous status of the island would be more beneficial to Crete as well. The Ottoman Empire only wanted to control the Cretan foreign policy (specifically to prevent a union with Greece) and the naval base at Suda Port. The editorial seems to be supportive of the Ottoman arguments that the union with Greece would be costly for Crete as it would be obliged to provide soldiers for the Greek army and it would be governed like any other province of Greece, subject to tenuous economic conditions of the country, thus losing its current autonomous status. However, it points out that most Cretans would prefer the union with Greece to this charming autonomy described above, as they see this as their "moral obligation" towards Greece:

⁸³ MMZC, pp. 460-61 (6 April 1327 / 19 April 1911). However, according to Ottoman demographic sources, the total Greek population in the Ottoman Empire as of 1907 was 2, 823, 063. See Karpat, Kemal H., *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, pp. 162-69.

⁸⁴ MMZC, pp. 550-52 (13 April 1327 / 26 April 1911).

[t]hey [Cretans] should sacrifice their ideals and overcome their feeling of gratitude. This way they will win the gratitude of the Oriental peoples and the respect of the International Powers. Hopefully, a better solution will be found. Are Cretans willing to make such a sacrifice? This is the question.⁸⁵

2.2. Participation in the Administration of the State

One of the major aspects of the *Tanzimat* era was that it witnessed important legal developments that introduced the employment of the non-Muslims in the state service. Following the 1856 reform edict, members of the non-Muslim communities started to be appointed to administrative, judiciary, economic and educational posts of the Ottoman government. One of the influential government posts where Greek Ottomans found themselves at was the diplomatic corps of the state. During the course of the nineteenth century there were many different significant examples that we could refer to. For instance, after the establishment of an independent Greek state, the Ottoman State did not hesitate to appoint Fotiadi Bey to Athens where he served as ambassador during the Cretan crisis and he departed from Athens in protest against Greece's policy regarding the island. Musurus Pasha's importance, however, emerged from the fact that he represented Istanbul at one of the most critical diplomatic posts in Europe, as ambassador to London for thirty five years (1856-91). Another influential figure was Alexander Karateodoris (1833-1906) who was appointed ambassador to Rome in 1874 and he was one of the representatives of the Ottoman Empire in the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Following the congress he even occupied the position of Foreign Minister for a brief period.⁸⁶

With such notable positions as ambassador, administrator, senator and minister, Greeks, and other non-Muslims, started to be visible in the Ottoman government and bureaucracy, thus acquired a precious opportunity in policy-making:

The very fact that officials of different communities were beginning to collaborate and...at least to some degree, to develop a fund of mutual respect reflects the extent to which egalitarianism really had begun to take root in Ottoman minds. In view of considerations like these, the fact that the standing of the non-Muslim bureaucrats was

⁸⁵ “Οι Κρήτες θα θυσιάσωσι τα καλλίτερα ιδανικά των, το αίσθημα της οφειλομένης ενγνωμοσύνης, αλλά θα κερδίσωσιν αυτοί την ενγνωμοσύνην των λαών της Ανατολής και την εκτίμησιν των Μεγάλων Δυνάμεων, αίτινες απεδείχθησαν ανίσχυροι προς εξεύρεσιν μιας άλλης λύσεως. Θα θελήσωσιν άραγε οι Κρήτες να προβώσιν εις τοιαύτην θυσίαν; Εδώ είναι το ζήτημα.” Editorial, “Το Κρήτικον Ζήτημα” (The Cretan Question), *Politiki Epitheorisis*, 17 October 1910.

⁸⁶ Alexandris, Alexis, *The Greek Minority of Istanbul and Greek-Turkish Relations, 1918-1974*, Athens: Center for Asia Minor Studies, 1992, pp. 27-30.

in some respects an intermediate one can be regarded, not as a sign of the failure of reform, but as a measure of progress in what was bound at best to be a process of change over time.⁸⁷

Findley's study on the non-Muslim presence in the Ottoman bureaucracy basically covered the Hamidian regime. The question that concerns us for the purposes of this thesis is whether this slow process of change was accelerated following the proclamation of the Constitution in July 1908. This is a legitimate question as one might be reasonably tempted to anticipate a higher representation for the non-Muslims thanks to two principles of the revolution, namely, equality and justice. It was reasonable and natural because the July Revolution had restored the *Kanun-ı Esasi* which explicitly stipulated that "All the Ottomans are equal in rights and duties before the law" (Article 17) and "Civil servants are assigned to appropriate posts in accordance with merit and capability, irrespective of creed or ethnicity" (Article 19).⁸⁸ In line with the aim of this study, the Greeks' complaints regarding the matter and responding discourse will be traced.

One thing is certain and it is the fact that strong voices on the part of the Greeks clamoring for justice in the face of what they regarded as underrepresentation at governmental posts started to be heard.⁸⁹ This issue first appeared in the newspaper columns and provided a heated topic of discussion and polemic between the mouthpiece of the Unionists, *Tanin*, and the Greek Ottoman press. An interesting piece of opinion that revealingly hinted at the way the Greek Ottomans were perceived by the Unionists as epitomized in *Tanin* was dated 24 December 1908. Its target was the editorial that appeared in one of the leading Greek Ottoman newspapers, *Neologos* (New Word/Speech) that covered the question of underrepresentation of the Greeks in government. According to *Neologos'* editorial it was difficult to say that the relevant articles of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* were being observed in the employment of civil servants. It even claimed that since the coming of the new regime the situation has not

⁸⁷ Findley, Carter V., "The Acid Test of Ottomanism: The Acceptance of non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Bureaucracy," in Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York: Holmes-Meier Publishers, 1982, p. 365.

⁸⁸ Gözübüyük & Kili, *ibid*, p. 29.

⁸⁹ Although the Greeks were the most outspoken group at what they saw as the unjust underrepresentation in government, there were some others, as well, who raised their voices. For instance, *Tanin* answered to Şükrü Ganim's claim that in the military corps the Arabs were not given the share they deserved. *Tanin* provided a list which spelled out non-Turkish Muslim officers occupying influential positions in the ranks of the army. Among those, the Arab Ottomans were Mahmud Şevket Pasha (Minister of War) and Hadi Pasha (Commander of the Third Army). There were two Albanians, two Circassians, one Georgian, one Tartar and one Bosnian at high positions. See "Türkler ve Anasır-ı Saire" (The Turks and Other Ottoman Elements), *Tanin*, 6 April 1326 / 19 April 1910.

improved and there was no hope of any improvement in future either. It then tried to prove its claims by referring to some figures that demonstrated the current number of Greeks in state employment. According to the total figures given by *Neologos*, among 31 governors (*vali*), 98 district governors (*mutasarrıf*) and 547 provincial district governors (*kaymakam*), there were only 10 Greeks serving as *kaymakams*. And then it asked why the state would not prefer Greek administrators in places like Salonika, Edirne, Aegean Islands and Ioannina which all had a noteworthy Greek population.⁹⁰ It contended that the government's policy was at odds with the Revolutionary principles, but rather it converged to a dangerous implicit tenet "Turkey belongs to Turks" (*Türkiye Türklerindir*).⁹¹ *Tanin* starts criticizing *Neologos* for its comparison between new and old administrations, accusing it of wishing the time of autocracy be back. Although *Tanin* acknowledges the insufficient number of Greeks in government, it notes that this is due to the fact that Greeks do not possess necessary abilities required to serve as civil servants. It emphasizes the necessity of a special education only through which one gains minimum requirements on the way to a governmental post because:

[a] civil servant does not sprout like mushroom. One needs to be brought up as civil servant...A Greek can become a good money lender, grocer or merchant but he cannot become a good civil servant at the moment. Above anything else he does not know Turkish. Secondly, he is not familiar with knowledge and arts that are indispensable to become a civil servant.⁹²

Tanin concludes the article noting a different case of the Armenians who are more numerous represented at government posts. It links their representation to their good level of Turkish and "their familiarity with Turkish customs" (*Türk adatına ziyade vakıftırlar*). Whereas there is no Armenian who does not speak Turkish, "there are many Greeks who regrettably mistake Turkish for Chinese" (*Türkçe'yi Çince zanneden Rumlar maateessüf pek çoktur*).⁹³ The *Kanun-ı Esasi* makes it very clear that the knowledge of Turkish is compulsory for any government employment (Article 18) though it does not specify anything with respect to the obligation of being familiar with the Turkish customs. Therefore, it partly implies a political choice made in favor of the Armenians, a preference that is parallel with many other instances regarding the electoral process covered in the first chapter and other examples

⁹⁰ "Rumlar ve Memuriyetler" (Greeks and Posts at Civil Service), *Tanin*, 11 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324 / 24 December 1908.

⁹¹ "Rum Matbuatı" (The Ottoman Greek Press), *Tanin*, 21 Kanun-ı Sani 1324 / 3 February 1909.

⁹² "...memur mantar gibi tenebbüt etmez. Memur yetiştirilmek lazım...Bir Rum iyi bir sarraf, iyi bir bakkal, iyi bir tüccar olabilir fakat bu dakikada iyi bir memur olamaz. Zira evvela Türkçe'yi bilmiyor. Saniyen memuriyet için lazım gelen ulum ve fünuna aşına değil." "Rumlar ve Memuriyetler", *Tanin*, 11 Kanun-ı Evvel 1324 / 24 December 1908.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

provided with the aim of serving for comparative purposes between Greeks and other non-Muslim communities, specifically Armenians and Jews. In fact, in an editorial written a couple of months after, Hüseyin Cahid had stated his belief that:

[w]e do not think that all the non-Muslim elements would follow a policy of opposition. First of all, we are sure that we will find the Jewish element, numbering 700,000, completely on the Turks' side. Second, the Armenian element will never find a separatist policy to their own interest.⁹⁴

On the other hand, the requirement to acquire a better knowledge of Turkish was expressed not only by the mouthpiece of *Tanin*. There were strong voices heard inside the Greek community itself as well. The reasoning behind this acknowledgement to acquire a good level of Turkish derived from the conviction that, with the advent of the new regime, more opportunities at governmental posts were available to the non-Muslims. A letter signed by two Greeks from Phanar is a characteristic example of self-criticism pointing to the general insufficiency as to the level of Turkish among the Greeks. The letter appeared in *Sada-ı Millet* and an interesting aspect of it is the way it perceives the bond between the Greeks and Turks. It regards the Greek element as the fundamental element of the Ottoman Empire, only second in importance to the Turks (*Türk biraderlerimizden sonra devletin unsur-u mühimmini teşkil eylediğimiz cihetle*). However, it complains that their eminent position is not matched by their level of participation in government and, for this discrepancy, the responsibility lays with the Greeks themselves. Although in the new regime which is based on liberty, equality and justice, the positions of minister, chairman, professor and other posts of civil service open their doors to the Greeks as well, they are not able to fully benefit from these as most of them lack an adequate knowledge of Turkish. Towards the end, it points out that the Armenians and Jews are much more advanced than the Greeks when it comes to the knowledge of Turkish. Much stronger Armenian presence in the government sector and the Jews' founding of associations with the aim of teaching Turkish are presented as proofs to the relative backward position of the Greeks. It concludes with its plea that the case of the Armenians and Jews should set an example for the Greek community because “[l]et us not trample our national interest and, above all, work with the aim of achieving the Ottoman union by shaking the hand of brotherhood given to us with complete sincerity” (*[m]enaft-i milliyemizi ayaklar altına almayalım. Bize uzatılan dest-i uhuvveti kemal-i samimiyetle sıkarak herşeyden evvel ittihad-ı anasını temine çalışalım*).⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Hüseyin Cahid, “İhtilaf yahud İtilaf Meselesi” (The Question of Discord or Concord), *Tanin*, 4 Tesrin-i Sani 1324 / 17 November 1908.

⁹⁵ “Rum Vatandaşlarıma” (To My Greek Compatriots), *Sada-ı Millet*, 4 March 1910.

The above account attributed a great part of the responsibility to the Greeks and urged them to give more importance to learning and teaching of the Turkish language. However, towards the end of 1910, the owner of *Sada-ı Millet* which published the above account claimed that the equality was not yet achieved in the Ottoman Empire. In his speech delivered at the parliament, Istanbul deputy Cosmidis attacked the government, which maintained that the principle of equality was being observed and, as a proof to this, gave the example of abolishing the *bedel-i askeri* (the exemption tax from military service) and the extension of conscription to all the non-Muslims of the empire. True, Cosmidis said, but this was equality in duties. He was asking instead where to find equality in rights. He meant the underrepresentation of the Greeks in the government service. He summed up his words that even though, in theory, it is said that every Ottoman citizen is equal, in practice, “[y]ou see a great deal of difference between the Ottomanness of Kosti and that of Mehmed” (*Kosti'nin Osmanlılığı ile Mehmed'in Osmanlılığı arasında büyük bir fark görüyorsunuz*).⁹⁶ An interesting interpretation regarding the matter came from Boussios who provided a novel perspective. He argued that rather than expressing complaints as to the underrepresentation of non-Muslims in government, “overrepresentation” of the Turkish elements in government needs to be stressed. However, rather than regarding this overrepresentation as something bad as far as the non-Muslims are considered, the harmful character of this reality on the part of Turks waits to be taken into consideration as well. Boussios even narrated the accounts of Greeks who asked from himself, as a favor, an appointment at a government post. However, he always asked them to carry on in trade and business. Boussios also seemed to have acknowledged one of the main reasons for Greek underrepresentation in government, saying that when a vacancy comes out at a certain ministry, it is expected that vacancy be filled with those who are experienced in the government sector. Perhaps his eccentric character prompted him to express the need to diversify different elements of the Ottoman nation between different sectors of the state and economy, by specifically referring to the case of the Turks who were overrepresented in government:

When will we see Turkish merchants among us? When will I see a Turkish banker to consult on financial matters?...We have to distribute among ourselves our forces and all the Ottoman elements and make sure that they all benefit from this distribution.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ MMZC, pp. 294-96, (20 Tesrin-i Sani 1326 / 3 December 1910).

⁹⁷ “*Beynimizde Türk tüccarları bulunduğunu ne vakit göreceğiz? Ne vakit banka muamelatı için bir Türk bankeri göreceğim?...Her meslekte kuvvetlerimizi ve anasırımızı taksim etmeliyiz ve hepsini müştereken istifade ettirmeliyiz.*” *Ibid*, pp. 566-67, (3 May 1327 / 16 May 1911).

During the parliamentary debate that took place next day, the Minister of Interior Halil Bey answered to the claims of the employment of the Turks in government at the expense of other Ottoman communities. He did not deny it but stated that, the fact that government had always been the favorite sector of the Turks accounted for this fact. He agreed with Boussios in the disadvantages of a strong concentration of a certain Ottoman element in a certain sector and called on the Turks that they should renounce their exclusive tendency to become civil servants because “real owners of a free country are those who possess factories, trading houses and especially lands of that country” (*[s]erbest bir memleketin asıl sahipleri o memleketin fabrikalarına, ticaret evlerine, hususiyle memleketin arazisine sahip olanlardır*).⁹⁸

Commenting on the parliamentary discussion, *Politiki Epitheorisis* agreed with Boussios’ and Halil Bey’s opinion that every community should diversify its energies between different sectors and no element should see the domination of either the business or the state sector as its natural right. Because the administration of the state was not the outcome of a conquest as in the past or racial domination, a delicate attention must be paid so as not to enable the monopolization of the state sector by a certain ethnicity. The participation of all the ethnicities that live together is a right and an obligation, exactly as military service is. As one dominant ethnicity (or mercenaries) is not enough to defend the country against enemy attacks, the same way, the administration by only one ethnicity will always be defective and harmful and it will lead to the disintegration of the state:

If the word “sovereignty of people” (*hakimiyet-i milliye / λαϊκή κυριαρχία*) is not an empty word, a notion upon which our constitution is based, it does simply mean that people have the right to select the people who govern it.⁹⁹

The editorial urges those in charge of public administration to seriously consider all these, if safe foundations for the existence of the state are to be laid. It asserts that only authoritarian regimes act as they deem right. However, young men are not only to be found in the ranks of the Young Turks. If this is the common country all the people share, and this is the common good all the people work for, then there must be a common administration all the people participate in.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 617, (4 May 1327 / 17 May 1911).

⁹⁹ “*Αν δεν είναι λέξις κενί σημασίας, η ‘λαϊκή κυριαρχία’, επί της οποίας στηρίζεται θεωρητικώς τουλάχιστον και το παρ’ ήμιν συνταγματικόν πολίτευμα, σημαίνει απλούστατα ότι ο λαός έχει το δικαίωμα να εκλέγη τους κυβερνήτας του.*” Editorial, “*Η Συμμετοχή των Χριστιανών εν τη Διοίκηση του Κράτους*” (The Participation of Christians in the Administration of the State), *Politiki Epitheorisis*, 8 May 1911.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*.

2.3. The Question of “Privileges” of the Greek Millet

The Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate was one of the classical Ottoman institutions which saw its interests in line with the preservation of the state. During his first term in office (1878-1884) Patriarch Joachim III had strongly resisted the Kingdom of Greece’s efforts to encroach his authority in certain matters, thus showing an example as to the Patriarchate’s conviction based not on the Hellenic ideal with its center in Athens but an ecumenical one with its center in the Ottoman capital.¹⁰¹ As Cosmidis pointed out in the parliament, after Greece declared its independence, a national church not to be controlled by the Phanar was also established.¹⁰² The office of the Ecumenical Patriarch was among the most significant ones in the Ottoman Empire. Aside from his supreme spiritual powers, the authority of the Patriarch also extended to the sphere of civil matters in the internal administration of the *millet* organization. Hence, he controlled not only the various religious affairs of his flock, but also education, marriage, divorce, inheritance and burial. In short, he was recognized as the sole representative of his *millet*, and a mediator between his flock and the state.¹⁰³

However, the declared policy of the CUP was the union of all the Ottoman elements which implied something not easy to reconcile with traditional national-religious centers in the Ottoman Empire, one of them was the Orthodox-Greek Patriarchate at Phanar. Considering Joachim III’s past history¹⁰⁴, it was clear that the part of his second term (1901-1912) coinciding with the CUP in power would cause significant troubles between the Ottoman government and the Phanar, which was jealous of its so-called privileges previously maintained and respected by the Ottoman Sultans. Unlike the *raison d’être* of the state administration in *Tanzimat*, which reformed old institutions and created new ones but sometimes without completely abolishing the remnants of the past, therefore allowing a certain duality to exist in certain institutions, the logic of the new regime was a logic which

¹⁰¹ Kofos, Evangelos, “Patriarch Joachim III (1878-1884) and the Irredentist Policy of the Greek State,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 4: 2, 1986, pp. 107-120.

¹⁰² MMZC, p. 557 (6 August 1325 / 19 August 1909).

¹⁰³ Davison, Roderic H., *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, New York: Gordian Press, 1973, pp. 13-14.

¹⁰⁴ During his first term (1878-1884) there were instances when he did not shy away from effectively protesting what he saw as the violation of his *millet*’s “privileges” by the government. What was new in the Young Turks regime was that in comparison to the past there was less room for negotiation and compromise. In short, the new regime was trying to put an end to the situation where the Patriarchate could act so as to bring obstacles to the new policies. For a discussion of these old crises see Exertzoglou, Haris, “Το ‘Προνομιακό Ζήτημα’ (The Question of Privileges), *Ta Historica*, 16, June 1992, pp. 65-84.

was more in accordance with that of a classical structure of modern state that aimed at institutional homogenization. The *Tanzimat* had abolished the hated tax of *cizye* but on the other hand introduced a new tax, *bedel-i askeri*, that allowed non-Muslims to buy off their military service. The new regime was adamant in putting an end to the dualities that remained untouched during the reform age of the *Tanzimat*. The primary policy, that indicated that the leading Young Turks who were imbued with education *à la française* and had strong positivist tendencies, would not tolerate this structure materialized with the abolition of the *bedel-i askeri* tax and introduction of universal conscription.

The question of the privileges of the Greek Patriarchate in the new regime first appeared in so-called Political Program of the Greeks which was proclaimed following the July Revolution. Hüseyin Cahid took it to his editorial dated 3 September 1908 and assessed their demands and questioned their legitimacy and viability. One of the points stipulated in the Greek program demanded that “all the privileges of the Patriarchate and rights deriving from them be respected” (*Patrikhane'nin tekmil-i imtiyazatına ve ondan neşet eden hukuka riayet edilmesi*).¹⁰⁵ As a matter of fact, at the root of this demand laid the Article 11 of the *Kanun-ı Esasi* which specified that, “The official state religion of the Ottoman Empire is Islam. However...as in the past, the implementation of religious privileges granted to different communities is under the protection of the state” (*Devlet-i Osmaniye'nin dini din-i İslamdır. Bu esası vikaye ile beraber...cemaat-ı muhtelifeye verilmiş olan imtiyazat-ı mezhebiyenin kema-kan cereyanı devletin taht-ı himayetindedir*).¹⁰⁶ Cahid stated that nobody would think of violating the *Kanun-ı Esasi* but he also expressed his doubts as to a possible misunderstanding of this article on the part of the Greeks. He pointed out that in the new regime nobody is entitled to enjoy any privileges.¹⁰⁷ What is meant by privileges? What is the reason for the extensive place that this question occupied? The history of the Second Constitutional Period is in a sense the history of misperceptions as well. Specifically while elaborating on the question of dominant nation in the first chapter, we saw that the understanding of equality and justice differed radically for the Greeks and Turks. And in the next chapter we will see a similar case with respect to the introduction of universal conscription. In this section, there is yet another misperception and it revolves around the word privileges. While the Greeks regarded the privileges of the Phanar covering quite an extensive area, the CUP was not that generous in

¹⁰⁵ Hüseyin Cahid, “Rumların Programı” (The Greeks’ Program), *Tanin*, 21 August 1324 / 3 September 1908.

¹⁰⁶ Gözübüyük & Kili, *ibid*, p. 28.

¹⁰⁷ Hüseyin Cahid, “Rumların Programı” (The Greeks’ Program), *Tanin*, 21 August 1324 / 3 September 1908.

that respect. The word privilege itself did not sound dearly to the CUP's ears. A political formation that defined itself around the idea of severing a variety of the ties with the *ancien régime*, the utterance of the word privileges tended to be closely associated with capitulations¹⁰⁸ granted to the foreign powers and political and economic privileges granted to certain internal institutions, most of the time under the pressure of the Great Powers, that led to a certain formation of "a state within a state." Of course, many things had changed during the course of past decades but nevertheless it is useful not to forget that one of the great inspirational sources of the Young Turks was the movement of the Young Ottomans in the 1860s and 1870s. And one of the aspects of the Young Ottomans' opposition movement was their dissatisfaction with the *Tanzimat* bureaucrats who, they thought, went so far in granting certain political and economic rights to the non-Muslims at the expense of the Muslims. Cahid was asking if these privileges amounted to anything further than mere privileges relating to the religious affairs. He asserted that the relevant clause in the *Kanun-ı Esasi* mentioned nothing more than the privileges pertaining to religious matters. The discussion did not have anything to do with the idea of equality because "If there is equality, it is so for every [Ottoman] element. The Patriarchates are not embassies enjoying certain capitulations" (*Müsavat varsa her unsur için vardır. Patrikhaneler kapitülasyonlara malik bir nevi sefarethaneleer değildirler*).¹⁰⁹ The ruling cadres of the CUP ascribed only a religious character to the Patriarchate. The non-Muslims citizens of the Ottoman Empire would only need the Patriarchates in matters related to their religion. When it comes to any non-religious matter, their office of reference would be the government itself. In this section, the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate will be mentioned only in discussions over the "ages-old privileges" of the Greek community and specifically over the educational matters. Most of the debates involving the Patriarchate did not take place inside the parliament but in the columns of the newspapers. Particularly under Hüseyin Cahid's editorship, attacks against it intensified after

¹⁰⁸ Whenever the word "capitulations" appears, its first connotation generally happens to be the economic concessions granted to the foreign powers. Although the Ottoman State could not abolish these economic concessions before the First World War, every government in the Second Constitutional Period had already the intention to abolish them but lacked the capacity to do so. For an evaluation of the national economic policies of the time see Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Milli İktisat*, Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982, especially pages 69-98.

¹⁰⁹ Hüseyin Cahid, "Rumlar Ne İstiyor?" (What Do the Greeks Want?), *Tanin*, 12 March 1325 / 25 March 1909.

the parliament passed a bill concerning the distribution of the churches between the Phanar and the Bulgarian Exarchate in Macedonia.¹¹⁰

A specific and significant part of these so-called privileges was related to the issue of education. Certain measures capable of dramatically changing the community education under the auspices of the Phanar would easily stir up the belief that old privileges of the community were in danger. Actually, the first serious attempt at unifying separate and conflicting systems of education in the Ottoman Empire was the Regulation of Public Education (*Maarif-i Umumiyye Nizamnamesi*) dated 1869. It was a watershed in the educational reforms during the *Tanzimat* era. It aimed at overhauling the extremely divided character of the Ottoman education. It stipulated a regular and orderly system of education and in order to reach this goal it emphasized the necessity of a mixed education so as to “strengthen the mutual understanding and friendship among the children of different religious communities” (*sunuf-i tebaa etfalinin muhteliten tahsil-i maarif tarikine sevki ve o cihetle beynlerinde itilaf ve muhadenetin tahkimi*). According to this law, only religious courses in non-Muslim community schools remained outside the supervision of the government.¹¹¹ That this aim could not be achieved is another story. What we need to note for our purposes is that the Second Constitutional Period, with all its attempts at unification both in discourse and policy, could never ignore such a significant area as education. In 1909 one of the most famous ministers of education in the Ottoman history, Emrullah Efendi, devised a bill on the regulation of primary education which also made the instruction of Turkish obligatory, though concrete actions in this regard could only start to be taken after the devastating Balkan Wars changed the fate of the Ottoman Empire. Nevertheless, the state managed to extend its authority to the community schools by its right to inspect their curricula, thus weakening the authority of the Phanar.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ The Ottoman Parliament passed the bill on the churches in Macedonia in July 1910. Joachim III vehemently reacted and decided to summon a National Assembly (*Meclis-i Milli*). Even though the government did not grant the necessary permission, the assembly convened at Phanar. Consequently, the government took harsh measures and dissolved it. In order to follow the discussions in *Tanin*, particularly see its issues dated 18 June 1326 / 1 July 1910, 24 June 1326 / 7 July 1910, 30 June 1326 / 13 July 1910, 27 July 1326 / 9 August 1910, 31 July 1326 / 13 August 1910, 8 August 1326 / 21 August 1910, 24 August 1326 / 6 September 1910, 3 September 1326 / 16 September 1910, 4 September 1326 / 17 September 1910, 5 September 1326 / 18 September 1910, 7 September 1326 / 20 September 1910.

¹¹¹ Somel, Selçuk Akşin, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire 1839-1908*, Leiden; Boston; Köln: Brill, 2001, pp. 86-90.

¹¹² Ergin, Osman Nuri, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, vol. IV, Istanbul: Osmanbey Matbaası, 1942, pp. 1173-75; 1227-29.

When the first discussions on education came to the parliamentary agenda, heated debates over the new character that the CUP wanted to give to education took place. In the parliamentary sitting dated 8 June 1909 the first discussions on the question of community education started. When the amendments in the *Kanun-ı Esasi* came to be negotiated in the parliament, main discussions revolved around the Article 16. This article stipulated that:

All schools are under state supervision. Education of the Ottoman subjects will be organized in a manner conducive to order and union, while the system of instruction pursued by different communities with regard to matters concerning belief will not be harmed.¹¹³

A couple of non-Muslim deputies led by Cosmidis submitted a petition with the purpose of incorporating a phrase saying that “so as not to harm the system of community instruction as previously valid / respected” (*milel-i muhtelifenin kadimen mer’i usul-u talimiyelerine halel getirilmemek*). He felt obliged to explain the reason for this proposal to those who disagreed with such a phrase. In schools run by the communities there were two different kinds of courses. One set of courses was on the matters concerning various aspects of their belief. There was nothing capable of stimulating any disagreement over this set of courses. Another group of courses, on the other hand, concerned such subjects as history, philosophy, literature, *et cetera*, and the discussion was centered on this. It was again stimulated by conflicting perceptions of the relevant clause in the *Kanun-ı Esasi* and suspicions on the part of the Greeks as to the “real” intentions of the CUP. Cosmidis referred to a specific part of the article which stressed that “Education of the Ottoman subjects will be organized in a manner conducive to order and union”. He was worried that without adding the phrase he suggested, which would serve as a guarantee of the preservation of the specific character of the community education, the article as it was could easily generate a policy, for instance, of the introduction of Turkish as the compulsory language of instruction for all courses save those on religion. Or in a similar way, the Ministry of Education could oblige these schools to adopt a program addressed not to the needs of a certain community, e.g. teaching of Greek philosophy or literature, but to an objective deemed necessary by the Ministry, e.g. the teaching of Turkish literature. As it is the case with many discussions in the Ottoman Parliament, the idea of Ottomanism and different interpretations of it was the crux of the matter. Cosmidis hoped that he was not mistaken when he thought that:

¹¹³ “*Bilcümle mektepler devletin taht-ı nezaretindedir. Tebaa-i Osmaniyenin terbiyesi bir siyak-ı ittihat ve intizam üzere olmak için iktiza eden esbaba teşebbüs olunacak ve milel-i muhtelifenin umur-u itikadiyelerine müteallik olan usul-ü talimiyeye halel getirilmeyecektir*”. Gözübüyük, Şeref & Kili, Suna, *ibid*, pp. 28-29.

[t]his Ottoman union we are trying to create is not a tumultuous amalgamation of nations but a political union. The aim is to achieve a political union and work for the general interests of this country, which is politically inseparable, while each Ottoman element preserves its own religion and ethnic character.¹¹⁴

Cosmidis' conception of Ottomanness was a union of Turks, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Bulgarians, *et cetera*, around a common political principle which would serve as a bond reconciling these differences. What he was actually defending was nothing more than an understanding of civic citizenship where various communities of different religions and ethnic characters would gather around a supranational concept of Ottomanism. Following Cosmidis, another Greek deputy Choneos from Salonika took to the floor and expressed his opinions that, in fact, buttressed those by Cosmidis. Choneos reminded all the deputies that for five centuries various communities had lived together with the Turks and preserved their national character. If this is the case, then it would be ludicrous that their national character be harmed in today's reign of liberty. Then he alluded to the rumors that spread through newspapers during the early days of the Revolution, according to which non-Muslim communities would be stripped of their liberties they enjoyed in the past. He contended that in order for these rumors to go away and to disperse the doubts on the minds of many non-Muslim Ottomans, the incorporation of the proposed phrase was essential. No doubt should remain:

[t]hat for thousand years the Greek nation has had a brilliant literature which has kept on infusing their minds and souls. They will never relinquish it. However, this does not mean they will not learn the Ottoman language that would serve the Ottoman union. Reconciling these two is possible. But if we prefer just one of them and destroy the other, we would commit a great injustice and error. This way we would violate the Ottoman union.¹¹⁵

Contributing to the same discussion, Boussios expressed his opinions on the Ottoman union. He defended the proposal and thought that only this way the misperceptions and misunderstandings on the part of many non-Muslim Ottomans could be dispersed. Employing his classical eccentricity he chose to establish an analogy:

¹¹⁴ “[b]izim husule getirdiğimiz ittihad-ı Osmani bir hercümerc-i kavim değildir, bir ittihad-ı siyasidir. Akvam-ı Osmaniye'nin herbiri kendi dinini, kendi kavmiyetini muhafaza etmekle beraber, siyaseten bir olan vatanın menafî-i umumiyesi, bir vahdet-i siyasiye husule getirmektedir.” MMZC, p. 206 (26 May 1325 / 8 June 1909).

¹¹⁵ “Rum kavmi üç bin seneden beri edebiyat-ı fevkaladeye malik olup, üç bin seneden beri o edebiyat ile âlûde olduğu halde ondan hiçbir vakit vazgeçmeyecektir. Fakat bununla beraber, ittihad-ı Osmaniye'ye hâdim olacak, lisan-ı Osmaniye de öğrenecektir. Bunun ikisinin de yekdiğerine telifi mümkündür. Yalnız, eğer birinin tercihi için diğeri mahvetmek sadetine düşecek olursak büyük bir haksızlık, büyük bir gadir yapmış olacağız ve bu suretle ittihad-ı Osmaniye'yi ihlal etmiş olacağız.” *Ibid*, p. 207 (26 May 1325 / 8 June 1909).

[t]he Ottoman State is like a company. In order for this company to be supreme, all its shareholders must join it with all their capital. What is our own capital? Our religion and system of instruction are what falls to our share, nothing more.¹¹⁶

Although generally not that visible in the parliamentary discussions, the outspoken editor of *Tanin* Hüseyin Cahid stood up to oppose the arguments raised by these Greek deputies. What he argued from the floor of the parliament constituted one of his most favorite topics that he had covered in his column in *Tanin*, though in a less politically correct language. Cahid pointed out that during the *ancien régime*, under the extreme pressures of the administration, all the communities in the empire were busy with searching for a way to break away from the state. And this was the way it should have been because in the face of the autocratic regime's violations, it was only natural for them to undertake action so as to protect their national identity. Speaking as an expert on the matter,¹¹⁷ Cahid maintained that schools where small children were infused with national ideas conflicting with the survival of the Ottoman State were the basic instruments of this secret struggle. This was something acceptable under the harsh conditions of the autocracy but in the new regime, this system of instruction could not be maintained. He had also some words for those who uttered the need to add their suggested clause to the *Kanun-ı Esasi*:

I have to say to those fellow citizens of ours that today the words of liberty and equality are in your mouths though your hearts lack them...What happens if everyone continues to act the way as it used to be? Therefore, even though this proposal seems quite reasonable on the surface, in reality it entails the most harmful conditions for our Ottoman union.¹¹⁸

The above discussions arising from a proposal to amend the relevant article of the constitution regarding the community education did not produce a result in line with that proposal. But discussions related to this challenging issue of community education continued at full speed in the press of the period. As a matter of fact, they did never come to an end anyway. In the middle of the parliamentary discussions when Choneos referred to the rumors that Greeks would lose the "national" character of their education system which appeared in

¹¹⁶ "[D]evlet-i Osmaniye bir şirket şeklindedir, bütün şerikler umum sermayelerinde girmelidirler bu şirket içine ki o şirket âli olabilsin. Bizim kendi sermayemiz nedir? Dinimiz, tedrisimiz. Başka birşey yok." *Ibid*, pp. 210-11.

¹¹⁷ Before he made his way to the parliament, he had been involved in the educational sector. He worked at the Ministry of Education between the years 1896-1901. Later he was appointed the director of Vefa and Mercan *idadi* schools in Istanbul. For further information on Hüseyin Cahid see Ömer Faruk Huyugüzel, *Hüseyin Cahid Yalçın'ın Hayatı ve Edebi Eserleri Üzerine Bir Araştırma*, İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1984.

¹¹⁸ "Ben o vatandaşlarımıza, bugün sizin ağzınızda hürriyet, müsavat var, fakat kalbinizde yok demeye mecburum...Herkes yine bildikleri tarzda hareket ederlerse nasıl olur? Binaenaleyh, bu teklif zahiren pek makul görüldüğü halde, hakikatte bizim ittihad-ı Osmani için en muzır şeraiti haizdir." MMZC, pp. 211-13 (26 May 1325 / 8 June 1909).

the press during the early days of the Revolution, he was perhaps, at the same time, referring to the political program of the CUP that was published in the newspapers. Perhaps the things Choneos labeled as rumors were not rumors but something more concrete. If we take a look at the CUP's political program published in *Tanin* on 25 September 1908, we could acquire an important insight. Noting that this program appeared in Hüseyin Cahid's editorial, it is but unsurprising the extent of similarity between opinions expressed in *Tanin* and those expressed in the parliament eight months later. Again making a comparison between the old and new regimes, Cahid concludes that the moves aiming at strengthening the national consciousness of non-Muslim communities in the old regime had been legitimate heretofore, but unacceptable from now on. He then stated one of the goals of the new regime by making a reference to the Article 17 of the CUP's political program according to which the introduction of Turkish as a compulsory language in the primary education would be aimed at. As he continued, the fears of those in the parliament who tried to prevent any incursion on their system of education did not seem to be imaginary:

Is not it the case that the schools in France which were under the control of priests were closed down when they understood that they educated so many students in a detrimental way to the country? Therefore, in schools we cannot let the propagation of the ideas that are harmful to Ottomanness carry on as in the past. How come does an Ottoman who does not know our language get close to us?...For this reason, Turkish has to be compulsory. In any case, this is also to the interest of the non-Muslims.¹¹⁹

Whenever the question of national privileges of the Greek *millet* appeared on the agenda, a common discursive attitude on the part of the Greeks materialized as a need to legitimize some degree of internal communal autonomy by consulting the pages of history. Sometimes the time that was referred to happened to be as early as the time of the Caliph Omar in the 7th century. But most of the time, Mehmed the Conqueror was exalted as the Sultan who honored the Gennadios Scholarios as the Patriarch and bestowed upon him many favors and privileges. A typical example of this came from an editorial that *Sada-ı Millet* extracted from *Neologos* that was centered on the issue of national privileges of the Greek Ottomans. In the first place, it started by making it clear that they were raising their demands not so as to establish a state within a state but to claim their historical rights recognized by the

¹¹⁹ “Fransa’da reħabin idaresi altında bulunan mekteplerin memlekete ne kadar muzır adamlar yetiřtirdiđi anlařılarak nihayet onlar kapatılmadı mı? Onun için mekteplerde eskiden olduđu gibi Osmanlıđa dűřman fikirler verilmesini bittabii kabul edemeyiz. Lisanımızı bilmeyen bir Osmanlı bize nasıl ısınabilir?...Binaenaleyh, Tűrkçe’nin mecburi olması zaruridir. Zaten anasır-ı gayriműslimenin menafii de bunu icap eder.” Hüseyin Cahid, “Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti’nin Siyasi Programı” (The Political Program of the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress), *Tanin*, 12 September 1324 / 25 September 1908.

most illustrious sovereigns of Islam. The history of these rights went as far back as the time of the second Caliph of Islam, Omar who, upon his conquest of Jerusalem, granted a status of protected (*zimmi*) to non-Muslims of the city and vowed that his successors abide by these rights. *Neologos* regards the privileges given to the Patriarch after the conquest of Constantinople more decisive than any other as they marked the foundation of the Greek *millet* in the Ottoman Empire. According to the editorial's narration of events, Mehmed the Conqueror asked Gennadios to serve as the Patriarch enjoying all the privileges of his predecessors and under the auspices of his Excellencies' protection. And these privileges were to be in effect unless the Greek *millet* would not renounce its allegiance to the Ottoman Sultans. According to this historical account, the Constantinopolitan newspaper contended that as long as Islam remained as the state religion of the Ottoman Empire and the Sultan as the spiritual leader of World Muslims, any violation of these privileges would also be a violation of Islam. It then implicitly alluded to the idea prevalent in the Unionist circles as to follow the French example. It argued that behind the French experience was the social, political and economic accumulation through ages and it came out after so much bloodshed on the streets of Paris and other French cities. It ruled out the repetition of the French example in the Ottoman lands which was home to two great civilizations: the Greco-Christian and Arab-Islam. In these lands where people hardly distinguished between religion and government, many ages were needed before passing through a similar process. Therefore, this editorial in one of the leading Greek Ottoman newspapers regarded the so-called privileges of the Greek *millet* gathered around the personality of the Patriarch as two sides of the same coin.¹²⁰ This editorial of *Neologos* almost reiterated Joachim III's opinions which were published a couple of days ago in *La Turquie*. In an interview he gave to the newspaper, the Patriarch pointed out that the Young Turks, many of whom were inspired by the French education they received, wanted to separate the church and state as it was the case in France. This way they would weaken the authority of the Patriarchate and detach the Greeks from their legitimate center (*merkez-i meşrua*). He likened his case of combining religious and worldly authority in his person to that of the Sultan who was the Caliph and the head of the state at the same time. He said that he would forsake all the privileges centered on the institution of the Patriarchate only if they would also strip the Sultan of his dual authority, thus removing Islam as the state religion. Speaking as an experienced person who grew old in the Ottoman Empire, he concluded that he applauded the enthusiasm of the Young Turks,

¹²⁰ Excerpt from *Neologos*, "İslam Devletinde Milet-i Hıristiyanıye" (Christian Nations in an Islamic State), *Sada-ı Millet*, 18 October 1909.

though they were not experienced enough to appreciate the fact that the immense heterogeneity of the Ottoman country made the separation of the church and state impossible to pursue as a policy.¹²¹ Accordingly, when Joachim III visited the Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Pasha at the Sublime Porte, he asserted that he would never renounce the “title” of *milletbaşı* (head of the *millet*) granted to Gennadios by Mehmed the Conqueror, in accordance with the common but inaccurate view. Therefore, he expressed his stubborn reluctance to accept that his position be relegated to a status concerned only with matters of strictly religious nature.¹²²

These accounts were certainly provided to attribute a certain degree of legitimacy to the claims of the Phanar, but sometimes it is hard to tell a history from a story. *Tanin* was arguing that these claims over the privileges lacked the supreme character attributed to them by many Greeks. They were nothing but a kind of a contract informally agreed between the Sultan and the Patriarch. In order to buttress its position on the topic, it resorted to an article sent by an anonymous Greek Ottoman writer and published in the newspaper *La Turquie*. According to this article, the so-called privileges were in fact could not be termed as “privileges” but merely as some points referring to certain internal affairs of the Greek community. This was like a contract which was necessary in the case of the non-Muslims, who were subject to the authority of an Islamic state, because they were in need of some special regulations as they could not be expected to obey the Islamic holy law. However, there was no charter, i.e. *berat*, formalizing this concord between the Muslim ruler and his Christian subjects. The scope of the agreement was only limited to such cases as marriage, divorce, burial, *et cetera*, but certainly not as extensive as to cover educational matters. In this sense, this could be likened to the establishment of an Islamic neighborhood court in line with an agreement between Yıldırım Bayezid and the Byzantine Emperor. This court dealt with such issues as listed above and addressed to the needs of Muslims who were present in Constantinople for business purposes.¹²³

In another issue of *Tanin*, a piece extracted from Hammer’s *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* was published in order to refute the Greeks’ claims. In the relevant pages of this classical source on the Ottoman history, Hammer narrated the events following the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman armies. As *Tanin* noted, in his account

¹²¹ Excerpt from *La Turquie*, “Patrikhaneler İmtiyazları Hakkında (On the Privileges of the Patriarchates), *Tanin*, 2 Tesrin-i Evvel 1325 / 15 October 1909.

¹²² “Rum Patrikhanesi” (The Greek Patriarchate), *Sada-ı Millet*, 5 November 1909.

¹²³ Excerpt from *La Turquie*, “Patrikhane İmtiyazatı” (Privileges of the Patriarchate), *Tanin*, 7 June 1325 / 20 June 1909.

Hammer mentioned Mehmed the Conqueror's extremely gentle treatment of Gennadios who was to be appointed as the Patriarch by the Ottoman Sultan. Among the privileges bestowed upon the Sultan's Greek subjects, Hammer cites that such matters as marriage, burial and some others of a similar character would be respected in accordance with the way they were in the Byzantine times. Therefore, *Tanin* concluded that there was not any legitimate basis to the discussions which took place in the Chamber of Deputies and because there was nothing in the so-called privileges that stipulated the community education, the government's policy of holding all the schools under its supervision would not pose anything violating the structure of the Greek community.¹²⁴

2.4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter the main stance of the Greek deputies was assessed under three headings. In the Cretan question we saw that the Greek Ottomans "successfully" passed the "test" they were subject to. The question of Crete's union with Greece was potentially very contentious as it involved the Greek Ottoman deputies who had been looked down on with suspicion as to where their true allegiance laid. At this point, we should bear in mind what was quoted in the first chapter, when Hüseyin Cahid wrote during the elections that having a Turkish majority in the assembly was a question of life and death. The main reason behind this *sine qua non* was the deep suspicions as to the future Greek deputies' stance on a question like the Cretan issue

¹²⁴ "Rumların İmtiyaz-ı Kadimi" (Ancient Privileges of the Greeks), *Tanin*, 4 June 1325 / 17 June 1909. To follow the historical account from the source cited in *Tanin*, see Joseph Von Hammer-Purgstall, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, vol. III, Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, 1989, pp. 9-12. The modern historiographic research on the subject renders the following picture. Braude notes that, contrary to the received wisdom, the "classic" usage of the term *Rum milleti* (Greek *millet*) started well after the conquest of Constantinople. Braude warns us against the claims which are based on the chronicles of the time and argues that the authority granted to Gennadios was personal as verified by the issuance of a new *berat* upon every new appointment made through centuries. Another famous incident made the claims of impersonal "privileges" granted to the *Rum milleti* more dubious. When Selim I asked from the Patriarch Theoleptos to present the mentioned *berat* he failed to do so. See Benjamin Braude, "Foundation Myths of the *Millet* System," in Benjamin Braude & Bernard Lewis, eds., *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York; London: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1982, pp. 70-88. Konortas shows that, contrary to the common view, "the term *millet* was first used at the end of the seventeenth century to refer to non-Muslim religious communities and did not become prevalent before the beginning of the nineteenth century." See Paraskevas Konortas, "From Tâ'ife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community" in Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi, eds., *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism*, Princeton; New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1999, pp. 169-79.

that concerned both Greece and the Ottoman Empire. However, as we have seen, during the parliamentary discussions the Greek deputies tried to emphasize the importance of appreciating the real nature of the problem. They saw the moves arising from impulsiveness as detrimental, first of all, to the Greek Ottoman community who could suffer from an attitude perceiving them as accomplices. Both the Greek deputies and the *Politiki Epitheorisis* (which could be regarded as the mouthpiece of the deputies who were linked to the Society of Constantinople) argued that most of the responsibility for the events laid with Crete rather than Greece.

The topic elaborated in the second section was on the employment in government. The crux of the debate was that the Greeks were heavily underrepresented at government posts. This underrepresentation was a fact impossible to be denied by anyone. However, the reasons for this phenomenon were open to discussion. According to the official view expressed by the CUP, namely by the Minister of Interior Halil Bey and the deputy for Istanbul and the editor of *Tanin* Hüseyin Cahid, there was one very apparent reason for their underrepresentation. The Greeks would make good businessmen and the like, but when it comes to positions in government they were not ideal candidates because they had poor level of Turkish and they were relatively less familiar with the “Turkish way” unlike the Armenians. However, this explanation was not sufficient to disperse the doubts on the minds of many who, after the discussions on the question of dominant nation, were convinced that the Young Turks were reluctant to open the doors of the state to an open competition because they had identified the Turkish element with the state itself.

The last section was about the community “privileges” as it arose in the area of community education. It was the most challenging topic between the Phanar and the CUP. There were similar examples which caused conflicts between the state and the Phanar. Therefore, in this sense, there was nothing new. However, one thing must never elude our attention if we want to understand the different character of the new regime. The primary aim of the CUP was to introduce extensive reforms to the Ottoman Empire so as to create a modern state structure as they understood it. The history of the *Tanzimat* is, in a sense, the history of attempts at creating a state which would have regular and orderly institutions. Its aim was to get rid of many dualities that prevented the state to unite all its institutions and citizens. However, this *Tanzimat* project had only a limited success and the new regime wanted to carry on where the attempts of the *Tanzimat* could not move further. In the New Turkey (*Yeni Türkiye*), as the Young Turks liked to label the Ottoman Empire, no privileges were to be tolerated. All the way from the start, they had desired to remove the hated

capitulations but had to wait till the Ottoman Empire joined the First World War. They were also adamant in abolishing the internal concessions granted to the non-Muslim communities through centuries and they probably thought that it would be easier to remove them in the first place. The name of their party was the Union and Progress. The Union could not tolerate an education system which was but united. And the Progress could originate if and only if the Union would be achieved.

CHAPTER III

MULTI-RELIGIOUS ARMY OF THE OTTOMANS

Being the last chapter of this thesis does not mean that the extension of military service to non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire occupies the least important place among all the other discussions in the parliament. To the contrary, sources indicate that this qualifies as the most significant question that was passionately debated. Its main qualitative difference from other issues mentioned in the previous chapter comes from the fact that although in the former questions, Greek deputies' main line of opposition was that the proposed laws encroached ages-old privileges of Ottoman Greeks and therefore during many parliamentary sittings they showed a strong resistance, in the question of universal conscription their main stance was that of agreement with the law that would, at least in theory, unite all the ethno-religious elements for the first time in the history of the Ottoman Empire. However, this does not mean that discussions were free of discord. Although the principle of universal conscription as an idea was welcomed by the Greek deputies, some practical details complicated discussions. Apart from these, what turned out to be more problematic and difficult to resolve were suspicions on the part of some Greek Ottomans regarding some hidden motives behind the introduction and application of this law. Before entering the parliament and following relevant discussions centering on the issue, a historical overview of events that fell short of a universal conscription law but perhaps paved the way for it when the time was ripe is on the way. Following this historical account there will be a short survey of some initial reflections regarding the question before the parliament was opened on 17 December 1908. In the broadest section that follows, the issue of universal conscription will be analyzed following

the discussions in the parliament. Six sub-sections of this section will also draw on articles and reports from certain significant Turkish and Greek papers published in Istanbul.

3.1. Non-Muslim Soldiers before 1909: Early Examples and the Nineteenth Century

Early examples to the Ottomans' pragmatic approach of making use of Christian soldiers when deemed necessary can be found back in the times when Ottoman armies were busy with stretching into the heart of Anatolian and Balkan peninsulas. We learn from Tamerlane's historian Nizamüddin Şâmî that when Yıldırım Bayezid and Tamerlane confronted each other on the plains of Ankara in 1402 there were also Christian soldiers in the Ottoman army.¹²⁵ Having non-Muslim soldiers in the ranks of the army might be considered easier in practice when waging a war against another Muslim power though this was not necessarily the case. For instance, Bayezid's predecessor Murad I had not hesitated to welcome Christian soldiers against their coreligionists when fighting at Kosovo in 1389.¹²⁶

The examples above were pragmatic and irregular approaches to the needs of an ever-expanding empire. The idea of universal conscription as a solid basis of the modern state, on the other hand, could only start evolving in the nineteenth century Ottoman Empire. The *Hatt-ı Şerif* of *Gülhane* was promulgated on 3 November 1839 and suggested the beginning of a new age for the Ottoman state with its aim of reforming the old structure and resisting the West. We see that a notable emphasis in the reform edict concerns military service. The reform document, which regards the defense of the country as compulsory duty of all the people (*muhafaza-ı vatan için asker vermek ahalinin farîza-ı zimmeti*), cites the recruitment of soldiers in an arbitrary fashion and a very long term of service that deprives the country of necessary manpower for economic development as the most problematic facets of the old system of conscription.¹²⁷ Although the edict was not revolutionary enough to mention at all the introduction of universal conscription, if its main tenet of inaugurating equality between Muslims and non-Muslims is assessed together with its aim of regulating the system of military conscription, one can nevertheless reach the idea that the reform edict of *Gülhane* was the first serious attempt for the future policy of universal military conscription.

As Gülsoy illustrates in his account on the story of conscripting soldiers from non-Muslims, the Crimean War (1853-1856) witnessed the most significant developments

¹²⁵ Nizamüddin Şâmî, *Zafername*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949, p. 305.

¹²⁶ Neşrî, *Kitâb-ı Cihan-nümâ*, Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1949, pp. 266-267.

¹²⁷ Gözübüyük & Kili, *ibid*, pp. 4-5.

regarding the question. Pressured by an increasing need for manpower, the Ottoman government felt the need to extend military service to its non-Muslim subjects and announced to oblige non-Muslims in the service with a statement published in its official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi* on 14 May 1855.¹²⁸ However, taking its lessons from unsuccessful and disappointing experiences during the war, the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856 allowed people to buy off their military service.¹²⁹ This does not mean that the introduction of universal conscription was abandoned for good but *Hatt-ı Hümayun* just left it to another time when suitable conditions would make it possible for non-Muslims to serve in the imperial army.¹³⁰

Was the time ripe in the year 1865 when a commission headed by Fuad Pasha was formed to devise a solution to the question at hand? One of the members to decide on the issue was a distinguished historian and statesman Ahmed Cevdet Pasha who described his viewpoint with the following words:

If the soldiers that would be drawn from non-Muslims are to be mixed with their fellow Muslim soldiers in the army, then we would be obliged to include priests as well in a company. I would have said that this would not cause any problem if there had been just one non-Muslim confession. However, there is every different kind of a sect in our country...All these would ask for a different priest in accordance with their beliefs while Jews would ask for a rabbi...As Mohammedans observe the holy month of Ramadan, non-Muslims too have their separate fasting days. How to govern such a motley composition? Also keep in mind that whenever commanders want to raise the spirits of soldiers they appeal to certain powerful Islamic motives that their soldiers have started hearing all the way back from their mothers' laps.¹³¹

The pasha was aware of army's role in creating and solidifying a sense of brotherhood and serving the common fatherland. However, his conviction was that the main difference between Ottomans and Europeans was that the former still lacked that a secular idea of fatherland. Indeed, to see the togetherness of the idea of *vatan* and attempts at strengthening it

¹²⁸ Gülsoy, Ufuk, *Osmanlı Gayrimüslimlerinin Askerlik Serüveni*, Istanbul: Simurg, 2000, pp. 55-58.

¹²⁹ Davison (1973), p. 59.

¹³⁰ "...islamdan maada tebaanın sunuf-ı askeriye içinde suret-i istihdamları hakkında nizamât-ı lâzime yapılp müddet-i kalile-i mümkinde zarfında neşr-ü ilan kılınması..." in Gözübüyük, Şeref & Kili, Suna, *ibid*, p. 11.

¹³¹ "Teba-ı gayr-i müslimeden alınacak efrâd-i askeriyye, neferât-ı islamiyye ile mahlût olursa, bir taburda imam olduğu gibi papas da bulunmak lazım gelür. Bir olsa, be'is yok, diyelim. Lâkin bizde teba-ı gayr-i müslimenin envâ-i kesîresi var...Bunlar hep başka başka papaslar isterler. Yahudiler de haham ister...Müslümanların ramazânı, huristiyanların eyyâm-ı muhtelifede perhîzleri var. Böyle mahlût bir hey'et nasıl idâre olunacak. Ve kumandanların başı sıkıldığı zaman askerın ırk-ı hamîyyetini tahrîk ile anları..fevkalâde fedâkârlığa sevk için belâgat-ı askeriyyeye mürâca'at eyler...ki ehl-i islâm, analarının kucagında iken kulaklarına gazâ ve şehâdet sözleri işlemiş..." Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, *Ma'rûzât*, edited by, Yusuf Halaçoğlu, Istanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980, pp. 113-114.

via universal conscription, we will have to wait till the Second Constitutional period. For the time being, what needs to be regrettably acknowledged is the following:

But in Europe the idea of motherland (*vatan*) replaced that of religion (*din*)...However, in our case the word *vatan* is only associated with one's place of origin. Even if we opt for the word *vatan* instead of *din* we can only expect that it takes time to acquire its European connotation, even so it will not be as powerful a motive as *din*. Until our soldiers internalize this word deep in their hearts, Ottoman armies will be lacking in spirit. Finally, do you think Hasan, a simple soldier, will obey his officer Hristo at the most critical instants of fighting?¹³²

Having listened to Cevdet Pasha's doubts on the subject the opposing side came up with the idea that universal conscription could solve a difficult position the state found itself in, as far as the diminishing size of the drafted population is concerned. However, Cevdet Pasha challenges them with a two-fold answer ruling out this pronounced objection. He draws the attention to regions that do not make any contribution to the Ottoman army and contends that making sure of drafting soldiers from *de facto* exempted regions of the empire will not only solve the problem of military bottleneck but also relieve the main element of the Ottoman Empire, *i.e.* Turks, of this burden.¹³³ In the end Cevdet Pasha carried the day and it turned out that the promised day when the Muslim and the non-Muslim would sleep in the same barracks is yet to be seen.

The movement led by the Young Ottomans had emerged against bureaucratic rule of *Tanzimat* pashas. Their outlook combined Islamic values with liberal views of the time and they maintained that the introduction of a parliamentary system would create a strong bond of allegiance among Muslims and non-Muslims of the empire. As Mardin describes the *Weltanschauung* of the most influential member of this movement, Namık Kemal, he notes that his conception of progress was greatly influenced by Europe and extending conscription to non-Muslims to stop the decay in the Turkish element of the Ottoman Empire forms one of the parts that give shape to his idea of progress.¹³⁴

Another prominent and radical name among the Young Ottomans was Suavi who assumed the task of criticizing the concessions granted to non-Muslims with the *Hatt-ı Hümayun* of 1856. Towards the end of 1867 and in the columns of the newspaper *Muhbir*

¹³² “*Vâkı’ a Avrupa’da gayret-i dîniyye yerine gayret-i vataniyye ka’im olmuş...Ammâ bizde vatan denilürse askerın köylerindeki meydanlar hâtırlarına gelür. Biz şimdi vatan sözünü ortaya koyacak olsak, mürûr-ı zaman ile bizde de eskâr-ı nâsda yer ederek Avrupa’daki kuvveti bulacak olsa bile gayret-i dîniyye kadar kuvvet alamaz. Husûlü de çok vakitlere muhtâc olur. Ol vakte kadar ordularımız ruhsuz kalır. Bir de nefer Hasan kendüsünü ölüme sevk edecek yüzbaşı Hristo’ya bir dar vakitte itâat eyliyecek mi?*”. *Ibid*, p. 114.

¹³³ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹³⁴ Mardin (2000), pp. 319-321.

(Reporter) that he was publishing in London his anger was directed at Europe that was clamoring for more rights to be given to non-Muslims. If there was any major inequality at all, he was stating, it was the case for Muslims not non-Muslims and the exemption from military service being the indication *par excellence* to this unfairness.¹³⁵

An influential statesman in the second half of the nineteenth century and later a significant figure for the Young Turks, Midhat Pasha saw the exemption of non-Muslims from military service problematic both in theory and in practice. It was awkward in theoretical sense as it was obstructing the spirit of egalitarian reforms, but it was also harmful in practice for the composition of the Ottoman society since it was disrupting the delicate demographic balance at the expense of the Muslim element in the empire. Freed from the heavy burden of life in the army non-Muslims were burgeoning in education, agriculture and trade while Muslims were shrinking in number.¹³⁶ The Serbian revolt in 1875 gave Midhat Pasha a perfect opportunity to temporarily materialize what he had on mind. He formed a voluntary company composed of non-Muslims where Christian cross together with Muslim crescent were displayed in company's banner. Following a public presence on the streets of Istanbul volunteers were sent to the spot to fight in the same ranks with regular Muslim soldiers.¹³⁷

Tanzimat reforms culminated in the Ottoman constitution of 1876, *Kanun-i Esasi*, which enumerated rights and duties of all the Ottomans regardless of ethnicity or creed. Although the constitutional text does not explicitly refer to the question of universal military service, Article 17 leaves no doubt as to the objective on behalf of Ottoman ruling elite by stating, "Apart from matters of religion and creed, all the Ottomans are equal in rights and duties before the law."¹³⁸

Opening of the first Ottoman parliament followed the preparation of *Kanun-i Esasi* nearly coincided with the last Russo-Turkish War in 1877. As such it presented a sort of a challenge to enthusiastic deputies, who in this difficult turn of events found themselves obliged to find some remedy to the empire's chronic problem of inequality between its subjects in matters of conscription and to the acute problem of war with its archnemesis of Russia. Could time be right to make a passage from theory to practice and give life to the principle of equal rights and duties verbalized just one year ago in the constitution? If not

¹³⁵ Çelik, Hüseyin, *Ali Suavî ve Dönemi*, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1994, p. 681.

¹³⁶ Kocahanoğlu, Osman Selim, *Midhat Paşa'nın Hatıraları*, vol. II, İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1997, pp. 28-29.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, vol. I, pp. 200-202.

¹³⁸ "Osmanlıların kaffesi huzur-u kanunda ve ahval-i diniye ve mezhebiyeden maada memleketin hukuk ve vezâifinde mütesavidir". Gözübüyük, Şeref & Kili, Suna, *ibid*, p. 29.

now, then when? The parliamentary sitting dated 25 April 1877, the day following Russia's declaration of war, was accordingly dominated with gallant speeches when many non-Muslim deputies took their turns to prove their allegiances to the Ottoman fatherland. Dimitraki Efendi, a deputy from the Danubian province, exclaimed the readiness of his Orthodox-Greek community to sacrifice their life and property for the state.¹³⁹

However, excitement and fury over the war did not help to produce any concrete proposal as to the current state of affairs. In the sitting of 2 June 1877 Vasilaki Seragiyoti Bey, a Greek deputy from Istanbul, described the motives for his proposal as dictated by his sense of duty and stemming from his conscience and came up with the proposal of abolishing the *bedel-i askeri* (the exemption tax from conscription) and making military service compulsory for non-Muslims. This was a necessity, first of all, for patriotic reasons (a full-fledged war was going on while non-Muslims were not participating in the defense of the fatherland!). "If *Kanun-i Esasi* really declared all of us equals in rights and duties", was asking Vasilaki Bey, "then how come only a portion of our people are deemed apt for this holiest duty of shedding their precious blood for the sake of fatherland while others buy off this noble duty?"¹⁴⁰ He then went on spelling out his reasons. First of all, the desired brotherhood among Ottoman elements is to be achieved only by being brothers in arms. Secondly, the current pool out of which the army drafts soldiers amounted to around 17 million while with the inclusion of non-Muslims this would certainly double. Thanks to an increase in the population under arms, the long military term could be reduced. Finally, the Istanbulite deputy comes to the help of Muslims stating that due to exclusive drafting of Muslims, the Muslim population happens to be in a constant demographic decline.¹⁴¹ However, in the next setting Ahmed Muhtar Efendi's answer to Vasilaki Bey did not surpass a mere declaration of contentment at his patriotic proposal and expressed the impracticability of the proposal by referring to the critical need for money on the part of army. Forsaking the *bedel-i askeri* would mean less money for the troops, therefore, he instead proposed that non-Muslims should come to help the army with voluntary companies.¹⁴² In the opening speech delivered before the parliament on the occasion of commencement of its second year,

¹³⁹ Us, Hakkı Tarık, *Meclis-i Meb'usan Zabıt Ceridesi, 1293=1877*, vol. I, Istanbul: Vakit Gazetesi Matbaası, 1939, p. 175.

¹⁴⁰ "Madem ki *Kanun-u Esasi* muktaza-i âlîsınca bilcümle ahali hem-hukuk ve hem-vezaifdir, nasıl olur ki bu ahalinin bir kısmı akdem-ü eazz-i vezaif olan vatan uğrunda kıymetli kanını döker de diğer kısmı bu vazife-i mukaddesini para ile tesviye eder?" *Ibid*, p. 323.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp. 323-324.

¹⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 330-331.

Abdulhamid II thanked his non-Muslim subjects for their enthusiasm they showed, not only in discourse but also in practice, during the war and concluded that one of the logical consequences of the *Kanun-i Esasi* should be to embrace non-Muslims in the ranks of the Ottoman army. Though the parliament reiterated the Sultan's desire and promised that it would not allow the subject to fall off the agenda, the short life of the assembly averted further discussion and a possible resolution of it.¹⁴³

3.2. The Issue of Universal Conscription after the July Revolution: Initial Reflections

Brotherhood (*uhuvvet*) was one of the mottos of the Revolution of 1908 which came out with the promise of uniting all the Ottoman elements with strong constitutional bonds and making them equal in rights as well as in duties. In order to feel like brothers, something lacking in the *ancien régime* was indispensable to be applied in practice: everyone had to serve in the same army, eating from the same caldron, sleeping in the same dormitory, taking drill in the same barracks, and fighting against common enemies. The new constitutional regime was adamant in this policy. We have clues from leading Young Turks even before they became actors in the political decision-making process in 1908. Just to quote an example, in an article written in 1906 the future speaker of the parliament and a leading Young Turk in exile, Ahmed Rıza, was discussing the changing role of military over the Ottoman centuries. He had reached the conclusion that under new circumstances, the role of the army was not to conquer but to prevent further decline and fall of the empire. Therefore, it was high time to replace the idea of *gaza* with that of patriotism.¹⁴⁴ Many believed that introduction of universal conscription had a potential to imbue the masses with patriotic values. More to the point, is the political program of the CUP publicized following the July Revolution: “Without making ethno-sectarian distinctions everyone will be conferred with complete equality, liberty and the same obligations...Hence non-Muslims will also be subject to the conscription law” (*Cins ve mezhep tefrik edilmeksizin herkes müsavat ve hürriyet-i tammeye malik ve aynı mükellefiyete tâbidir...Gayri müslime dahi ahz-ı asker kanununa tâbi tutulacaktır*).¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Us, Hakkı Tarık, *Meclis-i Meb'usan Zabıt Ceridesi, 1293=1877*, vol. II, Istanbul: Vakıf Gazetesi Matbaası, 1954, pp. 7, 12.

¹⁴⁴ Mardin, Şerif, *Jön Türklerin Siyasi Fikirleri, 1895-1908*, Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1983, p. 159.

¹⁴⁵ Tunaya, Tarık Zafer, *Türkiye'de Siyasi Partiler, 1859-1952*, Istanbul: Arba Yayınları, 1995, p. 209.

Exactly one month after the Revolution an article appeared with the signature of Ali Seydi on the pages of the CUP's semi-official paper *Tanin* where the author asserted that:

That all the citizens, without any ethno-sectarian distinction, are entitled to profit from the development and prosperity that our common motherland generates, likewise, the maintenance of its internal security and protection of all its borders falls again on their shoulders. Exempting some people from the defense of the country, who are otherwise subject to the same laws in all other matters with their fellow citizens, amounts to confirming that their bond with the motherland is infirm and shaky...enmity and hatred among different elements of the empire are to be eliminated only if Ahmed and Hüseyin eat from the same caldron and sleep in the same dormitory with Artin and Dimitri.¹⁴⁶

He then attempts to nullify arguments that oppose to extension of military service to non-Muslims. The first argument is a financial one stating that the government will lose a significant source of revenue collected from non-Muslims and he asserts that an amount around 600,000 liras is better to be sacrificed in order to apply a policy that will bring in more benefits in the long run. The second argument is stimulated by religious ignorance and he rather chooses to elaborate on this. He writes that history gives the strongest answer to this argument and starts turning the pages of history. He picks an intelligent example and goes back to the very beginning of Islamic history to legitimize his point. He leads his audience to the aftermath of the conquest of Mecca and to the Battle of Hunayn waged against the Bedouin tribe of Hawazin where the Prophet himself also participated. He writes that about 2,000 soldiers out of a total number of 12,000 who participated in this battle were non-Muslims. He then cites a modern example and reminds his readers that thousands of Muslims who were spiritually attached to the Caliphate fought against Ottoman armies in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 without wrecking any havoc on the Christian Russia. Thus feeding any doubts was ludicrous as non-Muslims were now "our true citizens" (*onlar bugün bizim hakiki vatandaşlarımız oldular*).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ "*Vatan-ı müşterekin mazhar olacağı umran ve ikbalden – bila tefrik-i cins-ü mezhep – nasıl umum vatandaşların hakk-ı istifadeleri varsa, o vatanın temin-i asayiş-i dahiliyesi ve hudud-u tamamiye-i malikiyesinin muhafazası için de yine vatandaşlar silah başına kumandasına tabi olmak mecburiyetindedir. Bir devleti teşkil eden ve aynı kavanin ve nizamata ahkâmına tabi bulunan efraddan bir kısmının müdafaa-i vatan hizmet-i meşruasından hariç bırakılması onların o vatanla irtibatının maluliyet ve meşkukiyetini tasdik etmek demektir...nifak ve nefretin külliye izalesi ancak Ahmed ve Hüseyin ile Artin ve Dimitri'nin senelerce bir karavanadan yemeleri, bir koğuşta yatmaları ile hasıl olabilir.*" Ali Seydi, "Askerliğin Milel-i Gayrimüslimeye Teşmili" (Extension of Conscription to Non-Muslims), *Tanin*, 10 August 1324 / 23 August 1908.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

3.3. The Issue Brought to the Parliamentary Agenda

It is but unfortunate that studies on such an important question as the extension of conscription to non-Muslims are almost non-existent. The primary study on the subject is the account by Gülsoy. However, there are a couple of shortcomings about his work. As narrated in his study, during the nineteenth century there were some attempts at non-Muslim conscription which never amounted to more than some trivial isolated efforts. Although military service was made obligatory for non-Muslims and they started to be soldiers at the end of 1909, the section narrating this important part of the story occupies only a quarter of his book. Furthermore, only a weak selection from Ottoman newspapers (and almost exclusively from *Tanin*, thus not including the perspectives the mouthpiece of the CUP did not share) accompanies a rich use of Ottoman archival documents. Therefore, aside from speeches in the parliament no sources were utilized to present the political position of non-Muslim deputies or other significant political figures. When it comes to archival data about the application of the conscription law, however, the biggest part of attention was paid to instances where non-Muslims deserted from army.¹⁴⁸ And a short article by Sinan Kunalp is rather problematic where, without elaborating on reasons, he unconvincingly concludes that if we look at the matter from a historical perspective the verdict is that “it was doomed from the beginning”.¹⁴⁹ It is certain that the temptation to employ historical hindsight is strong though it also carries a serious risk of losing sight of certain historical events in the muddy waters of the time. This section attempts to question this outlook by trying to illustrate some examples showing that the issue was a complicated one with many facets. While it rejects that the matter was “doomed from the beginning”, its final implication is that one needs to consult different sources and take into consideration of different political (both domestic and international) and socio-economic parameters. The aim of this study is not to explore the reasons for disappointing experiences during the World War I and its final failure but, instead, to portray the atmosphere while the bill was being debated.

Passionate discussions with regard to universal conscription occupied the Ottoman Parliament for three years, from 1909 until 1911. Discussions held in 1909 culminated with the decision to put an end to the *bedel-i askeri* tax and extended conscription to non-Muslims, effective as of October 1909. It not only abolished the discrepancy between Muslims and non-

¹⁴⁸ Gülsoy, *ibid*, pp. 127-71.

¹⁴⁹ Kunalp, Sinan, “İkinci Meşrutiyet Döneminde Gayrimüslimlerin Askerlik Meselesi (1908-1912)”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 72, December 1999, pp. 11-15.

Muslims but also some other regional discrepancies, like abolishing the exemption of Istanbulites and certain regions where no soldiers had been drafted before.¹⁵⁰ At the beginning non-Muslims were to be drafted according to the old conscription law and the legislation of a new law in order to take into account the conditions a multi-religious army would bring in was left to another time. However, the new bill on conscription was introduced to the parliament in July 1910 whose discussion continued with long delays and when we came to the year 1911 debates concerning some important details on the subject were still going on.

While presenting significant aspects of relevant parliamentary debates, the design to be followed will be so as to enable us to trace chronologically main contours of debate and mainly focus on Greek deputies without, however, ignoring what other non-Muslim representatives are claiming so as to provide a comparative point of view. Discussions when non-Greek Christian deputies are actively taking place should not be included in a manner so as to divert our attention from Greek deputies. Therefore, their arguments will be referred to only to make the case of Greek deputies more manifest and distinguish them from other non-Muslim groups in the parliament.

3.3.1. The *bedel-i askeri* tax

Undoubtedly, the Ottoman army was for all the Ottomans but not of all the Ottomans. And in the parliament, everyone agreed on forming an Ottoman army without excluding any ethnicity or creed. However, the disagreement was not over the future but over the present with the practical question revolving around the *bedel-i askeri*. Discussions started in June 1909 and the first part of the relevant question was whether to collect this exemption tax for that year. Turkish deputies were in favor of continuing to collect this tax at least for 1909 as it was not decided yet on a law that would allow non-Muslims to serve in the army. Another reason was caused by financial considerations as it would mean losing some portion of tax revenues. Greek deputies, on the other hand, displayed divergence of opinions among themselves. While Cosmidis and Artas agreed to collecting the tax for 1909 provided that it will be abolished for good thenceforth, Choneos and Boussios expressed opposite views by arguing that with the advent of the new regime all injustices had to be removed. Otherwise, it was hard to believe that the old regime with all its injustices among Ottomans was gone.¹⁵¹ A

¹⁵⁰ However, in the year 1912 Mount of Lebanon, Hijaz, Yemen and Samos were among the regions where *de facto* exemption was still going on. See Gülsoy, *ibid*, p. 160.

¹⁵¹ MMZC, pp. 413-14, 416-17, 421-22 (3 June 1325 / 16 June 1909); 505-6 (8 June 1325 / 21 June 1909) ; 5-7 (13 June 1325 / 26 June 1909); 136 (18 June 1325 / 1 July 1909); 187-88 (22 June 1325 / 5 July 1909).

Greek deputy for Izmit, Anastas Efendi (he was not among the most vocal Greek deputies though), revealed a flow of opinion which was worth citing:

...if we consider the gap in our budget and give the credit they deserve to our fellow Muslim citizens for their sacrifices for liberty we, the non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire, have to pay this *bedel-i askeri* wholeheartedly...In my opinion, only this way a true patriotism and real Ottomanness are to be proven.¹⁵²

Another related issue being discussed concerned not the current year but coming decades. What was being debated this time was whether to exempt non-Muslims older than 22 from military service and keep the old *bedel-i askeri* tax intact till they die. The Grand Vizier Huseyin Hilmi Pasha described the government's judgment before the deputies and legitimized his proposal by alluding to subtle socio-economic balances of the country. Bearing in mind that the majority of non-Muslims between the ages 20 and 45 were involved in trade and industry, calling them up for the long duty would harm the country's wealth and economic energy. Instead, buying off military service should be made possible by paying a lump-sum amount of 50 Ottoman liras. Consenting with the Grand Vizier a deputy for Bolu, Habip Bey, argued that this was a very reasonable proposal for a couple of reasons. First, this money was necessary for curing poor finances of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, failing to observe the government's suggestion would not only imply losing a good source of funds but also bring an extra burden on the already feeble economy with the requirement of training and arming this new mass of soldiers.¹⁵³ On the other side of the picture, the lack of accord on the part of Greek deputies seen in the former case is now replaced by a general consensus. Cosmidis attacked the proposal on the ground that it violated the principle of equal rights and duties as stipulated in the *Kanun-i Esasi*. Boussios Efendi harshly criticized the proposal and described it as dividing non-Muslims into two groups: those younger than 22 and those older. Then he asked why the older ones were not deemed worth of this right and duty. With all his joking style, he remarked that for the ones who happen to be older than 22 the real equality would then be achieved only in the afterlife while *Kanun-i Esasi* made everyone equal in this world. His conclusion was rather a controversial one. He argued that in this format this tax cannot be named *bedel-i askeri* but *bedel-i gayrimüslimin* (price for being non-Muslim). If it were really *bedel-i askeri*, then this would have been the case for Istanbulite Muslims and

¹⁵² "...bütçemizin açığını düşünür ve hürriyetin emr-i istihsalinde İslam vatandaşlarımızın bizden ziyade fedakarlıkta bulduklarını hesap edersek, biz gayrimüslimler *bedel-i askeri*yi maateşekkür vermeliyiz...Zira itikadımca hakiki Osmanlılık, ciddi vatanperverlik bu suretle olur." *Ibid*, pp. 183-184 (22 June 1325 / 5 July 1909).

¹⁵³ *Ibid*, pp. 7-8 (13 June 1325 / 26 June 1909); 132-33 (18 June 1325 / 1 July 1909).

they would have been obliged to pay this tax too. He concluded his speech in a passionately patriotic way by declaring:

The government allegedly thought that because we are in the business world, our exemption from conscription by paying this tax is for our common good. We do not want such a concession. We cry out to be drafted even if it is to happen much harshly for us than the case for Muslims.¹⁵⁴

An article which appeared five days later in the columns of *Tanin* criticized Boussios for his remark on the *bedel-i askeri* tax. The article signed by Bedii Nuri properly asserted that in the past all the Istanbulites, Muslim or non-Muslim, were exempted from military service and if a measure that would extend conscription to them or would oblige them to pay a tax comes into practice, then it will be relevant for all the inhabitants of the city. Therefore, terming this tax as “price for being non-Muslim” was nothing but sophistry. He did not stop here and found this as an appropriate opportunity to speak about injustices Muslims, more than non-Muslims, had to endure in the past. Because of this tax non-Muslims were free of troubles whereas Muslims had to bear the entire burden which resulted in their socio-economic underdevelopment in comparison to non-Muslim elements in the empire.¹⁵⁵

It seemed that the assembly was divided between non-Muslim deputies who did not show any sign of sympathy with keeping intact the *bedel-i askeri* and some Muslim (many of them Turkish) deputies who were favoring the opposite. Because Turkish deputies’ main reasoning stemmed from the fact that non-Muslims would not be enlisted for the current year, perhaps the only way out was an appropriate proposal to put a law on conscription into practice in order for non-Muslims to be drafted, without a further delay. The vivid enthusiasm and resolute stance of many deputies was crystallized with an ardent speech by Krikor Zohrab Efendi, who was an influential Armenian deputy for Istanbul. He argued that enhancing the feeling of brotherhood was much more prior to the deficit in the budget. Declaring confidently, “We want to live together. In order to learn the art of living together we have to learn to die together as well” (*Biz beraber yaşamak istiyoruz. Beraber yaşamak cihetini öğrenmek için de beraber ölmek lazımdır*), he appealed that a conscription law be drafted as soon as possible.¹⁵⁶ However, it was easy to grasp that preparing a new conscription law required some time and furthermore the government’s enthusiasm did not always match that

¹⁵⁴ “*Güya hükümet düşünmüş ki biz sanayi ile uğraşıyoruz, onun için para ile kurtulmaklığımızı ehven saymış. Böyle imtiyazı terk ediyoruz, istemiyoruz. Biz müslimlerden üç katlı, dört katlı, beş katlı ağır derecede bile olsa yine hizmet istiyoruz.*” *Ibid*, pp. 134-36 (18 June 1325 / 1 July 1909); 169-70 (20 June 1325 / 3 July 1909).

¹⁵⁵ Bedii Nuri, “*Bedel-i Askeriye mi, Gayrimüslimler Bedeli mi?*” (The Military Exemption Tax or the Tax for Being Non-Muslim?), *Tanin*, 23 June 1325 / 6 July 1909.

¹⁵⁶ MMZC, pp. 190-92 (22 June 1325 / 5 July 1909).

of many deputies. As a result, it was incumbent on the assembly to find a solution. Indeed, in a short time a consensus was reached on this belated issue and it was decided that old conscription law would do until drafting a new one to be able to answer to new demands. In this way, discussions on the *bedel-i askeri* were removed from the agenda.

Nevertheless, there remained a small detail to be resolved: What about the fact that non-Muslims had already paid their tax for half of the year 1909? In the name of Christians, Boussios claimed that Christians should have half of this money refunded and urged the Ministry of Finance do something. Zohrab Efendi, however, told that what was needed was not to dwell on details but applaud this law that ended the hated inequality among Ottomans. But it seems that for Boussios the time to applaud this decision had not come yet. Instead, he demanded some formula as to have this money reimbursed. Hasan Fehmi, a deputy for Sinop, felt at loss over Boussios' request. He stated that there was no need to go over it with a fine-tooth comb, otherwise, reaching a conclusion in this vital issue was impossible. Hagop Babiguan Efendi agreed with him and told that sacrifices on such small details were necessary to resolve the case.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps it was not a major concern like other related questions. Nevertheless, it was again important in showing the different attitudes expressed by the most vocal Greek deputy Boussios and the way he was set apart among other deputies in the parliament.

That Boussios was sometimes displaying a stubborn attitude and lengthening discussions (as in the example of the abolition of the *bedel-i askeri*) does not mean he was against universal conscription. Just evaluating his speeches in the parliament is not sufficient to claim that his Ottomanness was nothing but a façade. However, in the historiography of the time there are names, regarded as authorities on the subject, that reach this conclusion without even consulting these speeches in the parliament and carefully following the flow of their arguments. One of the notable examples in this regard is Feroz Ahmad who writes that, "On the whole, Greek deputies in the assembly were pan-Hellenists and their contempt for Ottomanism may be illustrated by Boussios Efendi's remark 'I am as Ottoman as the Ottoman Bank!'"'. Even though Ahmad admits that this remark is probably apocryphal¹⁵⁸, he interestingly contends that "it catches the spirit of the time".¹⁵⁹ No need to complicate matters but just focusing on the very same sitting we will witness the line of his arguments regarding

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 477-79, 481 (8 July 1325 / 21 July 1909).

¹⁵⁸ I have to note that I have not come across such a remark in my examination of the parliamentary minutes.

¹⁵⁹ Ahmad (1982), p. 409.

another clause of the conscription law that, apart from priests, rabbis and the like, extended exemption to monks residing in monasteries. This is a detail that should not be overlooked as only through such details we could get clues as to the spirit of the discussions if not the spirit of the time. He rightfully contended that the extension of exemption to monks could increase army deserters since monks were wanderers, therefore, different from priests who bore official titles. Young people trying to avoid conscription could easily put a cone on their heads and pretend to be monks. A better solution, for him, was to arrange a professional meeting between the Ministry of War and the Patriarchate to look for a secure way.¹⁶⁰

The *bedel-i askeri* tax was abolished for good but what about the lump-sum tax exempting the rich from military service? Here too we have diverse attitudes and different suggestions. The Armenian Socialist Vartkes Serengülyan's extreme view of an all-inclusive military conscription law (without distinguishing between rich and poor, ecclesiastical and secular) did not attract adherents although Boussios agreed at one point that buying off military service should not be allowed. In his characteristic directness he stated that:

Greek Ottomans would be the biggest losers in financial terms. But in order to prove that they are true Ottomans all of them have to be drafted, however harmful it will be to them. This is the way to search for rights and duties of Ottomanness. We are either Ottomans or not.¹⁶¹

Salonikan deputy Artas Efendi, on the other hand, thought that serving one's country is not restricted to military service and paying this lump-sum tax would allow productive classes to work for the economy without being disrupted with a 3-year service, an opinion shared by Ismail Hakkı Bey (the head of military commission) and Krikor Zohrab Efendi while Hamparsoum Boyadjian Efendi and Artin Bosgezenian Efendi agreed with Boussios. It is interesting that a clear line following Boussios or Vartkes did not come from Turkish deputies.¹⁶² Were Boussios and a couple of other non-Muslim deputies showing more patriotism than Turks or Muslims? It really does seem such a subjective thing this idea of patriotism and we had better move away from subjective discussions to objective ones and give an ear to the Minister of War Mahmud Sevket Pasha who came to the parliament on 16 January 1911 to defend certain clauses in the conscription law. In his speech, although he

¹⁶⁰ MMZC, pp. 482-84 (8 July 1325 / 21 July 1909).

¹⁶¹ "...bugün zannedersem askere gitmek icap ederse en ziyade mutazarrır olacak yine Rum milletidir. Fakat benzeniz Rumların tamamıyla Osmanlı olduklarını ispat için istiyorum ki, hepsi askere gitsin, ama mutazarrır olacaklar, olsunlar. Fakat asker olsunlar. Osmanlılık hukuku böyle aranır. Ya Osmanlıyız, yahud değiliz." *Ibid*, pp. 58-60 (27 April 1326 / 10 May 1910).

¹⁶² *Ibid*, pp. 58-61 (27 April 1326 / 10 May 1910); 427-34 (2 Tesrin-i Sani 1327 / 15 November 1911).

acknowledged that the law in its present form lacked perfect equality, he hoped that in due time these inequalities would be mended. According to the Pasha, conditions which forced them to support the law as it was were threefold: First of all, it was necessary to think of non-Muslims and give them some time to get familiar with the idea of military service. Secondly, removing the lump-sum exemption tax would have detrimental effects on the budget. And finally, the distinction between educated and uneducated had to be maintained as the country was in acute need of educated generations.¹⁶³ Actually, even with its defects the law marked a groundbreaking event by terminating a very serious inequality among Ottomans and other inequalities of relatively minor scope could be put aside for the time being.

3.3.2. Religion and conscription

The parliamentary sitting dated 12 July 1909 was a historical one as it marked the beginning of a new age in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Deputies decided that non-Muslims would be incorporated as conscripts as of the year 1909. The atmosphere was joyous and Monastir deputy Traianos Nallis Efendi celebrated this decision declaring that it would now initiate the real brotherhood of all the Ottomans by enabling them to serve under the same command. He likened the case of prospective conscripts to Ottoman deputies who, thanks to regularly coming together under the roof of the assembly, started to get to know each other and a feeling of friendship took root among them.¹⁶⁴ However, this enthusiasm expressed by one of the Greek deputies was not enough for the case to be free of dispute. The lack of a new conscription law yet was the reason for disagreement. Cosmidis and Choneos complained that the law in its old form would fall short of satisfying the case for non-Muslim soldiers and specifically put forth the need for employing priests for Christian soldiers and arranging their other religious obligations like fasting. No other Greek deputy expressed an opinion that disagreed with them. This aspect of the discussion is illuminating as it gives us a revealing clue as to differences in outlook between Greek deputies and other non-Muslim deputies. Armenian deputy Zohrab Efendi, for instance, did not voice any grievances and replied that the existing conscription law did not contain any clause for religious practices of Muslims either. It was something that concerned internal regulations of the army and as such it was normal not to integrate any related clause to the law.¹⁶⁵

When the new conscription law was still being negotiated in 1911, Choneos expressed his dissatisfaction that the request he made two years ago remained ignored. According to

¹⁶³ *Ibid*, pp. 157-58 (3 Kanun-ı Sani 1326 / 16 January 1911).

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 326-27 (29 June 1325 / 12 July 1909).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 327-28 (29 June 1325 / 12 July 1909); 476-77 (8 July 1325 / 21 July 1909).

him, respect for religion was one of the most crucial aspects for the success of a multi-religious Ottoman army. However, recent practices and lack of interest on the part of government had fallen short of his demands. In proportion to the population of sectarian groups, priests had to be employed in the army and allocated to companies as in the case of imams. He touched on the sorrowful reality that many Greeks were leaving the Ottoman Empire for a better life in America and in other foreign countries and argued that this specific issue, together with other uncertainties about life in the army, was triggering this outflow of Ottomans. He begged the Chief of Staff Mahmud Sevket Pasha that a booklet plainly written in each language and clarifying uncertainties about military service be prepared and delivered to soldiers.¹⁶⁶ The absence of any relevant demand from Armenians demonstrates differences between representatives of these communities in the assembly. Even though this was in accordance with the different nature of relations between Armenians and the CUP, other reasons for this situation need to be explored by interested researchers.

This specific point in the discussions and protests against some practices inside the army were recurring themes between the ruling CUP and the Greek-Orthodox Patriarch Joachim III. Before the subject came to the parliament, government officials had started to frequent the Greek-Orthodox Patriarchate to disperse doubts on the patriarch's mind. As early as the beginning of May 1909 Mahmud Sevket Pasha and the Minister of Interior Ferid Pasha had started visiting the Phanar.¹⁶⁷

Tanin did not have anything to say against these occasional meetings however persistently attacked the Phanar for its demands of non-spiritual nature. In one of his editorial attacks Hüseyin Cahid questioned the role assumed by the Patriarchate and its followers inside the Greek community. In this cynical opinion piece Cahid first assessed demands listed by the Phanar. He likened the Patriarchate's determination for negotiating the matter to trying to bargain in a store where they sell only in fixed prices. He expected that this habit of bargaining would come to an end in due future and passed on to concrete demands by the Phanar: prohibition of apostasy, employment of priests for Christian soldiers, assignment of places of worship, observation of days of fasting and formation of distinct companies for Christians. Cahid accepted all except the final one. While the first four demands were legitimate as they belonged to the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate on spiritual matters, the last one was unacceptable due to its mundane character. Admitting Phanar's role in non-spiritual

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 161-63 (7 March 1327 / 20 March 1911).

¹⁶⁷ Hüseyin Cahid, "Gayrimüslimlerin Askerliği Münasebetiyle" (On the Occasion of the Military Service of Non-Muslims), *Tanin*, 8 May 1325 / 21 May 1909.

matters would jeopardize Young Turkey's purpose of using power without undesired partners. On the other hand, the Phanar was trying to hold on its ages-old privileges. Cahid argued that this issue did not fall within the boundaries of religious domain. If it had been the case, a country like Russia, whose strict attachment to Orthodoxy could not be questioned even by the Patriarchate itself, would have refrained from drafting Muslim soldiers mixed with Christians in the same companies. He sarcastically concludes with an old adage that, "Imam does what he wants however big the mosque is" (*Cami ne kadar büyük olsa imam yine bildiğini okur*).¹⁶⁸

Covering the same topic *Sada-ı Millet* dedicated one of its columns to an article published in *Neologos* regarding the demands made by the Phanar. The relevant piece strongly disagreed with Cahid's line of argument although it seemingly shared the same goal of the unity of all Ottomans, via different means though. Whereas Cahid thought of the formation of separate companies for Muslims and non-Muslims as an obstacle on the way to unity, *Neologos* regarded it as a remedy. Similarly, while this issue was of non-spiritual nature for *Tanin* it suggested a spiritual character for *Neologos*. According to the reasoning followed by *Neologos*, because up to now, Muslims and non-Muslims have been living separately from each other, trying to unite them with such quick steps would possibly cause severe misconceptions and inflame hostilities between them:

However, desired results cannot be obtained by getting mixed together in the same place with those who, due to their deep ignorance, do not see themselves obliged to respect others' religion and customs but, instead, believe that violating this holy sphere of those observing a different belief stems from religious obligation.¹⁶⁹

Sada-ı Millet continued to extract articles and reports from Constantinopolitan Greek newspapers with an empathetic tone. This time extract came from the Patriarchate's newspaper *Ekklesiastiki Alithia* (Ecclesiastical Truth). Being the newspaper of an official Ottoman institution the response to the question of separate companies was relatively measured as compared to that of *Neologos*'. In this related piece the author of the article was trying to prove the legitimacy of their demands, especially the one concerning the formation of separate companies, with examples drawn from history. It was citing Selim the Grim's

¹⁶⁸ Hüseyin Cahid, "Gayrimüslimlerin Askerliği" (Military Service of Non-Muslims), *Tanin*, 5 September 1325 / 18 September 1909.

¹⁶⁹ "Halbuki hususat-ı mezkure, öyle bir takım cühelanın ve cehaletleri hasebiyle diğerinin itikadat-ı mezhebiyesine ve adet ve ahlakına riayetin ikdam-ı vezaif olduğunu bilmeyenlerin ve başka cins ve mezhebe mensub olanların itikadat-ı diniyesine tecavüzü güya vecaibden bilen kimselerin bir mahalde, karmakarışık bir surette bulundurulmalarıyla husule gelmez." Excerpt from *Neologos*, "Gayrimüslimlerin Askerliği" (Military Service of Non-Muslims), *Sada-ı Millet*, 29 October 1909.

Egyptian Campaign in 1517 where some Greek soldiers were present in the Ottoman ranks. Before the eyes of the Sultan, Greek soldiers were allocated to separate companies and their command was given to a Peloponnesian Greek commander. However, this was not the first example in this regard as Mehmed the Conqueror assigned a Greek to the task of defense of the island of Imros in 1456. In later times, during the reign of Abdulhamid I, a Greek named Nikolas Mavroyanni organized companies composed of Christian soldiers from Moldavia and fought bravely against the Russians. However, dramatic experiences of 1820s had planted seeds of misunderstanding and distrust between Greeks and Turks. The author thought that the current situation in which government's suspicious attitude against Greeks disregards this historical tradition of intimacy and violates privileges granted to Christians as early as in the time of Caliph Omar, respected and preserved by all the Ottoman sultans so far.¹⁷⁰

Apart from updating its readers on regular meetings between high government officials and the Phanar, *Tanin* selectively reported instances where Greek community appealed to the Patriarchate on matters related to military service. *Tanin*'s attitude concerning these events was always that of harsh criticism by asserting that the Patriarchate can never be accepted as mediator let alone partner in policy-making. As reported in its issue on 5 April 1910 the Unionist newspaper was informing its readers that, following last Sunday's prayers at the Patriarchate around 500 Greeks showed up to personally appeal to the Patriarch and asked him to make petitions at the government level to settle some issues concerning conscription, like the regulation of the length of military service and declaring Sundays holiday for Christians. *Tanin* found this appeal rather strange and unacceptable and wrote that military has its own special logic with its unique hierarchy which rules out not only the Patriarchate but even the Sublime Porte.¹⁷¹ Answering to this remark *Ekklisiastiki Alithia* described its reasons for disagreement with *Tanin*. *Sada-ı Millet* which did not share *Tanin*'s opinions incorporated its answer in its own pages. Actually, the disagreement expressed by *Ekklisiastiki Alithia* was not over principle but practice. It too gave credit to *Tanin*'s idea that the army has a unique way of working that should not be disrupted but added that listening to their requests would forestall some certain unpleasant happenings which are expected to originate from the extension of conscription to non-Muslims. It went on with its observation that Turks too were not yet familiarized with eating together and sleeping in the same places with Christians. It assured *Tanin* that the Patriarchate did not have any political aim and its

¹⁷⁰ Excerpt from *Ekklisiastiki Alithia*, "Tecnid-i Anasır-ı Osmaniye" (Ranking the Ottoman Elements in the Army), *Sada-ı Millet*, 12 November 1909.

¹⁷¹ "Rum Efradının Müracaatı" (An Appeal by Greeks), *Tanin*, 23 March 1326 / 5 April 1910.

only intention was to help its Orthodox flock in the observation of their religious obligations.¹⁷²

3.3.3. Some responses: letters and speeches

Sada-i Millet was continually following Greek papers published in Istanbul and providing excerpts of articles that were opposing to *Tanin*'s arguments with a moderate choice of words. It seems that a certain Istanbulite, who would regularly and exclusively read *Tanin*, would most probably form a conviction as to some Greeks' obstinate positions, regarding them as chronic problem-creators. Obviously, *Tanin* also allocated some space to accounts that described the enthusiasm on conscription expressed by non-Muslim communities. However, in its reports it tended to emphasize the eagerness of Armenians, thus, verifying its consistent attitude with respect to these two communities.¹⁷³ On the other hand, a newspaper like *Sada-i Millet* published in Turkish under the direction of Cosmidis was trying to prove the opposite. *Sada-i Millet* could not miss the occasion when the Metropolitan of Ankara Sofranios addressed the crowds:

Compatriots!

We all listened jubilantly to the imperial order of our Sultan on the conscription and we are willing to obey it. Conscription of non-Muslims is not something new as history has shown us on many occasions. During auspicious reigns of our great sultans, Christians were honored with military duty...Since we are children of this fatherland which is sacred and common to every one of us, then, the readiness of all the Ottomans to sacrifice their lives to defend it is an undeniable matter.¹⁷⁴

As we saw in the previous section that whereas articles or reports in *Tanin* always portrayed the Phanar in a bleak character, *Sada-i Millet*'s accounts portrayed a Phanar that was content with the idea of universal conscription in principle though, at the same time,

¹⁷² Excerpt from *Eklesiyastiki Alithia*, "Hıristiyanların Askerliği" (Military Service of Christians), *Sada-i Millet*, 11 April 1910.

¹⁷³ For a couple of examples on this, see *Tanin*: "Ermeni Kiliseleri ve Askerlik" (Armenian Churches and Conscription), 19 Kanun-ı Sani 1325 / 1 February 1910; "Askerliğe Davet" (The Call for Military Duty), 28 February 1325 / 13 March 1910: Specifically in this account it is reported that Armenians from an Anatolian village wrote a letter to an Armenian newspaper published in the United States and asked their fellow villagers to return to the country and added that failing to do so would deprive them of their property rights in their village.

¹⁷⁴ "Vatandaşlar! Ferman-ı padişahide ahz-ı asker hakkında olan emr-i şahaneyi kemal-i meserretle hepimiz dinledik ve itaate amadeyiz. Hıristiyanlardan ahz-ı asker emri yeni birşey olmayıp çok defa selatin-i izamın devr-i meymenelerinde dahi ordu-yu Osmaniyede Hıristiyanlar vazife-i askeriye ile şerefyab oldukları tarihçe malumdur...Madem ki cümlemiz bu vatanın evladıyız ve bu mukaddes vatan cümlemiz için müşterektir, binaenaleyh, bilumum Osmanlıların vatanın muhafazası uğrunda feda-ı cana amade bulunmaları lüzumu bir emr-i aşıkardır." "Anasır-ı Gayrimüslimenin Askerliği" (Conscription of Non-Muslims Elements), *Sada-i Millet*, 3 November 1909.

nurturing intense suspicions and fears. For instance, the following account was characteristic of the line followed by *Sada-ı Millet* when Joachim III was delivering a speech to fresh soldiers among his flock following the Sunday service:

My sons in the army!

I am proud of seeing you here celebrating your religious duty while in uniforms...With your weapons in your hands, you will defend not only the fatherland but also your legitimate rights in this regime of constitutional government. In a regime of constitutional government equality reigns supreme among all its citizens...However, as the starts are always the most difficult, you will also be confronted with some hardships. But do not you have any doubts on your mind. Both the government and your spiritual center will work to eliminate all obstacles and take all the necessary measures for you to live in perfect equality with your Muslim companions.¹⁷⁵

Both *Tanin* and *Sada-ı Millet* were giving excerpts from one of the most outspoken Greek papers of Istanbul, *Neologos*. The aim of including these excerpts in their pages was different for these two papers. *Tanin* was picking pieces from the columns of *Neologos* and showing these as a proof to their work aimed at instigating hatred between Greeks and Turks while *Sada-ı Millet* was trying to demonstrate a different perspective with which it was, most of the time, in agreement. As suggested by these excerpts, *Neologos* can be seen as sharing a common denominator with the Phanar, although it was not the mouthpiece of it like *Ekklisiyastiki Alithia*. *Neologos* could articulate the view that extension of military service to non-Muslims marked a milestone in the history of the Orient and with the introduction of it, a chance to give life to old empty words of liberty, constitutionalism and equality appeared.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, this newspaper could also give voice to letters full of harsh grievances and accounts of maltreatment and allegedly written by certain Greek soldiers.¹⁷⁷ *Sada-ı Millet*'s

¹⁷⁵ “*Asker evladlarım! Sizi elbise-i askeriye ile mülebbes olarak vezâif-i diniyenizi ifaya geldiğinizi görmekte müftehirim...Asker elindeki silah ile yalnız vatani değil ancak hükümet-i meşruta idaresi altında müsavat-ı meşrutasını da müdafaa edecektir. Çünkü hükümet-i meşrutada umum tebaa arasında müsavat caridir...Lakin her işin başlangıcı müşkül olduğundan, askerliğe davetinizde bazı müşkülata tesadüf edecekseniz de hiç şüphe etmeyiniz ki gerek hükümet, gerek merkez-i ruhaniyeniz her türlü mevaninin ref'i ve Müslüman refikanız ile kemal-i müsavatla geçinmeniz hakkında icab eden tedabiri temin edecektir.*” “Rum Efradı ve Patrik Efendinin Nutku” (Patriarch’s Speech and the Greeks), *Sada-ı Millet*, 14 March 1910.

¹⁷⁶ Excerpt from *Neologos*, “Vatan Müşterek Ordusu” (The Common Army of the Motherland), *Sada-ı Millet*, 4 November 1909.

¹⁷⁷ Hüseyin Cahid, “Rahat Bırakalım” (Let Them Leave Alone), *Tanin*, 7 March 1326 / 20 March 1910. In this editorial Cahid likens the Greek press of Istanbul to Pandora’s Box. According to him with the declaration of liberty on 23 July Greeks took Pandora’s Box as a present and out of the box came out these newspapers. He mentions a letter written by a Greek conscript and recently appeared in *Neologos*, the most significant one coming out from Pandora’s Box.

empathetic attitude does not mean that it showed absolute tolerance to all the accounts reported in *Neologos*. Perhaps one of the major illuminating differences between *Tanin* and *Sada-ı Millet* emerges at this point. Whereas *Tanin* condemns *Neologos* for such reporting and accuses its owner, Stavros Vutiras, of trying to implant hatred and disunity between different Ottoman elements, after expressing its regret on the matter *Sada-ı Millet* keeps its optimism that thanks to hard-working and honest officers, the Ottoman army will have thorough reforms and better workings.¹⁷⁸

Cosmidis' paper does not regard optimism enough for a better future and decides to publish letters from Greek soldiers who narrate oppositely different accounts than that of *Neologos*. Whether these letters were authentic or not does not seriously concern us. What matters, instead, was how these newspapers attempted to influence the public opinion. While no such letters from Greek soldiers were published in *Tanin*, there are some examples in this respect provided by *Sada-ı Millet*. In one of these, a Greek soldier who comes to serve in Istanbul sends a letter to a friend of his in Salonika and describes his first days in the army:

My brother Spyro,

We do not do anything special apart from following drills and being present at Friday Prayers of the Sultan. Last Friday we had the honor to see His Imperial Majesty entering and leaving the mosque. Our barracks is a perfect building by the sea... Two days ago our new beds arrived and we have been very comfortably sleeping on these beds... Our refectory is separate from dormitories. However, not all barracks have these perfect conditions. Luck smiled on us.

Your brother Yorgi Sandaros¹⁷⁹

Sada-ı Millet seems quite careful in portraying different aspects of military life for prospective Christian conscripts. Accordingly, in yet another account a Greek soldier visits the publishing house of the newspaper and informs the journalists on life in the army. This account seems to provide an authentic impression as it cites both the exact place this young man was performing his military duty and praiseworthy efforts of the Second Lieutenant Hayri Efendi. A different emphasis from the former account, this description is aimed at depicting the respect shown to Christians and a friendly atmosphere in the barracks:

¹⁷⁸ "Hıristiyanların Askerliği" (The Military Service of Christians), *Sada-ı Millet*, 27 March 1910.

¹⁷⁹ "Kardeşim İspiro! Muayyen vakitlerde tayin icrasından ve Cuma Selamlığı resm-i alisinde bulunmaktan başka bir işimiz yoktur. Hatta bu Cuma günü Zat-ı Şahane'yi camiye girer ve çıkarken görmek şerefine nail olduk. Kışlamız deniz kenarında mükemmel bir binadır... İki gün evvel karyolarımız geldi. İki geceden beri bunların içinde rahat rahat yatıyoruz... Taamhanemiz ayırıldır. Ancak, tekmil kışlalarda bu mükemmeliyet bulunmaz. Bizim taliğimize düştü". "Bir Rum Neferin Mektubu" (Letter from a Greek Soldier), *Sada-ı Millet*, 1 April 1910.

With our Muslim friends in the army we get along like brothers. They treat us with full respect and do their best to help us gain dexterity in our drills... We are allowed to attend Sunday service at church. They permitted those of us coming from nearby cities to spend Easter at home with our families. In short, we are extremely happy with our lives in the barracks and army in general. We do not have any complaints.¹⁸⁰

Indeed, *Sada-i Millet* was taking every opportunity to depict the enthusiasm of Greek Ottomans to perform their military duty. Aside from above examples coming from humble soldiers, it was providing examples from upper echelons of society as well. In its issue dated 2 May 1910, a banquet held at Kadıkoy Greek Club in honor of Greek soldiers on the occasion of Easter entered the newspaper's pages. According to its lively account, tunes, applauds and speeches filled up the club's hall while the exclamations "Long live the army", "Long live the country", "Long live liberty" were flying on the air. Then an Easter egg was put on auction as a donation to the navy and in twenty minutes 3000 piastres were collected.¹⁸¹

However, one could also come across letters and accounts which were radically different from those above. Instead of harmony and respect, these accounts were depicting humiliating character of the military service for Christians and lack of respect displayed by officers for their religion. These, of course, did not appear in Turkish papers. *Tanin* could only attack the Greek newspapers publishing and making use of these letters for their criticism against the government and the CUP in particular. *Sada-ı Millet*, on the other hand, would choose to hope that "thanks to hard-working and honest officers" things will be corrected in future, thus implying to regard the grievances as problems caused by personal chauvinistic attitudes of certain officers in the army. Souliotis, however, tended to see this kind of complaints as an indicator of a general authoritarian policy of the Young Turks and provides the following letter dated 23 May 1910 and sent by a Greek soldier to the Phanar. He presents it as a characteristic account describing a Christian soldier's life in the army:

Your All Holiness,

It is with my great sorrow to inform you that our situation has become unbearable because of the violence, the lack of lawfulness and all the things that are against us. Because our officer, to our bad luck, is very fanatical and has authoritarian instincts...on Sundays if we ever say that we want to go to church, they send us to church but, when they do, they lead us like sheep. Yes, of course, we are soldiers and

¹⁸⁰ "İslam arkadaşlarımızla kardeş gibi geçiniyor, onlar da bilmukabele pek çok gayet nazikane muamele ediyorlar, talimlerde mümarese kazanmaklığımız için fevkalade çalışıyorlar...Pazar günleri de kiliseye gitmek için müsaademiz vardır. Paskalya münasebetiyle mahalleri yakın olanların memleketlerine giderek yortularını aileleri nezdinde geçirmelerine müsaade olunmuştur. Hülasa-i kelam, kışla ve askerlik hayatından son derece memnunuz, hiçbir şikayetimiz yoktur". "Bir Rum Neferin Beyanatı" (Statement by a Greek Soldier), *Sada-ı Millet*, 1 May 1910.

¹⁸¹ "Kadıköy Rum Kulübünde" (At Kadıkoy Greek Club), *Sada-ı Millet*, 2 May 1910.

we obey the laws. But the law is applied in a strange way and according to the will of the people who are not controlled by anybody. They are like tyrants to us. It is impossible to become like brothers as they say ‘*Hepimiz kardaşız*’ (we are all brothers) since they are poles apart with equality. That we write is nothing compared to what we suffer. We do not know what holiday means. We do not know what prayer is. We do not know anything because they laugh at us if they see us crossing ourselves or if we do anything else religious. Therefore, we beg your holiness to show pity on us for our troubles and violence we suffer and I hope that you take necessary measures because our position is unbearable... We do not have the permission to go to the market to buy what we need. Earlier on they used to give us permission to go once a week outside the barracks, but now there is no more permission anymore. They say the order was cancelled by *ordu kumandanı* (commander of the troops). And he had said that there would be no more permission. But this new measure is only for us. If our situation does not improve we will have very poor results as our patience is slowly disappearing.¹⁸²

3.3.4. The length of military service

After discussions with the aim of enacting a new conscription law started in 1910, one of the central issues materialized as the length of military service. The Article 3 of the proposed bill declared the total span of service as 25 years, with three years of regular service. On behalf of the legislating committee Ali Vasfi Bey listed the total time of service in certain countries as following: 30 years in Greece and Serbia, 28 years in Germany, 23 years in Austria and Russia. A number of deputies found the length of military service too long and objected. Objections proposed a military service of twenty years, with two years of regular service instead of three and were not specific to a certain group of deputies. MPs who objected to the length of service legitimized their position by referring to the expanding army with the

¹⁸² “Παναγιώτατε Δέσποτα, μετά μεγάλης μας λύπης πληροφορούμε την Υμετέραν Θ. Παναγιότητα ότι η θέσις μας κατήντησεν αφόρητος, ένεκα των βιαιοπραγιών και ανομιών των εφαρμοζομένων εις βάρος ημών. Επειδή ο αξιωματικός ημών, κατά κακήν μας τύχιν, είναι φανατικός πολύ, έχει και ένστικτα απολυταρχικά...την Κυριακήν, μηχανικώς μόνον άμα ειπούμεν ότι θέλομεν να υπάγωμεν εις την εκκλησίαν, μας στέλνουν η μάλλον μας πηγαίνουν ως πρόβατα. Ναί μέν είμεθα στρατιώται και είμεθα υπό νόμον, αλλά παράδοξον νόμον εφαρμοζόμενον κατά βούλησιν ανθρώπων απηλλαγμένων παντός ελέγχου, των οποίων τα φυλετικά αισθήματα ευρίσκουσι το ποθούμενον το να μας τυραννούν. Είναι αδύνατον να δυνηθώμεν ν’αδελφοποιηθώμεν κατά το λεγόμενον των ιδίων (έπιμοζ καρδάσιζ), διότι ‘αυτοί και η ισοτέλεια δύο άκρα ενάντια’. Αυτά που γράφομε δεν είναι τίποτε, είναι μηδέν, από εκείνα που υποφέρομεν. Ούτε εορτή ηζεύρομεν, ούτε προσευχή, ούτε άλλο τίποτε, επειδή μας γελούν άμα ιδούν ότι κάμνομεν Σταυρόν η άλλο τι σημείον θρησκευτικόν. Όθεν παρακαλούμεν την Υμετέραν Θ. Παναγιότητα όπως φανή ίλεως εις τα βάσανα και βιαιοπραγίας τας οποίας υποφέρομεν, και προβή εις κατάλληλα μέτρα, διότι είναι αφόρητος η θέσις μας...δεν έχομεν άδειαν να υπάγωμεν εως την αγοράν ν’αγοράσωμεν τι αναγκαιούν προς ημάς, πρίν μας εχορηγηίτο άδεια να πηγαίνωμεν την εβδομάδα επ’αδεία μίαν φοράν έξω, τώρα δεν έχει πλέον, ήρτε λέγει διαταγή από τον Ορδουκουμαντανή να μη χορηγήται πλέον άδεια, αλλά μόνον εις ημάς εφαρμόζεται. Εαν αυτη η κατάστασις μας δεν βελτιωθή, θα έχωμεν λυπηρά αποτελέσματα, διότι η υπομονή μας εξαντλείται βαθμηδόν.” Veremis & Boura, *ibid*, pp. 107-8.

inclusion of non-Muslims. Deputy for the Minister of War answered their objection and defended the Ministry's position. A service of two years in certain European countries was not feasible in the Ottoman case as the army lacked a cadre of reserve officers. He did not oppose to these demands in principle but added that only in time, after training a sufficient body of reserve officers, shortening the length of regular service could be considered.¹⁸³ According to Cosmidis, the conscription term could be shortened by reducing the amount of time deemed necessary for training the soldiers. Then again, speaking as an expert on the matter, deputy for the ministry scoffed at his idea and added that even the Germans were not capable of doing this. Cosmidis did not back down and after presenting a personal account of comparison between German and Ottoman peasants, concluded that two years were enough:

Germans cannot achieve it but Ottomans can. They are not of quick comprehension as we are. When it comes to innate capacities, I would prefer Ottomans to Germans...I do not have any doubt at all that our peasants absorb training more easily. With these unique qualities our people possess, one year's time is sufficient for a perfect training.¹⁸⁴

However, Habip Bey stated that in order to judge two years enough for regular service one should be ignorant about military life, as Cosmidis was. He consulted the Italian example. Even an advanced country like Italy, with a solid network of railways and maritime facilities, had recently decided to reduce the term to two years. The Ottoman Empire was the antithesis of Italy. It did have neither a strong network of railways nor vessels. What is more, Italy had more or less a homogeneous population, but the Ottoman Empire? Even the language itself would pose a challenge for the army, if we were to appreciate the fact that many young soldiers would come to the army without the knowledge of any Turkish at all, thus, creating a difficulty even in teaching them to read numbers during shooting drills. As a matter of fact, Cosmidis' ship foundered on the rock of empire's unpleasant realities. At the conclusion of discussions a proposal to reduce the total term to twenty and the regular term to two years was presented to the presidency of the parliament. The proposal, in which 16 out of a total of 37 signatures belonged to Greek deputies, was rejected.¹⁸⁵

For the time being it appeared like the matter was closed. But when the discussion carried on the following year it reappeared on the agenda of the parliament, without effecting

¹⁸³ MMZC, pp. 149-158 (3 April 1326 / 16 April 1910).

¹⁸⁴ "*Almanlar muvaffak olamaz fakat Osmanlılar muvaffak olur. Çünkü Almanlar bizim gibi zekavet-i fikriyyeye malik değildirlər. Ben Osmanlıları fitraten Almanlara takdim ederim...Hakikaten bizim köylülerimize daha kolaylıkla anlatmaya muvaffak olunacağına şüphe etmem. Efrad-ı ahalimizin hal-i aslisi bir sene zarfında mükemmel bir askerlik talim etmeğe müsait olduğu cihetle...*" *Ibid*, p. 159 (3 April 1326 / 16 April 1910).

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 159-163 (3 April 1326 / 16 April 1910).

the desired change though. The form was the same (reducing the total term to twenty years and regular term to two years) but the content not. Last year the emphasis was whether two years would be enough for the satisfactory preparation of conscripts in case of war. Now the emphasis has changed and the new argument was that this long a military service would bring nothing but more poverty to the country. Boussios took to the floor of the parliament and expressed his opinions in a moving fashion:

Here I speak on behalf of all the Ottomans and declare that we, the Greek Ottomans, do need the Turkish element. The Turkish element formed this state but day by day it is fading out. If this state disappears we, the Greek Ottomans, will suffer as well. Please preserve the Turkish element...we want to live like civilized people. We cry out that first we are civilians then soldiers. But you say the opposite. You say that 'We will cultivate our land and open stores only if we cease to become soldiers'.¹⁸⁶

He further added that due to this kind of laws, thousands, if not more, of our young people had been migrating to America to escape this heavy burden. This speech of Boussios' followed by a more passionate one by Krikor Zohrab even convinced one of the most obstinate members of the CUP, Mehmed Talat Bey from Ankara, to change his mind and support a shorter term of military service. Taking over from Boussios and elaborating his arguments with his usual strong and convincing style, Zohrab declared that defense of the fatherland would remain incomplete if the other side of the question was neglected. In this contemporary age, battlefields of the past were to be replaced with other battlefields the logic of civilization was bringing in. On the one hand, they (the CUP) were passing laws to encourage industry but where to find workers to fill up the factories?

They say that the Turkish element of this empire is not capable of engaging in trade and industry. I will never accept this. Poor them! How are they supposed to be tradesmen and industrials? No time remains from serving in the army!¹⁸⁷

The views expressed by Boussios and supported by Zohrab already appeared in the pages of *Politiki Epitheorisis* back in April 1910. Its editorial dated 11 April 1910 imprints an impression that Boussios was the author of it. Although it is not known who wrote it, one thing is very certain: striking similarity of its contour of arguments to that of Cosmidis' and

¹⁸⁶ “Şimdi umum unsurları düşünüyorum ve diyorum ki biz Rumlara Türk unsuru lazımdır. Zira Türk unsuru bu devleti teşkil etmiştir. Ve bu unsur tamamiyle ezilip gidiyor. Bu devlet giderse biz de az çok zararlı olacağız. Türk unsurunu muhafaza ediniz...medeni yaşamak istiyoruz. Biz diyoruz ki evveleminde ahaliyiz. Sonra ahali sınıfından çıkıp da asker olacağız. Siz diyorsunuz ki evveleminde askeriz ve askerlik vazifesi olmadığı halde ahali olacağız, çift süreceğiz, dükkan açacağız.” *Ibid*, p. 105 (12 Tesrin-i Evvel 1327 / 25 October 1911).

¹⁸⁷ “Bazıları batıl bir fikir dermeyan ediyorlar. Diyolar ki, Türk unsuru sanata, ticarete müsait değildir. Ka'tiyyen böyle değil. Yalnız zavallının vakt-ü zamanı, imkanı yok. Hizmet-i askeriyyeden boş kalmıyor ki bu işlere başvursun.” *Ibid*, pp. 106-10 (12 Tesrin-i Evvel 1327 / 25 October 1911).

Boussios' in the parliament. The article analyzing the extension of conscription to non-Muslims first mentioned two important perils the Ottoman Empire was in, one international and the other domestic. As far as the international arena was concerned, economic encroachments of the Great Powers within the Ottoman Empire had reached a very critical level. There was not even a single mine not surrendered to foreign hands. The domestic danger was that Turks had never stopped considering themselves as the dominant nation. The significant point in the article is that it evaluates universal conscription in relation to these two crucial dangers and regards it as the only remedy to them. There could be a remedy only if non-Muslims were attracted to the army and see that they have equal rights and duties with the Turks. If this perception is created then, “the army will be their focal point and they will not be distracted to other states and ideals” (...θα εύρωσιν εν τω στρατώ το κέντρον, το οποίον θα τους αποσύρη από των έλξεων άλλων κρατών και άλλων ιδανικών). This way a real brotherhood will be created that will remove the first lethal danger and consequently, an empire where peoples are living in harmony will be a strong bulwark against foreign encroachments. However, there was another issue that certainly needed to be settled: the long military service. Again in line with the spirit of future speeches to be delivered in the parliament, socio-economic decline that has already started in the Muslim population of the empire could only be arrested with appropriate and reasonable measures. Otherwise, the state would be in a serious danger of withering away. It supported a total service of 25 years, with two years of regular service and gave examples of countries where this term of service was being applied, namely Italy, Germany, France and Bulgaria.¹⁸⁸

3.3.5. Conscription and migration

We saw that during parliamentary discussions Choneos and Boussios had touched upon the topic of migration of many young people, especially to America, to escape the burden of conscription. They believed that a shorter military service and introduction of some measures to remove certain irregularities and violations in the army could prevent this widespread outflow of people. The Phanar had also a sensitive interest in the issue as it was losing from its Orthodox flock each and every day. Towards the end of 1910 a commission was formed at the Patriarchate to discuss the matter at hand and decided to submit its proposals to the government.¹⁸⁹ The resulting *takrir* was written by Souliotis and started with the sorrow and

¹⁸⁸ Editorial, “Το Περί Στρατολογίας Νομοσχέδιον” (On the Conscription Law), *Politiki Epitheorisis*, 11 April 1910.

¹⁸⁹ “Patrikhane ve Askerlik Meselesi” (The Patriarchate and the Question of Conscription), *Tanin*, 19 Tesrin-i Sani 1326 / 2 December 1910.

worry expressed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the fact that many of its distinguished children among its flock “to abandon our beloved country trying to avoid conscription” (...να εγκαταλείψωσι την αγαπητήν ημών πατρίδα, φεύγοντα την στρατολογία). It continues that it leaves no doubts that these migrating people would have been valuable citizens for the brotherhood of different peoples in this common country. It then passes on describing the reasons for this phenomenon of migration. First of all, the long military service and ambiguities relating to certain practical issues motivate those involved in commerce and arts to leave their motherland. Secondly, a small proportion of soldiers from the same ethnic group to be found in companies and absence of non-Muslim officers were creating feelings of loneliness and nostalgia. The petition stipulated that because the regulations in the army were from the time when only Muslims were being conscripted, keeping these intact would amount to a very rigid condition which ignores morals and customs of Christians. Then it went on and listed its proposals that were similar to the ones expressed by Greek deputies in the parliament: a shorter military service, publication in Greek all the military regulations so as to dispense doubts, informing prospective conscripts on when they will be conscripted and how long they will be serving, permission to facilitate Christians’ entrance to *Harbiye* by giving some temporary concessions (for three years) with examinations in native language.¹⁹⁰

Sada-ı Millet, however, was continuing to report rosy instances. While acknowledging outward movement of people, it was, at the same time, quite content at writing that many Christians were informing them on such events they were witnessing. In a specific letter, somebody wrote that he prevented his son from acting this way and even informed the officials against his son’s escape attempt. This was a story with a happy ending as his son was now serving in the army and was quite happy with his life in the army and his friends specifically.¹⁹¹

Yet, these optimistic examples reported by *Sada-ı Millet* seem to be rather exceptions to the general rule. The country was losing its young people who were embarking *en masse* on the ships that would take them to distant shores with the promise of a better future. The extension of military conscription to non-Muslims accelerated this outflow of people and lowered the average age of migrating population. The government was working on measures to halt this development. It even took a decision that prohibited the issuing of passports for those to be imminently conscripted. However, in October 1910 the authorities carried out an investigation which indicated that these measures were not that effective. It turned out that a

¹⁹⁰ Veremis & Boura, *ibid*, pp. 118-120.

¹⁹¹ “Asker Kaçakları” (Army Deserters), *Sada-ı Millet*, 10 April 1910.

third of prospective non-Muslim conscripts who were supposed to be residing in Istanbul were found to be in America.¹⁹²

In an article which appeared in *Politiki Epitheorisis* on 18 September 1911, Souliotis made an appeal to young Christians and urged them not to go away. He thought that their flight would strengthen the hand of those who, upon seeing abstention on the part of Christians, would mock them as unfit for fighting and treat them as second-class citizens. In Souliotis' view there were a couple of reasons for Christians' lack of eagerness towards conscription. The length of service, certain ambiguities surrounding life in the barracks were relevant concrete reasons while a specific perception created the principal reason:

Christians still believe that the state army is Muslim or rather Turkish. Therefore they cannot understand how they can serve as Christians in a Turkish army, how they can preserve their national and religious identity, how they will exercise and sleep in the same barracks and how they will fight together with the Turks who consider it their own army and their own state.¹⁹³

He is really dubious as to the intentions of the Young Turks. He states that if their intentions are genuinely sincere and they are really striving for a common fatherland to be created in close cooperation with non-Turks, then Greeks are also obliged not to miss this opportunity. Yet Hüseyin Cahid's assertion in the columns *Tanin* where he boldly confessed that "the dominant nation in the country is and will be the Turks" (*memlekette millet-i hakime Türklerdir ve Türkler olacaktır*) was a source of great concern for Souliotis and the Greek deputies in his political team.¹⁹⁴ However, he asserts that, "if the conscription of Christians is something indirect or insidious on their part and if they try to mentally turkify them, then we will prove to our misled compatriots that nobody can be turkified" (Αν η εις το στράτευμα κατάταξις των χριστιανών ενέχι υπουλόν τινα οπισθολογισμόν εκ μέρους των εν αυτω εξ αρχής κατατεταγμένων πρόσ διανοητικών και ηθικών εκτουρκισμόν των χριστιανών...θ' αποδείξωσιν εις τους πλανωμένους συμπατριώτας των ότι ο εκτουρκισμός δεν έχει καμμίαν πέρασιν). He then calls on young Christian recruits and urges them to be patient until all the details are arranged and deprivations cured. He assures them that their sufferings

¹⁹² Gülsoy, *ibid*, pp. 147-48.

¹⁹³ "Οι χριστιανοί λέγουν και νομίζουν ακόμη, ότι ο στρατός του Κράτους ή της Πατρίδος,, είναι μουσουλμανικός, ή μάλλον τουρκικός.. Επομένως δεν δύνανται να εννοήσουν πως θα υπηρετήσουν αυτοι, χριστιανοί, εις στρατόν τουρκικόν, πως θα δηνηθούν να σώσουν εν αυτω την εθνικήν και θρησκευτικήν υπόστασιν και αξιοπρέπειαν των, πως θα γυμνασθώσι και θα στρατωνισθώσι και θα πολεμήσωσιν ακόμη μετά των τούρκων, οι οποίοι θεωρούσι τον στρατόν ιδικόν των και το Κράτος ιδικόν των". Athanasios Souliotis, "Μή Φεύγετε!" (Do not Go Away!), *Politiki Epitheorisis*, 18 September 1911.

¹⁹⁴ Hüseyin Cahid, "Millet-i Hakime" (The Dominant Nation), *Tanin*, 25 Tesrin-i Evvel 1324 / 7 November 1908.

will always be remembered and they will always be held in equal esteem with those who fought in the mountains of Macedonia against tyranny before them. Like those fighting against tyranny are admirably remembered today, they will not be forgotten for their role as first Christian recruits who put an end to the old humiliating exclusion from the Ottoman army.¹⁹⁵

3.3.6. Conscription and education

Final major discussions took place where military and education intersected. First question arose with respect to one of the clauses of the Article 6 in the proposed conscription law which stipulated that those who attended institutions of superior education established by the state or those sent abroad, again by the state, for education at a superior institution were exempt from military service. According to this clause, the following, a rather awkward situation actually, was emerging. Those attending foreign schools abroad recognized by the Ottoman state qualified while those attending similar institutions established by communities on the Ottoman soil not. Boussios took to the floor and argued that the practical motivation behind this clause was an evident distrust on the part of the government against schools of non-Muslim communities in the Ottoman Empire:

...if a student decides to go to Athens to be educated at a superior institution he will be able to escape military service. It means that you want to send us to Athens because you do not want us to establish a university here in Istanbul. If this will be the case then a Greek Ottoman student will go to Athens, some others will go to Belgrade or Sofia...Let us set up superior business schools, industrial schools and universities and offer an instruction to our students with Ottoman values.¹⁹⁶

Even though this idea of Boussios' stroke a chord with a couple of Turkish deputies, like Seyyid Bey from Izmir and Arif Ismet Bey from Biga, the Minister of Education Emrullah Efendi differed in opinion. Emrullah Efendi said that he was at loss for words before Boussios' reasoning as he thought that the nature of the issue did not have anything to do with the rights of non-Muslim communities or violations of them. He defended his position by maintaining that the clause did not specify anything related to ethnic or religious groups. True, he said, non-state schools remained outside the scope of the law but this was the case

¹⁹⁵ Athanasios Souliotis, "Μή Φεύγετε!" (Do not Go Away!), *Politiki Epitheorisis*, 18 September 1911.

¹⁹⁶ "...ben buradan Atina'ya gidip otursam mekâtib-i aliye-i ecnebiyye şakirdi sıfatıyla askerlikten kurtulmuş oluyorum. Demek siz bizi İstanbul'da bir darülfünun yapmamak için Atina'ya göndermek istiyorsunuz. Eğer böyle olursa, ben buradan kalkıp Atina'ya gideceğim, başkası da Belgrad'a ve kimisi de Sofya'ya devam etmek isteyecek...Büyük ticaret mektepleri, büyük sanayi mektepleri, büyük darülfünunları kendimiz yapalım da talebeyi Osmanlı terbiyesiyle burada okutalım." MMZC, pp. 58-60 (22 Kanun-i Evvel 1326 / 4 January 1911).

for all ethnicities. Muslims or Turks, did not possess the right to do it either.¹⁹⁷ The nature of disagreement was caused by lack of trust on both sides. While the government and the CUP specifically regarded Greek schools as places that were not willing to spread Ottoman values, many political figures on the Greek side had serious doubts about the “Ottoman” education. On many occasions they were suspecting that under the pretext of union and Ottomanness, what was being actually diffused in classrooms was nothing but a policy of Turkification. The logic of the minister that Turks were not allowed either, did not mollify the opposing group as they already perceived Ottoman schools as strongly inspired by certain Turkish values anyway.

Second question had to do with facilitating the road for non-Muslim officers. Non-Muslim soldiers had started serving in the Ottoman army under Muslim officers but what about Muslim soldiers serving under the direction of non-Muslim officers? And in order to qualify as an officer in the army ranks, one had to graduate from the War Academy (*Mekteb-i Harbiye*). Boussios reminded that in order to enter the War Academy one had to start first from *rüşdiyye* schools, carry on with *idâdî* schools and as a final step take the entry exams in Turkish to make his way to the Academy. This was a long process and although the absence of non-Muslim officers in the army would not cause any problem in terms of military considerations, facilitating the employment of non-Muslim officers would boost the enthusiasm and morale of non-Muslim soldiers. Because courses like mathematics were being conducted in their native language for those attending non-Muslim *idâdî* schools, these students would have great difficulty due to the exams held in Turkish for these courses upon entering the War Academy. What was missing for them was not the factual or theoretical knowledge but scientific terminology in Turkish. What he was requesting from Mahmud Sevket Pasha was, at least for a couple of years, the right to take these exams in mother tongue without removing the prerequisite of sufficient knowledge of Turkish. The Minister of War did not find Boussios’ proposal appropriate and, instead, suggested for those desiring to be educated at the War Academy to sacrifice one year to learn Turkish at the required level. Mehmed Talat Bey from Ankara saw Boussios’ proposal as an attempt to ripen a fruit before it is due, and Mehmed Tahir Bey from Bursa believed that those students with an insufficient level of Turkish are not capable of serving for the good of the country. This time Vartkes Efendi agreed with Boussios’ proposal and called on the Turkish deputies to see it in logical terms. Before 1908 Turkish was not popular at all for many non-Muslims, but with the

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid*, p. 61 (22 Kanun-i Evvel 1326 / 4 January 1911); 129-43 (29 Kanun-i Evvel 1326 / 11 January 1911).

passing of the autocratic rule, reason dictated the learning of Turkish to benefit from the principles of equality. However, since the new age got them unprepared and what they needed was just a little time to reverse the old situation, he asked for some toleration and turning a blind eye on things non-Muslims lacked at the moment. He gave a personal example and said that he was not satisfied with his level of Turkish. He put the blame on the old regime and vowed that in two years' time he will speak perfect Turkish.¹⁹⁸ As a matter of fact, Boussios had not asked for a permanent exemption but just some leniency on the matter. We had seen, during the discussions of the *bedel-i askeri* tax, that after the abolition of it Boussios was still claiming the part paid for the passing half a year. At that time, as reasonably criticized by Hasan Fehmi, he was going over the issue with a fine-tooth comb and losing sight of the big picture of the Ottoman unity at the expense of losing some communal interests but now it seemed that tables have turned on him.

3.4. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, we saw that Greek deputies eagerly supported the bill on universal conscription. The leitmotiv of their argument was that the *bedel-i askeri* tax signified a reason for humiliation for Christians as it prevented them from serving in the army. Acknowledging the primary historical role assumed by the army in the Ottoman Empire, they intrinsically believed that exclusion from the army also meant exclusion from the state. Their enthusiasm was not new but a continuation of a conviction presented by some Greek deputies in the first Ottoman Assembly in 1877-78. Therefore, they were eager exponents of this measure in principle. There were a couple of disagreements on the application of this law, the most notable being the grievances about the arbitrary rule in the army and complaints about lack of respect on the part of some officers against Christian soldiers. The first leitmotiv of seeing the exemption from military service as an insult to Christians has to be assessed together with the other leitmotiv coming from the Turkish side, i.e. "the dominant nation in the country is and will be the Turks". Deputy for Istanbul and the editor of *Tanin*, Hüseyin Cahid's articles on the question of dominant nation aggrandized the doubts of Greeks who were not on good terms with the CUP. Their disillusionment with the CUP's policies finally reached a point where they started to perceive the application of the policy of conscription as an insidious measure of Turkification of the Ottoman Empire in general, and Greek Ottomans in particular.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 237-43 (9 March 1327 / 22 March 1911).

In the historiography of the Second Constitutional Period and specifically on political attitudes of Greek Ottomans, it seems that criticisms and accusations directed at them by the Unionist press of the time were consequently taken over by Turkish and even foreign historians of our time. What is unfortunate is that most of the time, so-called received wisdom was accepted and narrated as history without performing the most indispensable duty of a historian: that of checking them against written sources of the time and trying to catch the spirit of the time with all its conflicts, disagreements, quarrels, prejudices and misperceptions. If it is easy to distrust speeches made in the parliament and rule them out as mere discourse and façade, then why not analyzing them in light of relatively more open arguments expounded in the pages of newspapers, in one way or another, related to these political figures? Sentencing the policy of universal conscription to death all the way from its beginning, relating the emerging difficulties and problems about the conscription exclusively to Greek Ottomans and their so-called pretentious Ottomanism, or presenting non-Muslims deserters from the army as a proof to the lack of patriotism on their part simply ignores two aspects. First of all, common sense tells us that military service is not something easy or comfortable. This was acknowledged by Muslim and Turkish deputies too. When the *bedel-i askeri* was being debated in the assembly there were Turkish deputies who were saying that this tax was not a humiliation but protection for non-Muslims, while it had put the heavy burden of conscription on the shoulders of the Muslim element in the empire. Secondly, deserting from army was a universal problem valid for Muslims as well. However, taking into account doubts, fears and ambiguity, more cases of desertion are expected from non-Muslims and it generally took the form of overseas migration. In the final analysis, we have to remind ourselves that military service was something new to non-Muslims. By the way, isn't the new always intimidating?

*New opinions are always suspected,
and usually opposed,
without any other reason
but because they are not already common.*

John Locke: *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, "Dedicatory Epistle"

CONCLUSION

This study was about a narration of events which involved Greek Ottomans and Turks in a political struggle during one of the most extraordinary times in the history of the Ottoman Empire. It was extraordinary because, for the first time, different communities thought that they found an opportunity to work for the good of their community or the country, thanks to the proclamation of the constitution and the promises of the Revolution materialized in the words of liberty, equality and justice. However, extraordinary times generally bring alongside misperceptions and misunderstandings as well. The greatest problem seemed to derive from different understandings of the word equality.

We saw that the Greeks in the parliament were not a monolithic group. When the Greek Party was formed at the end of 1910, not all the Greek deputies joined this party. Some deputies decided to support the CUP and in turn they were awarded by being reelected in the 1912 on the Unionist ticket. It is hard to argue that the Greek deputies in the parliament solely represented the matters that only concerned their own communities. They did not regard themselves as deputies of the Greek community but as deputies of the entire Ottoman nation. Greek deputies also participated in the discussions that had nothing to do with the Greek community. And this is valid for those who established the Greek Party too. Those forming the Greek Party (Boussios, Cosmidis and Vamvakas are the leading ones) differed from the others (Carolidis and Aristidi among the leading names) in their vehement opposition to the CUP and therefore they consequently supported the Entente Liberale (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Fırkası*). However, this does not mean that the second group supported the CUP in every respect but believed that it is wiser to cooperate with the most powerful faction in the Ottoman politics. Some Greek deputies were quite visible in the parliament. Boussios and

Cosmidis were among the most active deputies in the parliament. However, there were some Greek deputies who hardly took to the floor of the parliament, like those from the Aegean Islands.

One of the important aspects after the Revolution was the different attitudes on the parts of the CUP towards the Greeks, Armenians and Jews. Following the articles and reports in the pages of *Tanin* makes it quite apparent that a very thick line had been drawn between the Greeks and the other two. This was the case both during the electoral process and after the elections. The Jews received the least of the attention in the Unionist press and they never appeared in a negative way. They were the smallest group in the parliament represented by 4 deputies, although their power seems not to be proportional with their small number. Salonika where the CUP had its center was famous for the very strong Jewish and *dönme* (Jews converted to Islam) presence. There were close ties between the leading Unionists and some Jews. Especially the deputy for Salonika Emmanuel Carasso was in close contact with the CUP leaders both before and after 1908.¹⁹⁹ In the parliamentary discussions, the Jews never posed a significant problem to the CUP. However, the case of the Armenians was different. It was not the case that they opposed the CUP. They differed from the Jews because they were a large non-Muslim community, only second to the Greeks, represented with 14 deputies. Inside the parliament, deputies for Istanbul Zohrab Efendi and Haladjian Efendi together with Erzurum deputy Vartkes Efendi were the most visible figures. Although Vartkes was a Socialist, in many respects, he was in agreement with the Unionists. Zohrab was one of the most articulate members of the parliament. He chose to keep a distance from the CUP, whereas Haladjian was an important Unionist figure who even served as the Minister of Public Works. The most striking difference between the Armenian and Greek communities showed itself on the pages of *Tanin*. As we saw especially in chapters one and three, the Armenians were always portrayed as the ones who shared the same sorrowful fate with the Turks in the *ancien régime* whereas the Greeks suffered the least. Similarly, while the Armenian community was taken as the one closest to the Turks in customs, the Greeks were criticized for their imperfect level of Turkish in general.

None of the Greek deputies, on the other hand, emerged as a staunch Unionist unlike the case with the other non-Muslim deputies. This was also valid for those who did not join

¹⁹⁹ Kayalı, Hasan, "Jewish Representation in the Ottoman Parliament," in Avigdor Levy, ed., *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, Princeton; New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1994, p. 551. For an assessment of the role of the Jews in the Young Turk movement before the Revolution see, Şükrü Hanioglu, "Jews in the Young Turk Movement to the 1908 Revolution," *ibid*, pp. 519-26.

the Greek Party. On the other hand, it was the Greeks who raised their voices during the elections. And again it was the Greek deputies who raised objections as to the formation of different companies for the Christians in the military service, employment of priests in the army and preservation of the historical “privileges” of their community. However, this was not because they did not believe in Ottomanism or they wanted to break away from the Ottoman Empire. Actually, regarding the Ottoman Empire as a common heritage of Turks and Greeks was not an uncommon attitude among the Greek Ottomans.²⁰⁰ Ottomanism, in their understanding of the concept, was a political union of different ethnic elements. It was a solution devised in order for the Ottoman State to continue its existence. However, they thought that the policy propagated by the Unionists in the name of Ottomanism was at odds with their understanding of the concept. For instance, on the question of the military conscription they agreed with the CUP in principle though their concerns came out in matters concerning the application of the policy. Since they believed that many state officials had authoritarian tendencies and chauvinistic attitudes emerging from their conviction in seeing the Turks as the dominant nation, they were anxious of the effect of such policies on their community. In their attempts at holding on to their national (*milli*) character, in this sense holding on to the tradition, against the CUP’s reforms aimed at creating a unified society under the leadership of the dominant nation of the Turks, in this sense representing a break from the tradition, we can argue that their stance converged to Ottomanist idea more than it did in the case of the CUP. The CUP’s idea of unifying reforms was not perhaps new as the history of the *Tanzimat* is also the history of attempts at unifying separate institutional and social structures. The difference in the Second Constitutional Period was, however, that this time the governing cadres were more determined to carry on with their program. It is interesting that in their struggle both the Unionists and the Greeks asserted that they were aiming at maintaining and strengthening the Ottomanist ideology. However, they both accused each other of undermining the principle of Ottomanism. Perhaps the way to grasp this complicated issue depends on what we understand of Ottomanism. In a parliamentary sitting, Carolidis Efendi established an analogy: “Ottomanness is the sun surrounded by the stars” (*Osmanlılık bir güneştir. Etrafında yıldızları var*).²⁰¹ He certainly meant that none of the

²⁰⁰ For instance deputy for Serfidje, Vamvakas Efendi openly represented this idea. In one of his speeches at the parliament he asserted that on the foundation of the Ottoman State there were two great civilizations: Islamic (or Arabic) civilization and Christian civilization (represented by the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate). See MMZC, p. 552 (3 May 1327 / 16 May 1911).

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, p. 453 (7 July 1325 / 20 July 1909).

Ottoman elements is entitled to be the sun. The place of the sun is reserved for the political ideal to which all the Ottoman elements are attached as stars. If one of the Ottoman elements happens to claim the place of the sun, no doubt that it will be burned up disrupting the other stars as well.

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