RISE OF THE YOUNG TURKS

POLITICS, THE MILITARY AND OTTOMAN COLLAPSE

M. NAIM TURFAN

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For Barbara,
for everything.

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Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse

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Foreword

I met Naim Turfan in October 1983 while I was in London on a sabbatical. My purpose in visiting London was to do research at the Public Record Office and visit various libraries in the city. But I also used the occasion to visit former teachers at the university and to read new theses of interest in the Senate House Library. One afternoon, I went to see the late Professor P. J. Yatikiotis who taught politics in the Middle East at the School of Oriental and African Studies. During our conversation, I asked him if he thought there were any theses I ought to read while I was in London. His face lit up as he began to talk about a thesis he had just directed by a 'Young Turk' called Mehmed Naim Turfan. He described it as a remarkable thesis, one of the best he had directed during his entire career, and he urged me to go and read it at the first opportunity. Next day I went to the Senate House and began to read Naim's thesis. It was, as Professor Yatikiotis had described it, a remarkable piece of work. It was much larger than the average Ph.D. thesis, perhaps twice or even three times as large. But what was even more striking than its size was the maturity of the work, marked by vast scholarship, a felicitous style, and historical judgment rarely found in the writing of most graduate students.

As I read the thesis, I made copious notes for use in the future. I thought that was the end of the matter. But a few days later, I had lunch with the late Albert Hourani and I mentioned that I had read this wonderful thesis on the political role of the Ottoman army and the Young Turks and remarked that it was a pity that such a work was not available as a book. Impressed by my enthusiasm, Professor Hourani asked me to write a report on the thesis and send it to a press with which he had connections. I wrote the report and posted it to the editor as Professor Mourant had suggested. The editor responded by asking for Naim's typescript which was then sent to two other readers. After some months, the two anonymous readers sent their reports to the press. They were 'very favourable' and the editors of the series for which Naim's study was being considered were 'very impressed with the work'. However, the editors wrote that the typescript was too long to be commercially viable and asked Naim to reduce it to 'not more than 100,000 words'.

Naim was unwilling to abridge his work, especially as that would mean cutting out his notes, except as sources of reference. But

Naim's notes are not merely a reference to the sources he used; they are that, but they are much more. He never utilised notes to put aside material he could not use in the text, rather he used them to tell another story, to let the reader hear many voices at the same time, while also authenticating his research. For Naim, his notes were the very heart and soul of his study and there was no question of pruning them so as to make his book commercially viable. Naim was a scholar and not a careerist, and he had faith in the quality of his work.

Naim was a political scientist by training and he had learned his craft from such eminent scholars as Richard Rose and P. J. Yatikiotis. But if he was a political scientist by training, he was a historian by instinct. Reading his thesis I was always conscious of his lively historical imagination, his enormous fertility and facility of mind, his ability to understand vividly the conditions of the past and view with sympathy the ideas and aspirations of earlier ages, especially the epoch of the Young Turks. Yet he never allowed his imagination to carry him away, or force him to take liberties with historical facts. He was a believer in the historian's obligation to get his facts right and always made a conscious effort to that end. He was particularly careful with quotations, making sure that he never misquoted a single word. The same was true whenever he translated or rather rendered foreign-language sources into English, particularly Turkish sources; he often gave words he thought were controversial in the original language so that readers could judge for themselves. He also possessed another gift historians envy, the gift of singling out an event which brought the entire period to life.

The period Naim focuses on in this book was one of transition from empire to nation. It was marked by a struggle between the men of the old order and a new generation, described as the 'Young Turks', men who were determined to drag the Ottoman empire into the twentieth century. The politics of these years are extremely complex and the sources difficult to use and analyse. Perhaps that is the reason why most historians have tended to stay away from the Young Turk decade. There is next to nothing in English on the subject and very little in Turkish. The only recent book that comes to mind is Ahmet Turan Alkon, *Ikinci Mesrutiyet Devrinde Ordu ye Siyaset* ('Army and Politics during the Second Constitutional Period') published in Ankara in 1992. Though a competent study, it lacks the analytical complexity of Naim's work. Naim in his study examines the politics of the constitutional era in detail and shows that the army officers who were members of various Young Turk parties were not simply led by the civilian politcians. They

maintained their independence of thought and action at all times and often determined the outcome of events.

Naim's untimely death in January 1998 was a great personal loss. It was also a loss to the field for Naim's productive years were still ahead of him. However, we can be grateful that he left behind this important work which will remain the dfinitive study on the military and politics in the late Ottoman Empire for years to come.

Feroz Ahmad
Boston

Note

Naim Turfan died on 26th January 1998, after a prolonged and courageous battle against the lymph cancer, Non-Hodkin's Lymphoma. On diagnosis in November 1995, he was on the point of finishing the revision and updating of this book, based on his original Ph.D. thesis at the University of London, entitled *The Politics of Military Politics: Political Aspects of Civil-Military Relations in the Ottomon Empire, with Special Reference to the 'Young Turk' Era* (1983). He postponed the project to concentrate on getting well, intending to take up his normal life again once treatment was over – sadly, a forlorn hope. Two years later, when the lymphoma suddenly became rampant and unstoppable, he was unable to complete those final touches, even radiotherapy as "holding treatment" in order to gain a little extra time to return home and finish the book. The pain was too severe and he was too weak; he never came home.

I promised my husband that I would make sure his book was published. I have been involved with it, in its various forms and stages, since we first met as students in 1973; nobody knows the text as I do. Here, then, is the fruit of his labours and of my pledge.

Mrs. Barbara Turfan
London

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M.N.T.

Notes on Usage

ORTHOGRAPHY: I adhere broadly to the conventions of modern Turkish orthography for the transcription of Ottoman Turkish (*Osmanlıca*) irrespective of the origin or original spelling of words.

1) Personal and place names: I try to give personal and place names as nearly as possible the form that would have been used by Ottoman (*Osmanlı*) contemporaries. For example, Mahmud Şevket Paşa rather than Mahmut Şevket Paşa or Mahmoud Shawqat Pasha; Selânik rather than Salonica or Thessaloníki. For personal names, as familiarity and the reading of historical texts dictate, I tend to use either the full names of individuals or the names by which historians generally refer to them. For example, Mustafa Reşid Paşa rather than Reşid Paşa, Rıza Paşa rather than Hasan Rıza Paşa. Similarly, place names are usually accompanied on first reference by an alternative, either the native version or that by which the place is internationally known. Thenceforth, only the form I consider most fitting is given. For example, Anatolia throughout but accompanied on first reference by the native Anadolu, Selânik throughout but accompanied on first reference by the native Thessaloníki.

2) Family names: Names in brackets accompanying personal names on first reference denote family names (*soyadı*) later adopted in accordance with the Law of Family Names (*Soyadı Kanunu*), passed on 21 June 1934 (No. 2525), put into the statute books on 2 July 1934 and coming into effect six months later.

3) Military ranks: Ottoman military ranks are given in English with the vernacular supplied in brackets on the first reference. Older ranks with no ready equivalent in English are given only in the vernacular. Ottoman military ranks of the Young Turk era (especially post-1908) were more or less equivalent with those of most contemporary western European military establishments, particularly the French. Difficulty arises, however, with the rank of Lieutenant-General since the equivalent unit, the Army Corps, did not exist in the Ottoman Empire before 8 January 1911 (26 Kânunuevvel 1326). Before 1911, therefore, the Ottoman armed forces held no such rank although the equivalent, in English, of *Birinci Ferik* was specifically Lieutenant-General. Hence, I take all

Birinci Feriks prior to 1911 as Generals and subsequent appointees as Lieutenant-Generals. Further, Ottoman officers from Second-Lieutenant to Captain inclusive were called *Efendi* after their names (apart from a few courtesy titles of *Bey*), from Adjutant-Major to Colonel *Bey*, from Brigadier to Marshal *Paşa*. Hence, *Kolağası* Mustafa Kemal Bey, for example, is this officer's full contemporary appellation, with the exception of the formal *futuvvetlu* - which (equivalent) part of every military title is omitted throughout for the sake of simplicity and clarity. In Ottoman military parlance *Efendi, Bey* or *Paşa* was never a courtesy title.

4) Civilian titles: In the Ottoman context, civilian titles represent one of the most complex and least understood of imperial rank and honours systems. I have adhered to the basic elements only, in order to avoid further complication and confusion. It may be said that normally *Bey* would apply to a higher civilian rank such as that of a Government minister, but many of the highest-ranking ministers and civil servants would be *Paşas*. On the other hand, the religious hierarchy were all *Efendi* at whatever level. For example, the Ottoman ambassador to Italy, İbrahim Hakkı Bey, received the imperial rank of *Paşa* when he was appointed Grand *Vezir*, whereas we can only talk about *Şeyhülislâm* Cemaleddin *Efendi*.

5) Ranks and titles in general: For the sake of clarity and familiarity, *Sultan* is used throughout for the monarch although it is not strictly accurate during the whole period. Alternatives such as *Hakan, Han, Hünkâr* and *Padişah* were in use and *Padişah* was for long the accepted term. Likewise the title Grand *Vezir* in this study, although the term *Sadr-ı a'zam (Sadrâzam)* is more correct later, from the sixteenth century.

CONVERSION OF DATES: Throughout the study, the Gregorian calendar is taken as the basis. But for the Young Turk era, with its close attention to detail, the *Hicrî* (or else *Malî*) calendar, then in use, is observed. Conversions are provided, where necessary together with the original, in order both to facilitate the tracing of material, particularly archival, and to render the work in keeping with the times.

TRANSLATIONS: Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. Sometimes, for accuracy or familiarity in the case of European languages, the original stands without translation. As for the *Osmanlıca*, where I consider it appropriate and valuable, parts of

the original are provided in brackets. Translations are as accurate as possible, even though this may at times conflict with style.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES: While the text of this study is intended to be self-contained, it should be read in conjunction with the Bibliographical Notes, where I often undertake a critical examination of my source material and, at times, speculate along lines of interest that, although relevant, diverge too sharply from the textual progress for inclusion there. References in the Notes are works I have consulted and do not necessarily provide a full bibliography. In the case of each published work, the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* (1st edition) apply. Full bibliographic details are given on first citation in each chapter. Heavily-used works and published archival material are subsequently cited in abbreviated form, clearly indicated "[Hereafter . . .]". Similarly, the origin of unpublished archival material, in a traceable form, is supplied once in full and subsequently in abbreviation, indicated "[Hereafter . . .]". In view of the abundance of material cited and quoted, the conventions *ibid.*, *op.cit.* and *loc.cit.* are used only within individual notes. For consistency, İstanbul is given as the place of publication for all works published there despite the profusion of alternative names, such as Dersaadet, Konstantin(n)iye, Constantinople.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY: This is a list of works drawn from the Bibliographical Notes and containing only published material (including published archives). The works selected are those most relevant to the study as a whole while at the same time accessible to the reader, including the specialist reader. For the full bibliographical sources used in the preparation of the original study, the reader is advised to consult the Ph.D. thesis upon which this work is based (See **Prologue**, N.1).

Now shalt thou feel the force of Turkish arms

Marlowe, *Tambourlaine the Great*, Part I, III, iii, 134

Prologue

Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) and the political aspects of Ottoman civil-military relations

One night in October 1909, we are told, an Ottoman staff-officer, Adjutant-Major (*Erkân-ı Harb Kolağası*) Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) Bey, attached to the IIIrd Army, gave a speech at the second annual congress of a political society of which he was a member – *Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (known as the Committee of Union and Progress) – being convened secretly some time between 13 and 25 October in Selânik (Thessaloníki). It seems he was there as a delegate from Trablusgarb (Ottoman Libya). In his speech, Mustafa Kemal Bey specifically commented upon what might loosely be called the political aspects of Ottoman civil-military relations. The young officer is quoted as saying:

> "As long as members of the military remain in the Committee [U.P.], neither shall we set up a party nor shall we have a military [Ordu mensupları cemiyet içinde kaldıkça hem fırka kuramayacağız hem de ordumuz olmayacaktır]. The IIIrd Army, the majority of whose members are [also] members of the Committee, cannot be called a modern army

> in today's meaning of the word. [Moreover] the Committee, leaning upon the military, is not able to take root in the body of the nation [. . . millet bünyesinde kök salamamaktadır]. Therefore, before everything, let us by means of resignations take out from the military those officers whose services are needed in the Committee and those members of the military who wish to remain in the Committee, and let us from now on institute statutory regulations in order to prevent the entry of officers and [other] members of the military into any political society."[1]

The fundamental importance of this oft-quoted fragment of speech lies, contrary to the consensus of opinion, not so much in what this officer said or what was done after he had said it as in why he was saying it and, even more, whether or not it was appropriate for him to say it.

It is not easy to penetrate the thoughts and sentiments of a man. Yet, as the complexity of events which gave rise to such forms of thinking are studied eclectically in the course of this work, I shall try to make clear that what was significant here was a view, novel for the time, of the military as independent of the government of the day. This meant to disengage the military from partisan politics, to let the officers assume a kind of autonomous position and to give them in return a commanding role, thus allowing the military the freedom to act in concert and independently of the supposedly competitive partisan struggle for power – an aim not fulfilled then but realized fully some years afterward, not by civilians but by officers and not by Mustafa Kemal Bey but by the very officer who was at this time a member of the all-powerful *Merkez-i Umumî* (Central Committee of the Committee [U.P.]), Staff-Major (*Erkân-ı Harb Binbaşı*) Enver Bey. Mustafa Kemal Bey's turn was to come later, under different circumstances and in a radically different political process which transformed his aim into decisions, as when he had a chance to summon all his supporters to aid him in correcting and, indeed, redressing the disorder that disturbed his society.

But this synopsis, to the details of which I assign the last part (Part Three) of this book, will remain apparently paradoxical unless it is placed in its methodological and, following that, its social setting (Parts One and Two respectively). Indeed, one finds authors, too numerous to mention here, who offer the explanation that what Mustafa Kemal said was to take the military out of politics, without even bothering to define what they mean by "politics" or how relevant were "politics" in that room in Selânik in 1909. I have also read those authors who take the view that what Mustafa Kemal wanted was to civilianize the régime, conveniently forgetting that the régime of the day was a constitutional monarchy to all intents

and purposes and civilian in nature as far as régimes went in the Ottoman Empire. Last, not least but I think the most valid, is the view that Mustafa Kemal feared the undermining of the discipline and therefore fighting capacity of the armed forces should its members act in factions in order to serve their party first. Correct though such a fear later proved to be, this view, to which many scholars continue to subscribe, ignores a junior officer's concern for the formation of a political party and, more revealingly, his making it his business how this prospective party should be able ". . . to take root in the body of the nation", for it treats the quotation stripped of its historical setting.

I, on the contrary, will venture to affirm that at face value a paradox is implicit in Mustafa Kemal Bey's statement in the sense of how and by what right a serving officer came to participate, and as a delegate at that, in a secret meeting of a revolutionary society in a country under constitutional government. And the paradox appears more puzzling since, as I may remind the reader, he happened to be one of those officers who had been active in the restoration of the Constitution some fourteen months earlier and, indeed, had got himself into trouble with the previous régime for his involvement in the political activities towards that end.

Yet what appears paradoxical to us now would not have seemed so to Mustafa Kemal Bey or to the likes of him then. Nor, presumably, will it to us if we try to grasp the politics of the day as they perceived them. It is, in brief, to an analytical discussion of the many reasons for this kind of ambiguity that this book is directed.

Note

1 Quoted in part in Y.H. Bayur, *Atatürk: hayatı ve eseri*, I – Doğumundan Samsun'a çıkışına kadar. Ankara: Güven Matbaası, 1963; p. 44, on which the present translation is based.

The source of this speech is Dr. Tevfik Rüşdü (Aras) who was the General Secretary of the 1909 Congress. His account, oral and later written, has appeared in various works. For an informative example, see: C. Bayar, *Ben de yazdım: millî mücadeleye gidiş*. İstanbul: Baha Matbaası, 1965-1972. 8 cilt. Cilt 2, p. 508, where a slightly differently worded but substantially similar version appears. It is, again, based on the *Notes on the memoirs of Tevfik Rüştü Aras*, the related section of which ("the 1909 Congress of the Committee [U.P.]") was communicated to Bayar in a letter dated 7 December 1944. For further details, see: C. Bayar, *Atatürk'den hâtıralar*. İstanbul: Sel Yayınları, 1955; pp. 16ff.

The events at the Congress, with particular reference to the speech, were related by Atatürk himself to Bayur and Bayar on various occasions. See: Y.H. Bayur, *op.cit.*,p.43, N.35; and his earliest reference: Y.H. Bayur, *Türk inkilâbı*

tarihi. Cilt I: Giriş : Berlin Muahedesinden Trablus-Garp savaşına kadar. Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, VIII.Seri-Sa.9. Ankara: Maarif Matbaası, 1940; p. 227; and C. Bayar, *Ben de yazdım*, Cilt 2, p. 507, N.2.

The only source I have been able to find for the written account of the Congress by Atatürk himself is a letter written to his close friend, Staff-Major Behiç (Erkin) Bey, from 'Ayn al-Mansur Headquarters in Dernah, Trablusgarb (Tripoli), dated 16 Temmuz 1328 (29 July 1912). I quote the relevant part:

> "It is said that they [i.e., the Government] enacted a law [madde-i kanuniye yapmışlar . . .] preventing the soldiers from meddling in partisan politics. When, a couple of years ago, at a congress at which I was present by chance [. . . ben iki sene evvel hasbettesadüf bulunduğum bir kongrede . . .], I said 'Leave the soldiers alone!', I became [in their eyes] a reactionary . . ."

This letter, the original of which is in the *Türk İnkilâp Tarihi Enstitüsü* Archives, was first published in a daily newspaper, *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye*, in 1925 and subsequently reproduced in part or in full in a number of works, the latest and I think the most reliable of which is: S. Borak, *Öyküleriyle Atatürk'ün özel mektupları*. İstanbul: Çağdaş Yayınları, 1980; pp. 48-49, p. 49. (Borak renders "hasbettesadüf" as "tesadüfen" for the modern Turkish reader). Cf., B. Erkin, "Atatürk'ün Selânik'teki askerlik hayatına ait hâtıralar", *Belleten*, XX:80 (Ekim) 1956, pp. 599-604, esp.pp.599-600.

Despite a slight error as regards the date of the Congress, there is nothing one can gather from the latter, with one exception – Mustafa Kemal's accounting his presence at the Congress as being "by chance [hasbettesadüf]". I know of no source that would verify this claim. Cf., for example, R. Simon, "Beginnings of leadership: Mustafa Kemal's first visit to Libya, 1908", *Belleten*, XLIV:173 (Ocak) 1980, pp. 69-82. On the contrary, he was there as a member of the Committee (U.P.) and as a delegate, as I have indicated. Cf.esp.: E.J. Zürcher, *The Unionist factor: the role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish national movement, 1905-1926*. Leiden: Brill, 1984; pp. 42-52.

The circumstances of the then Staff-Major Mustafa Kemal Bey's presence in Trablusgarb, as well as of the "enact[ment] of a law" will be considered and evaluated later in this study. Bayar's (1955) version of the speech was later translated, loosely I would say, into English and appeared in: İ. Orga, *Phoenix ascendant: the rise of modern Turkey*. London: Robert Hale, 1958; p. 38. However, the date of the Congress and the rank of Mustafa Kemal were mistaken there and these mistakes repeated in, for example: D. Lerner and R.D.Robinson, "Swords and ploughshares: the Turkish army as a modernizing force", *World politics*, 13:1 (October) 1960, pp. 19-44, pp. 19-20; who used Orga's translation. Lerner and Robinson, in turn, constituted the source of: S.E. Finer, *The man on horseback: the role of the military in politics*. London: Pall Mall Press, 1962; p.31. And what has by now become "received truth" creeps even into the first psychobiography of Atatürk with the words: "He urged that the military play no role in politics . . .": V.D. Volkan and N. Itzkowitz, *The immortal Atatürk: a psychobiography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984; p. 66. Indeed, I have already studied the ramification of that "received truth" in respect of the First Turkish Republic and its related literature. This was an adjunct to my developing a theoretical framework for the political aspects of civil-military relations for the present work. See: M.N. Turfan, *The politics of military politics: political aspects of civil-military relations in the Ottoman Empire with special reference to the 'Young Turk' era*. Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1983; pp. 15-18 and esp. N.25, N.37 and N.38.

As for the 1909 Congress and related documents, which were reproduced, see: T.Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de siyasî partiler, 1859-1952*. İstanbul: Doğan Kardeş

Yayınları, 1952; pp. 190-191 and pp. 210-212. Cf., T.Z. Tunaya, *Türkiye'de siyasal partiler*. 3 cilt. İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1984-89. Genişletilmiş 2. baskı Cilt I: II. Meşrutiyet dönemi (1908-1918); pp. 28-29 and pp. 80-83.

Pro-Committee, but contemporary, accounts are found in the two leading articles of *Tanin* by H. Cahid, "Askerler ve cemiyet", 13 Teşrinievvel 1325 (26 October 1909), and "Selânik Kongresi münasebetiyle", 25 Teşrinievvel 1325 (8 November 1909).

An informative discussion of the Congress, with special but misplaced emphasis on the speech, is provided by: S. Akşin, *100 soruda Jön Türkler ve İttihat ve Terakki*. İstanbul: Gerçek Yayınevi, 1980; pp. 148-150; and again repeated in: S. Akşin, "Mustafa Kemal Atatürk'ün iktidar yolu", pp. 49-80 in *Çağdaş düşüncenin ışığında Atatürk*. İstanbul: Dr. N.F. Eczacıbaşı Yayınları, 1983; p. 56.

Part One

On Military Politics

1

The military as a key political institution

I.

To me, politics in the broad sense is precisely what it was to Oswald Spengler – "life, and life is politics. Every man is willy-nilly a member of this battle-drama"; as too, logically, every military man would be. For indeed, no military is outside politics. All militaries are in them. Moreover, there never was a military institution which has remained out of politics – be it beside them, below them or, especially, above them. The Turkish Armed Forces is a current example, and a good one at that. Better still, the Ottoman armed forces offer a teleological example, and a representative one too.

There are militaries, however, and no doubt there have been, which try to remain out of the narrower day-to-day, or partisan, politics – the governmental policy-making activity itself. For instance, the national military of Turkey does try not to become obsessed with the effort and hurry of day-to-day politics; even the imperial, professional soldiery of the later Ottoman Empire at times was forced to behave thus, or did so voluntarily. Now this proposition may seem hard to credit and the difficulties it imposes upon us are undeniable, not least because the military is more than just another political institution – that is, a social institution, being a

product of human society, arising out of social conditions; it is, along with the bureaucracy and the judiciary, a key political institution.

I would argue here that we accept any organized form of human life as political, inherently affecting the society and its institutions, if and when it emanates from policy-making activity towards the recognition and reconciliation of opposing interests, or even their initial creation. In such a kind of life as this, pervading and permeating as it does all collective social activity, public and private, of all human groups, certain social institutions are key. They provide the framework inside whose boundaries political activity, actuated and sustained by disagreement and no less by agreement, takes place. Moreover, these key social institutions are political in that they are concerned with regulating the pursuit and exercise of the state's coercive power in respect of the most effective permanent components of that power: armed, administrative and judicial, whatever the form of government. Nevertheless, the key political institutions should not be construed as the product of political thought but as the premise upon which political thought rests, since ultimately they depend on the nature of individuals. So the key political institutions support a structure within which political problems and their solutions are acted out, rather than one which itself comprises the solution for any specific problem. Thus, the key political institutions are the essential pillars of the state – that overarching social institution distinguishable from the others by its supreme political authority for the regulation of the whole complex society – and are not to be confused with the more numerous dependent institutions of the state and of the society, the political executive, or government, included.

Turning now to what is perhaps an even more apt analogy, together the key political institutions form the DNA, as it were, of the body politic. Accordingly they transmit, in a kind of molecular code, the hereditary determinants of the society from generation to generation. In this way the key institutions convey social information, that is, the disposition of grades and divisions – the social order – from its primordiality. I do not think it is possible to understand the nature of any society without taking into account this genetic code which determines the way in which every society develops. A key political institution – in the present case, the military – in particular offers a key to understanding not only the "metabolic processes" of the institutional life of a society but also the historical context of how and by whom violence has come to be monopolized in that society. Like a genetic code, to repeat, it carries all the relevant information that determines the nature of

the final product, the state. If we can retrieve the history of the military institution, in which the social information is embodied and transmitted, then we shall have a comprehensible living process of the state and thence of the society. Obviously, in this process, what is crucial for the military institution is not the continuation of its particular identity but rather the continuation of the kind of military that it is and, especially, of its remembered past; so that the military institution develops in relation to its internal determination, by embodying national or imperial norms and rules in its national or imperial setting and, consequently, by proffering universally accepted roles. This is what the military signifies and, accordingly, this is the way it develops. Besides, the military generates self-perpetuating power simply because by its nature it has an economic base concomitant with the power of the state, if one takes power here both as a value and as a means.

So, however one looks at it, there is no escaping the admission that the political resources available to the military are the sources of its power, in the sense that they are the means by which the military may induce support, compliance, impartiality or, at the least, indifference on the part of other political institutions in its attempts to win, maintain or expand its share of power in the society. The kinds of political resources which thus comprise means of influencing public policy are the military's expertise, popularity, legitimacy, organization, economic strength and manpower – to name but the most significant. Little wonder, then, that the resources are wont to bring the military firmly into the sphere of choice, priorities and conflict – in other words, that of governmental political activity, especially in times of weakened state control. And at all times these politics, including military politics, will thus not be seen as abstracted from the social whole.

The presupposition of this kind of philosophy of political institutions in general, and of the military institution in particular, is a radical conception in politics, but I believe it to be universally acceptable. When applied to the military, this conceptualization signifies an institution which represents organized violence and the threat of it in terms of the maintenance of the established social order from the outset, its defence against foreign aggression and, at times, its propagation and imposition over foreign populations.

In these ways, the regular military institution reflects the highest degree of social conformity and social acceptance, through which it prevails upon individuals to lend support in propping up and protecting the social order. For the leitmotiv of the social order is its desire for continuous self-preservation: the key political institutions are there to ensure that this does occur – and which

physically better placed to do so in society than the military, on behalf of the state? Kipling's admonition provides perhaps the most graphic answer:

> "For it's Tommy this, an' Tommy that, an' 'Chuck him out, the brute!'
> But it's 'Saviour of 'is country' when the guns begin to shoot."

It is, then, no good studying institutions only by considering their formal governmental arrangements. We need to combine the formal institutions of government with the wider social context within which, say, the military institution operates. Since political activity is a part and parcel of social activity, politics a product of society and power fundamental to politics, then political institutions like the military are indispensable to the politics of society because they embody power – that is, power over others: the principal means of affecting the behaviour of others by some sanction, such as might.

The idea of the military as one of the key political institutions diverts substantially from the narrow, orthodox, institutional approach to politics; after all, the military is the political institution that ultimately determines the distribution of political power. In so doing, it does something else besides. The military, as a political institution, directs us, the people, in those contingencies wherein the combative impulse is stimulated to act – that impulse which is embedded in and moulds human behaviour. And militaries tend to think that with their elaborate organizations they are fighting for whatever they deem it their duty to fight – the defence of their realm or an offensive to impose their realm on others, whether for the furtherance of an idea or of an ideal. All this is politics, of course, no matter how or what militaries think. For it is all to do with the breadth and depth of human endeavour, collective society; hence the totality of politics. Indeed, it is useful here to postulate that any decision about whether something is unpolitical is always political. Consequently, the decisions of any military institution of any social order intrinsically as well as extrinsically affect political and, no less, economic life. For these to alter radically in any direction, the military's behaviour must alter correspondingly. Yet I argue that short of social revolution, desired and effected by the will of the people, such change is not readily viable in a given social order; any kind of stylized behaviour, namely "institutionalized" behaviour, is by definition almost impossible to alter. It is not simply because within an institution such as the military, traditions and explicit norms prescribe a way of life – in the present case, a military life comprising normally a

coherent nexus of carefully-directed opinions and actions. Nor is it just that men are fundamentally conservative and therefore resist sudden shifts in their social stance, as the social psychologists would argue. Nor, finally, is the most important and significant function of the military, that of propping up and protecting the existing social order, sufficient to explain its obduracy. All in all, what the problem of explaining the military's position fully needs for its solution is to be approached from the standpoint of its own considerable social interests – interests that pertain to the society to which the military belongs. The military institution, perhaps more than the institutions of law and administration, will develop vested interests in stabilizing and supporting the total political process within the social order. Thus the military institution, as the leading actor, will assume a more responsible role than the other two key political institutions. However, the claim and, in fact, the assumption of responsibility, combined with its institutional coherence, is a matter of degree, partially contingent upon the varieties of social order – across the spectrum from its individualist to its collectivist form. And yet whatever the form, the institution will have potential autonomy of action because the soldiers carry arms. Now of course this is also to do with the fact that, as I have mentioned, the military institution affects the distribution of national resources which, in turn, affects the strength of the military. There is a second reason though, more interesting topically and more profound philosophically, for the high standing of the military. That the military institution and the society to which it belongs are interdependent is not merely a platitude; it is a relationship of extreme importance. For only through this interdependency is it possible to understand why the vested interest in the maintenance of a particular form of social order prevents the self-perpetuating attitude of the military from changing, because as far as the military institution is concerned there is no point in changing them. Actually, contrary to what is generally believed, the power of a political institution does not simply mean its power over the state. Now this may at first seem unlikely on general grounds; for it would appear natural that when people first think about the military and its relation to the state, they should begin by thinking of it as correlative to state and as existing only as organized violence which has a protective element as well – a view that serves to compound the power of the military institution, denoting all the ways and means of command and authority (in its *de facto* and *de jure* senses) without violence.

In addition to this view, however, a more essential conception

of the military's institutional power must be propounded – power with respect to the military. It is this power which is required to inaugurate the military as a key political institution in the first place, to guarantee its continuance and, most important of all, to enforce its norms and in this way to perpetuate its attitudes. So the suggestion I am considering is not that a conception of a purely immanent institutional power is replaced by one of a purely transcendant type, but that a conception in which immanence is emphasised gives way to one in which transcendence is emphasised. Put in Kantian terms, the *a priori* character of institutional power, presupposed in and necessary to the political process, bears a rather special sense here. My suggestion, thus qualified, falls into two parts. First, the power of the military institution in all its facets – economic, political, cultural, psychological and coercive – is its power to resist systemic change into a wholly new social order. It is almost impossible for a military that has evolved within and believes in one social order to alter itself and become compatible with a wholly different one, chiefly because the institutional power of the military – by means of recruitment and promotion, career specialization, expertise, the degree of permanence of its personnel and group solidarity based on a strict hierarchical structure; and the loyalty that these ensure – supplies stability through the inelasticity which the military maintains throughout its history. Secondly, although the passage of time and the change of circumstance necessitate continual readjustment of the structure of the military institution (even if it is the most inelastically organized), it is the institutional power of the military compounded with its political conservatism, to which I have already drawn attention, that sustain it through such transitions.

II.

Starting from the preceding universal and particular assumptions based on the principles of my own political thinking, the substance of this book has a political character not only in a general sense but also in the more precise sense that it has a political unity; it also has a definite aim. The book is my attempt to analyze the political aspects of civil-military relations in the Ottoman Empire, while paying close attention to the so-called Young Turk era. It has, moreover, a definitive historical scope of conception in that it possesses a historical unity, fortified by the full and, I trust, adroit use of the materials of history. More specifically, the purpose of my book is to ascertain the military's place in Ottoman society and,

no less important, to locate its place, temporally and spatially, within the Ottoman phase (c.1300-1922) of Turkish political history. So aimed, the analysis depends heavily on a factual and empirical interpretation of the conditions under which the Turkish military tradition was established within the Ottoman state, the role it played especially in the Young Turk era and the way it set the scene for the transformation from empire to nation-state, namely the Republic of Turkey.

This, then, is my task. In its assignment the constant emphasis on the province of politics may seem to carry the implication that identification of "political animals" is essential to the explanation of their behaviour; and so it does. It implies simply that politics, to quote Spengler once more, is "in every trait of instinct, in the inmost marrow". Consequently, the present analysis of the political aspects of civil-military relations will almost certainly be affected in itself by the mental and moral nature of the soldiers and, equally, of the civilians; and, no less concomitantly, by the character of those native historical witnesses to my case. In this, my witnesses are typical of the society that created them – but, more importantly, so were those civilians; so, too, were the soldiers. Notice that here the extent to which the soldiers differ from the civilians may be shown by assessing the relations between the officer corps as an élite group and other élite groups. This I shall do, because for the purpose of this study, these groups are the most significant with which I can deal. I intend, therefore, to concentrate on the military élite – the professional soldiers or career officers – while the civilian élite will include all those groups appointed, selected or elected to the highest level of authoritative decision-making in conducting the affairs of state; in other words, to govern.

III.

Where was the military in Ottoman society? How is it possible to locate its place in the Ottoman period of Muslim Turkish political history while excluding the immediately preceding and succeeding periods in Anatolia with their corresponding states – the Anatolian Selçuk State (Selçuks of Rum) and the Turkish Republic? Does not the exclusion of other Turkish states in Anatolia and elsewhere prevent me from adjudicating on the role in day-to-day politics that the Ottoman military had undertaken to perform? If such questions are to be answered, and answered satisfactorily, and if objections have to be met, a unique approach is needed.

In this work my approach is that of an attempt to seek the

military element, which I regard in a manner of speaking as a contributory part of the DNA by which military hereditary characteristics are transmitted. Thus, I positively refuse to feel hampered by the past; rather, I welcome the past in the hope that I may thereby reflect upon the present, profit by the future. Indeed, I need to be a social evolutionist here, for I probe the past not just for the past's sake but in order to locate the past of the present. In its essence, my approach aims ultimately at establishing the existence of a living military tradition in the Turkish Republic, reaching back, within the chronological and textual limits necessarily imposed in this study, at least as far as the foundation of the Ottoman polity. Valuable as this kind of method may be, it is justifiable only *a posteriori* when applied to an accepted but unexamined phenomenon. As a principle of research, however, this approach should not narrow the researcher's perspective even though it axiomatically presupposes the concept of evolution, whereas it is this concept itself which ought to be substantiated only as a result of the research.

In this approach, I try to keep the military's role in the Ottoman body politic in a living relationship with that of preceding Turkish states, in accordance with general evolutionist thinking. But, as in all evolutionary process, the development of the Ottoman polity contained change and mutation generated within the society itself. To appreciate this fully is to seek the conceptual autonomy of the Ottoman Empire only. What I have in mind is to use the heuristic method. For this, I do not approach the military element from a fixed system of conceptual references in order to find the extent to which the Empire can be related to it; by so doing I could only find in my object what I already had within my own perspective. Rather, the political aspects of Ottoman civil-military relations must be derived from those relations themselves. In this way, by first identifying the autonomous concepts applicable to the case and then using them in the reconstitution of history, it comes about that both what is being related and what it is being related to attain greater clarity and become more understandable.

Within this general domain of thought, I attempt to offer an explanation by the connection with the past of the object under study. For in this attempt to distil politics from history I try not to lose sight of the history, in order, mainly, to keep the argument from becoming abstract. So considered, the book therefore is by no means a work of history but a reflection about history. After all, human history, like biography, is about chaps; reflection about history not so much reflection about the chaps as about their politics – thence military politics, or the politics of military chaps.

IV.

Before addressing myself directly to the substance of the politics of Ottoman military politics, a few remarks about method and related concepts may be in order.

For me, the whole intricate question of method resolves itself not into formulae but into E.M. Forster's power of the writer to bounce the reader into accepting what he says – a power which I too shall employ in the attempt to take a synoptic view of the Ottoman centuries as a whole and to extract the essence of the political out of the social discourse. Only so, I believe, is it possible to combine generalizations with the description of events. More important still and no less significant, only so is it possible to represent the situation globally, where all militaries are in politics, and to prove the point thereof.

In support of the method chosen, I shall try in this study to make consistent use of specific terms – terms like form, stimuli, control and politicization, all to do with the conscious political acts of the Ottoman military: briefly, the forms of them, the major stimuli which motivated them, the control of them and, most fundamentally, the essence of them. All these terms, representing my autonomous concepts, will, I hope, help to mould upon an orderly pattern the diverse materials of this book. I shall blend the shorthand terms into the text, introducing them as they naturally arise, with explanations or definitions as required, mainly to help me focus my argument and the reader's attention upon facts. And I shall do so not necessarily sitting as I ought, like Humpty Dumpty "with his legs crossed like a Turk", but asserting, like him, that "when I use a word ... it means just what I choose it to mean neither more nor less". Further, I shall use the words to indicate rather than to excite, for I do not want to replace their logical significance with latent effusiveness. That is to say, I do not want to review the historical facts through the distorting medium of my own political enthusiasms – precisely because to do so would nullify the validity of my general propositions, seeing that they draw their support from statements about the past.

To emphasise such a connection is to confirm the guidance of history for politics. The harmony between the two will be perfect if I manage to transform the argument over my proposed scope and terms into disagreements about my factual details. Indeed, I claim the right to fallibility in these and welcome any constructive criticism.

No more remains to be said about method, except to draw the attention of the reader to its application in the Parts to

follow – Parts so relevant to the modern Turks of Turkey. But I will assert more: the politics of Ottoman military politics were omnipresent among the peoples of the Empire for the underlying reason that, like its predecessor the Eastern Roman Empire (commonly known as the Byzantine) and unlike its contemporary the British Empire, in the Ottoman case the empire was the state – a basically Turkic, definitely dynastic, professedly Islamic and, appropriately, "universalistic" kind of state. Each of its institutions had been geared to specific imperial needs; needs that were chiefly concerned with expansion through conquest, rule from strength, might into right. This required, above all, a stable conservative unity in which the military was omnipotent. Consequently, the repercussions of its politics were significant long after the conquests had ceased, the imperial rule diminished and the state withered away following its crushing defeat in the First World War. Yet despite all that had happened, not all the imperial officers, depleted though they were in numbers and quality, remained on the battlefield, inactive. Nor did all those who survived the battlefield remain out of the activity of politics; most of them did, some did not. It is explaining the activities of the latter that is germane to this study. The essence of this explanation in terms of the conjunction of military politics is that given the antecedents of Ottoman social conditions, subsequent events, as I have just outlined, were unlikely to have resulted other than as they did. Yet it is important to be clear in what sense this is true.

Military politics were significant to different degrees say, for the Greeks, for the Serbs, for the Bulgarians, during the creation of their own nation-states and the ensuing political developments. But these politics were of the utmost significance for the Arabs, especially the Muslim Arabs of Syria, Iraq and the surrounding regions, for one often overlooked reason – that their Founding Fathers were former Ottoman officers.

Hence, the Ottoman military variable was independent; change in it affected the changes in others. Changes in the politics of military politics, then, affected the social changes – economic, political, psychological lives of the Ottoman peoples. National states emerged at various times as heirs to the Ottoman social tradition. Only the emergence of the Turks of the Ottoman Empire and their state, the Republic of Turkey, needs fully to be appreciated for my purpose here.

That said, the Part on military politics will now be succeeded by a discourse on Ottoman Turkish political history, for the subject of study and the study itself will reveal themselves as one.

Part Two

The Military Tradition in The Ottoman Empire

2

The Military Seal

I. Stamping the military's seal on Osman *Gazi's* principality

I.

The military,[1] itself a political institution, has always constituted the vital component in the conventional, spontaneous, living traditions influencing the development of Turkish political structures and their functions. From this standpoint, the most important historical aspect of civil-military relations in, say, the Turkish Republic is the extent to which the management of force and violence has been analogous to the process of its institutionalization on the creation of this state out of the ruins of its predecessor, the Ottoman Empire. An understanding of this process of the acquisition and retention or destruction of political power requires an appreciation of the linked changes which circumstances over the centuries demanded – changes in various social institutions, especially the military as the chief agent of coercion. I argue, therefore, that for an understanding of Ottoman statecraft at the end of empire, the historical antecedents must be studied. For this, it will be necessary to go back at least as far as the foundation of the Ottoman state as a small principality at the turn of the fourteenth century ". . . from the fortunes of war on the troubled frontiers of Asia Minor"[2] – more accurately, Turkia (Turquia or Turchia) as it had become universally known since the twelfth-century Selçuk hegemony.

The dominant characteristics of the Ottoman state, inherited from its Selçuk parentage, were present in embryonic form at its birth. Among these, the skilful employment of physical force and the dependence on the powerful unifying force of religion were the

main political determinants for the state's foundation.[3] The juxtaposition of these two forces provided a stimulus for petty lords, local and nomadic chiefs and family heads – along with their followers – to form a ruling group of military nobles. It must also have influenced, among others, Osman I (d.1326), to organize a small frontier principality (*uç beyliği*) as a principality-in-arms.

The emergence of Osman I's principality in about 1300 among the many other Turkish principalities in Anatolia (Anadolu) may be traced to the demands and practices of war and policy because, contrary to Clausewitz's dictum that war is a continuation of policy by other means, in this case policy was the continuation of war. That is, the will of the "state" was tacitly assumed to be directed towards continually increasing its power in relation to other "states". The unification or separation of the religious and military forces corresponded to the external pressures, the political, economic and demographic developments of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Anatolia.[4] These developments called for the most tactical deployment of the two forces in the continuous struggle among the predominantly Turkish frontier principalities of western Anatolia. The winner did not eliminate but assimilated the losers,[5] be it by coercion or by cooperation, having proved himself the most able manipulator and the best representative of those forces. The process led to the development of Osman I's principality from a minor *beylik* into a true "Frontier Empire",[6] seeking, throughout, its legitimation in the ideal of *gaza*. Nevertheless, the amalgamation of physical and religious forces comprising *gaza* had yet to evolve in sophistication from the popular folk tradition of heroic exploits into the learned orthodox Islamic doctrine of continuous expansion through the religious duty of holy war.[7]

With the Turco-Mongol invasions of the Muslim Middle East in the 1220s and their occupation of the Selçuk Sultanate, the already turbulent Anatolia sank into deeper turmoil for another two hundred years, causing the considerable migration of nomadic Muslim Turkish tribes (*aşirets*) towards the western edge of the Anatolian plateau, the frontier region where "Muslim East" mingled with "Christian West" (Eastern Roman Empire). Concomitantly, increasing population pressure on the inhabitants and the immigrants led to the frontier region becoming a place of refuge for troops, religious and political figures, townsmen, villagers, merchants and craftsmen, including those *ahis* and *baba'îs* who provided political, economic and spiritual centres for the migrants.[8] The migrants were all looking for new lands in which to live,

cultivate and trade, or simply to find a livelihood, and at the same time they were all prepared to pay the price for this, whatever that price might be.

Thus, during the formation of independent frontier communities which grew up in the disintegrated body of the Anatolian Selçuk state, war, but war of an offensive character, became the chief priority of the increasing population. Without exception they were geared to gaining and settling land, whether at one another's expense or, more frequently, from a different and little-known enemy who was particularly alien to the migrating Turks in terms of culture and, more importantly, religion.

The realization of these differences must have accelerated the establishment of principalities, independent but inspired by the same warrior ideology, along the Muslim-Christian frontier in Anatolia.[9] Their common attitude was stimulated by their concept of *gaza* which, combined with the latitudinarian cultural pattern and syncretic lifestyle inherited from the past,[10] fostered the expansion of the frontier communities by making them conform to a particular pattern, suited to the waging of wars. A "class" of warrior Turks gathered around chiefs who organized principalities in western Anatolia under the overall command of the Selçuk Sultanate, itself a vassal of the İlhanlı Empire after 1243, and from the 1260s onward incited one another to make raids into the lands of the "infidel". One of the chiefs fighting on the frontier, Osman I, with his territory situated furthest to the north and closest to Byzantium and the Balkans,[11] won a major victory over the Christians in 1287/88. This, so invented Ottoman tradition would have us believe, resulted in Osman's receiving the title of *Uç Beyi* (Frontier Lord) from the Selçuk Sultan, Gıyasuddin Mesud II (1284–1297, 1302–1318).[12] Whether selected or, more probably, elected to chiefship – and reliable evidence supports the latter – still Osman Bey, holding such a land-base, had to create a common sentiment among all other principalities by generating the unity and dynamism which could animate and maintain a state.[13] His famous victory over the Byzantine forces in 1302 at the battle of Baphaion (Koyunhisar?) was instrumental in consolidating his political power among the other principalities. It was through the continuation of war, therefore, that Osman Bey's name came to be associated with the state, incorporating its two most basic functions, unification and protection.

One of the requirements of political independence was the clear definition of the ruler as the leader of the state. This definition is again represented by an Ottoman tradition of the legitimation of authority through Islâm. Thus, the proclamation of authority by

the traditional means of a sermon following the Friday prayer is generally taken to have been read in Osman Bey's name as Osman Gazi after the battle of Baphaion.[14] Such a sermon, apocryphal though it sounds, may be perceived as an expression of what I call the personality principle in the Ottoman state concept.

The personality principle is so important an element in Ottoman-Turkish political theory as well as practice that it deserves fuller consideration. I regard the personality principle as deriving from the concept of order (*nizam*), the direct consequence of the desire for an established harmony among people living in a society. In order to accomplish this aspiration, the writers on Ottoman statecraft occupied themselves with the problem of, at first, the achievement and, in later periods, the maintenance of the dominant influence of the Ruler. Their basic premise seems to have been born from a simple formula: if there are men they must have some beliefs and, if so, these belief-holders should be convinced that some form of social order is a prerequisite, especially "on the troubled frontiers of Asia Minor" where they now happened to be living. The solution, for the mainstream Muslim-Turkish political literature, was founded upon the axiomatic nature of statecraft. That is, for men, who are in need of harmonious subjugation, a kind of statecraft which would keep each man in his proper place as determined not by his ethnicity but strictly by his ability to consecrate himself to and serve the policy and aims of the Ruler. To this end, the running of the state had to be sanctioned by the authority and power of the Ruler and the Ruler had to be sanctioned by Islâm within the purview of eternal tradition (*kanun-u kadim*). It was deduced from this argument that the Ruler had precedence over the rules. Indeed, the authority of the Ruler consisted in his supreme qualification and in his consequent ability to bind the people together in a harmonious whole. The Ruler's power thus referred to the execution of that which authority had laid down. The power and authority of the Ruler lay in the common perception of him as vicegerent of Allah on earth (*zillu'llâh*: Shadow of Allah on earth) whose decisions were therefore taken to be those of Allah. His absolutism permeated the realm, since obedience was considered to be an obligation (*fard-ı 'ayn*: individual obligation) for each of his subjects.[15]

I maintain that the personality principle was instrumental right from the start in gaining the loyalty of warriors, as well as other subjects, of every description, creed and credence; from first to last, it served to incarnate rulership in the ruler's name, like Osmanlı – as has tended to be the case in Muslim Turkish history. Subsequently, it was this very principle that would, in turn, give

rise to a higher loyalty from among local chiefs and, further, from rulers of neighbouring principalities. At each stage the principle synthesized the sustanance of the economic and political expansion already stimulated by the frontier.

After the establishment of Osman Bey's principality, expansionist policy was more purposeful, and therefore more constant, and directed to the maintenance of interests that were not incompatible in the eyes of the frontier warriors because they were all capable of subordination to the interests of the warrior ideology – a manner of thinking characteristic of the frontier society's atavistic superstitions, religious beliefs and agnatic loyalties. To me, the historical origins of warrior ideology subserving *gaza* in Turkish Islâm are still obscure and do not concern us here; but its efficacy does, and satisfactorily so. For as a result of expansionist policy encouraged by the warrior ideology, Osman Bey's frontier principality was able to dispose of proportionately large forces which then increased the principality's dynamism.[16] The dominant features of this dynamic force were thus elevated by the social élite which may be called a ruling aristocracy – usually a ruling body of mounted warriors who were conscious of status and eager to gain and maintain it.

II.

I hold that the origins of the politics of Ottoman military politics must be sought in the history of the military aristocracy who generated them. These politics were the outcome of the patrician and militant moral habit of society, and their logical expression in terms of military aristocracy simply augmented the dichotomy between the *beys* and the populace since, during these formative years of the Ottoman state and its immediate expansion, the main burden was carried on by these "warrior knights"[17] as the *beys* are aptly called. The military competence of the state, therefore, had become the very expression of the Ottoman polity by creating an élite of the "men of the sword", which was based on the requirements of belonging solely to the military profession. In fact, in the case of this military aristocratic "class", membership was not based on tribal kinship or any genealogical ground.[18] It was, however, deemed a service which itself was a privilege rather than an obligation, from the point of view of a system of belief generated by the ideal of continuous *gaza* and imbued with the premise of the extension of *Dar-ül-Islâm* – the domain of Islâm. Besides, there were of course, as I have intimated, material benefits.[19] Hence, the military profession

was from the start closely connected with the positions of power in the society.[20] They owed their situation to ". . . the concept of frontier gazâ – the empire's fundamental and unchanging principle . . ."[21] which obliged the members of this "class" to lead a life of which fighting was the leitmotiv. The immediate outcome was that the obligation of leading an active military life entitled *beys* and their followers to a place in the forefront of society. It inspired governance; it facilitated dominance; but for long it retarded the development among the populace of self-reliance. Nonetheless, a manner of life evolved in which the employment of coercion became valuable and those who could employ it necessary to the society. These characteristics incorporated the ancient Turco-Mongolian traditions of state which had developed in and were adapted to life in the Central Asian steppe and persisted in the organized, sedentary Turkish states of the Middle Ages. From this bifurcation[22] between the *beys* and the "people" derives the division between the *askerî* and the *reaya*, the "rulers" and the "ruled", which was the basic structural characteristic of Ottoman society.[23]

The classical Ottoman *nizam* was composed of these two major estates, the *askerî* (lit., the military) and the *reaya* (tax-paying subjects). The *askerî*, comprising the *seyfiye* (men of the sword; armed forces), *kalemiye* (men of the pen; bureaucracy) and *ilmiye* (men of learning; *ulema*; judiciary) were paid by the Sultan and were exempt from taxation. They were not a class in the hereditary sense nor did they normally have historically-established rights independent of the Sultan, membership being contingent solely upon the Sultanic will which consistently chose to leave its ranks open to suitable newcomers. While members of the *askerî* were obliged to profess Islâm – indeed the *ulema* were naturally always recruited from among the Muslim-born population – and it was in the convert's interest to appear zealous in his new faith, motives for conversion and degree of faith were of less significance than was personal merit in attaining promotion and distinction. Such tolerance and *largesse d'esprit* was important in an extensive and heterogeneous empire, not only for non-Muslim subjects but also for the *reaya*. The latter could not normally be admitted into the *askerî* but it was possible for an individual to be so elevated in reward for some outstanding military deed. Thus, while it was in the interest of the state to maintain the order and harmony of society by ensuring that each individual remained in his own "class", the opportunity for individual "upward mobility" through merit alone provided the incentive for personal endeavour and loyalty to the Sultan. In this way, the constant admittance of new

and capable elements into the *askerî* assured the vigorous survival of the society and thus of the Empire itself until the beginning of the seventeenth century.

In the 1350s, the principality of Osman Gazi, however prominent, was no more than one among many frontier-principalities.[24] Within the period 1299–1350, the structure of such a principality was that of a relatively small but conquering polity with a military organization consisting of what may generically be termed *beys* with their own forces, mostly mounted and usually raised from their own territories. The central authority functioned as the commander-in-the-field and political head of state but was dependent on the cooperation of the *beys* for the carrying out of both functions and thus represented – in sociological theory – the apex of the social hierarchy in a society based on patrilineal descent.[25] Hence, two broad strata came into being – the chief *bey* with his subordinate *beys*, and the populace.

Against this social background, since *gaza* and colonization were the dynamic elements of the Ottoman conquests,[26] they resulted among other things in the *seyfiye* functioning in the beginning as the original source of organic government and later as an important element which always played the major part in the formation of government administration.

Like the structures of every other state, the structures of the Ottoman state and their functions were subject to transformations under external and internal stimuli and changed with the differing circumstances of its history. This study assumes that the internal structures of the respective periods determined the organization and use of military force and thus the external behaviour of the state generally. Yet despite change, the main function of one basic structure, the *askerî*, remained constant and so retained its continuity; that is, the preservation of an élite with its exclusive function of ruling.

In the light of this general assumption, there would seem to be good reason to believe that the profession of arms has been among the highest callings of the ruling élite. Consequently, what I propose to call a military seal was impressed from the beginning on the conduct of the affairs of the Ottoman state and on the organization at the highest level of its administration. This was so to such an extent that the leading members of the “men of the sword”, and later “men of the gun”, occupied a dominant position in the determination of its policy. The military seal was never entirely lost in the continuous stream of Ottoman history. Indeed, it has managed to survive as a traditional constituent into the modern period leading to the Turkish Republic.[27]

The foregoing argument suggests that the main characteristics of the traditional constituent necessitate a further analysis for the better understanding of the modern period. This may be said to have begun in the last decade of the sixteenth century, resulting from both foreign and domestic pressures on the Ottoman Empire – the economic and military impact of its rivals in Europe and simultaneous social changes within. And the inherent structural weaknesses of the Empire were related intimately to its institutional failure effectively to respond to new problems, thus ultimately permitting thorough penetration by foreign economies and no choice for the Ottomans but to occupy the peripheral place allocated them in the world economy – incorporation in the new world system but as a dependent, not on their own terms. After all, one of the prerequisites for sound economic development is a strong state in terms of political institutions, particularly bureaucracy. Fundamental realignment at the start of the modern period was, of course, to provoke a radical transformation of the Empire, and of the profession of arms, in the mid-seventeenth century and was the main impetus in the creation of the major historical phases that followed.

In the historical literature, the periods of Ottoman history are generally characterized by means of military successes and failures. Historians tend to write about, and thus divide, the periods of the Ottoman Empire into certain years, based largely on the sequence of political events of which the armed struggle was unavoidably the major component. It follows that the constitution of the military has been *pari passu* the means to political ends. Thus, by looking closely at the state's central authority and its relation to one of the key political institutions, the profession of arms, we may be able to assess Ottoman history from a fresh standpoint. It is my contention in this study that historical experience evokes a series of responses which give a society its distinctive character. Hence, as in this example, the military seal, although it may become faint at times, exerts a continuous influence and even provides data for predictions about future paths – and indeed was to do so in the case of the Turkish Republic.

To sum up the discussion so far, the military, along with the religious, dynamics of political developments inspired the two main allegiances of the Ottoman state; the former, which most concerns us here, also provided the sentiment which sustained the prominence of military force in the political hierarchy. Indeed, the resolution towards Ottoman expansion and the corresponding cohesiveness that provided the stability of the state could not be made general without immediately either consolidating the power

of the *bey* or imposing an imperial mould. We may now look at the political outcome in somewhat more concrete detail.

II. The ratification of the military seal in the Ottoman state

I.

The picture of the impression of the military seal on the conduct of affairs and on the top level of the organization of the Ottoman state will be limited to the extent that I shall consider only the régime at the centre. This, however, will not impair the validity of my conclusions because of the predominance of the connection between the ruler and one functional category involving the élite elements, that of war and statecraft (*seyfiye*). Everything within this category demonstrates with utmost clarity the ever-increasing privilege, prestige and pride of the members of the ruler's household as through time they came to comprise the main division of the ruling stratum. For, to employ Ottoman terminology, among the *askerî*[28] the *kapıkulus*[29] (lit., servants of the door) were long to stand highest in matters of war and statecraft. The inclusion of the *kul* system in the Ottoman body politic is important in many respects, but supremely so as far as the present subject is concerned. Indeed, what may be described as the two strands of the *kul* system – which provides its basic structure – could be untwisted, so to speak, not so much to find any structural defects as to assess its composite strength through the analysis of each of its elements. As far as I can see, each strand follows its own course, military and political respectively.

For the first, assuming the role of the only effective *gazi* state necessitated continuous conquest and maintenance of *gaza*, which made the state's military potential always wider than its actual boundaries despite the rapid growth of the latter from the earliest times of the principality.[30] During the reign of Osman Gazi's son, Orhan Bey (1326–1362), the Ottomans expanded at the expense of their Muslim and Christian neighbours, mainly by means of siege warfare, and gained a foothold in Europe.[31] Subsequently, fostered by the geographical conditions[32] and facilitated as much by economic as by political conditions in the Balkans,[33] it became possible for them further to extend their borders.[34] Yet this crossing into Europe continually increased the requirements of a regular, standing, military force,[35] especially with the relative reduction of the Turkish so-called "conquering race"[36] – already becoming

exhausted from bearing the weight of an increasing number of incessant wars. Hence, military reasons for the introduction of the *kul* system were imperative.

As for the second, political, strand, the establishment and maintenance of central authority over the powerful frontier lords – the mainly Muslim *beys* of the *gaza* frontiers in Europe[37] – who were more independent of the central government than those closer to the centre, necessitated the formation of salaried and regular corps under the direct command of the ruler himself. So the practice of employing the "men of the Sultan" for this purpose naturally required able men whose interests could be more closely identified with those of the central government than could those of the powerful *gazi* aristocracy. Such a need was satisfied through a gradual increase in the size and, more especially, in the area of activity of the imperial *kul* household in which the Sultan – Murad I (1362–1389)[38] – represented the executive power; in fact he became the essential instrument for its exercise.[39] Thus, initiation of the *kul* system into the body politic was politically expedient and, I venture to aver, vitally important.

All told, the point to be made here is that in the sphere of war, even the vernacular name *kapıkulu*, which extended to the foremost professional corps of Europe under the direct command of the Sultan – the *yeniçeri ocağı* (janissary corps; lit., corps of new soldiery),[40] as it came to be known – during the reign of Murad I, most clearly shows the intention of the Sultan to secure a body of men under his own political control.[41] By the 1370s, in contrast with the earlier period, there was a continuous tension between the frontier *beys*, who were always eager and ready to engage in offensive wars for the expansion of their own power and landholdings, and the central authority, which was determined to preserve the rule of the "House of Osman". The "House" was, in consequence, ready to employ any means as a "counterpoise"[42] to the forces of the frontier *beys*, forces mainly consisting of *sipahis*, the numerous "feudal" horsemen in the provinces.[43]

Through this complex of related changes, the Ottoman state acquired its characteristic structure in which the military-administrative group, under the Sultan, held the political power. The *kul* system provided the basis of this structure through its role in war and statecraft. After all, the two spheres of the structures and functions of the military and the government were synonymous in certain ways, for instance in that the commanders of the new corps had extensive administrative duties.

The years between 1354 and 1402 can indeed be taken as the period of formation, when this structure proved itself efficacious in

the development of the Ottoman state "from frontier principality to empire".[44] For example, Murad I utilized his *kul*-origin statesman and dedicated warrior, Lala Şahin Paşa – the first *beylerberi* (governor-general) of the Ottoman state, in Rumelia (Rumeli)[45] – to establish supremacy over Gazi Evrenos Bey, a powerful frontier *bey* holding large tracts of land around the Vardar River.[46] And by routing the last major Crusade, although not the Crusader mentality, in Nicopolis (Niğbolu) in 1396, the victorious Sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402) enhanced his existing prestige as the *Sultan al-Rum* – the Sultan of the (Eastern) Roman lands.[47] He not only expanded the size of his standing army in order to curtail the independence of the local Anatolian and Rumelian dynasties, but also increased the number of *kuls* in the palace and the administration, further assisting in the creation of a centralized and integrated empire by 1398.[48] The parallel between the policies of the two successive Sultans may indicate that the rulers intended to consolidate their authority and influence over the most important instruments of force – *timarlı sipahis* vis-à-vis their immediate *timar*-holding overlords – by using their own *kuls*, *yeniçeris* and statesmen of *yeniçeri* origin as a counterweight.[49]

The development and expansion of the *kul* system were to be realized by the practice of *devşirme*[50] – the special recruitment system – and its elaborations during the reign of Mehmed II (1451–1481), who ensured that nearly all the high *seyfiye* and *kalemiye* appointments went to his *kuls*.[51] Such a practice indeed, following the 1402–1453 era of interregnum and recovery, as it has come to be known, facilitated the use of the *kul* system and, in particular, the *yeniçeri* corps as the most powerful instrument for the centralization of political power. Here, it is opportune to note that Mehmed II, historically conscious as he was, must have appreciated the significance of the first major Ottoman defeat, at Ankara in 1402, whereby Bayezid I lost more than simply the almost fratricidal struggle for dominance against Emir Timur (Aksak Temir Bek, 1336–1405).[52] He had first lost the crucial support of the disloyal Anatolian *sipahis* when, in mid-battle, they abandoned him *en masse* in favour of their former Anatolian *beys* who were eager to regain their autonomy and had looked to Timur Bey for protection.[53]

The resulting near-disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was exacerbated by a contest for succession among Bayezid I's sons, who had retained some Ottoman territory in western Anatolia and Rumelia during Timur Bey's suzerainty but on his departure eastward in 1403 fought over its control[54] – against one another and the re-established *beys*. These *beys*, it seems clear, were intent

on, and for some years succeeded in, preventing any revival of Ottoman centralized power to their own detriment by playing off each brother against the other.[55] Nonetheless, the Empire managed to survive and recover despite the internal and external disruptions in the form of succession crises, civil wars and threats, be they actual or potential, from Christendom.[56]

Among the causes of recovery was that force which had been continuously active since the foundation of the Ottoman state. The concept of *gaza*, combining as it did religious authority and temporal opportunity, was, moreover, closely linked to the strategic importance of Anatolia as a secure landbase for Ottoman initiative to the Christian west and north. All this contributed to the prestige and credibility that made the conciliatory policies of Çelebi Mehmed I (1413–1421) possible.

Moreover, the *kul* system, and especially its emergent integral part the *yeniçeri* corps, having already given Çelebi Mehmed I superiority over his rivals during the struggle for the throne, helped him to consolidate his authority. He thus established his rule over the provinces, annexed between 1413 and 1421, by using *kuls* he had created; for example, employing *yeniçeris* in 1416 to suppress a dangerous revolt that erupted in a number of locations in western Anatolia and on the Rumelian frontier, headed by Şeyh Bedreddin Efendi. The significance of this movement for the present subject lies in its political, economic and cultural aspects. Şeyh Bedreddin, a religious scholar and mystic, had been appointed *Kadıasker* (*Kazasker*; high-ranking judicial dignitary) in Rumelia by Çelebi Musa and rallied the support of the people – Christian and Muslim alike. In fact, Şeyh Bedreddin's latitudinarian and esoteric interpretation of Islâm enabled him to unite former *sipahis* who had been dispossessed of their *timars*, as well as disaffected Muslim and Christian peasants in an era initiated by the rout of 1402; that is, when orthodox Islâm faced the heretical religious movements that flourished on the collapse of the centralized Ottoman polity. Şeyh Bedreddin's revolt, indeed, was the reflection of this in the sphere of social and, more specifically, political activity. It was only suppressed by the autonomous military structure of Çelebi Mehmed I who projected himself in this period as the defender of orthodox Islâm, claiming that he attacked principalities, in what is considered to be the process of consolidation of his power, solely because they prevented his waging *gaza*.[57]

The main result of such manipulation of the *kul* system by Çelebi Mehmed I was the increasing importance of the support given to the ruler by the imperial troops. Events proved that in the Ottoman Empire after 1421, in practice although not in theory,

the support of the *yeniçeris* became the most crucial element in securing accession or succession to the throne. For example, after the death of Çelebi Mehmed I, his son, Murad II (1421–1444; 1446–1451) came to the throne in the capital, Bursa, with the support of the *yeniçeris* and the *ulema*,[58] and applied the same method in his struggle against external and internal rivals.[59] But he also saw a revolt of the *yeniçeris* engineered by Çandarlı Halil Paşa, the powerful Grand *Vezir* of *ulema* origin, during the reign of his young son, Mehmed II, for whom he had voluntarily abdicated in 1444.[60] The removal of Mehmed II and his *kul*-origin advisers,[61] together with the external pressure of further Crusader attacks, brought Murad II back to the throne in 1446. His second reign gave him the opportunity to open new *gazas* in the Balkans and to reconstruct the strong state which, in the years following the conquest of Constantinople (İstanbul) by Mehmed II in 1453, came to be established definitively as the Ottoman Empire.[62]

It follows, then, that the increasing deployment of and dependence upon *kapıkulus* was inherent in the development of the central Ottoman government during the reign of Mehmed II (1451–1481). For the interregnum and its aftermath right up to his own rule proper, had served to condition this progress through a series of changes, each nomologically linked to and explained by its predecessor, towards the absolute consolidation of imperial power at the centre.

Mehmed II, as the first historically-known Sultan to enact two sets of basic laws, *Kanunnâme-i Âl-i Osman* and *Kanun-ı Pâdişahî*, was clearly pursuing two objectives: first, the provision of a fundamental administrative structure in which the concept of the ruler as the apex of government and sole source of authority was coupled with the hierarchical system based upon degree of proximity to the ruler; and secondly, the systematization and implementation of a body of laws which was, in fact, to survive until the nineteenth century.[63]

Yet Murad II, during his two periods of rule, had already outlined the policies subsequently followed by his son. In particular, the role of Mehmed II's advisers, Zaganos and Şehabeddin Paşas, in countering the power of the influential Çandarlı family, must have nudged the Sultan towards the idea of absolute imperial power and its realization and retention through the development and the efficiency of the *kul* system.[64] Significantly, although on Mehmed II's accession Çandarlı Halil Paşa remained in office as Grand *Vezir*, he had lost ground to the loyal *kul*-origin Zaganos Paşa who, at the head of the "war party", actually organized and initiated the final assault on Constantinople on 29 May 1453.[65]

As the *kul* system was conceived, *kuls* were attached to and solely dependent upon the Sultan in a relationship of parton/client (*cliens*) mutual obligation, having been detached from their origins and with no agnatic or cognatic ties to society. They thus formed an organ of state in the sense of being the prop of Sultanic power rather than a sharer in it, holding political privileges rather than rights. And the policy of ruling through *kuls* was essential for the Sultan if he were to become an absolute ruler, holding in his hands the authority of the state in its entirety and ruling the whole Empire from his capital. Accordingly, he either eliminated or transformed the elements which could resist him. Here, again, one may see the usual pattern of reliance upon certain methods. Not only did he have his Grand *Vezir*, Çandarlı Halil Paşa, executed,[66] most probably in order to break the hold of old and influential families in the administration of the state;[67] he also simultaneously dealt with the *yeniçeris* by suppressing the rebellious amongst them, expelling many and forming new units from the Palace huntsmen (*sekban*),[68] improving their training and pay and increasing their numerical strength from 5,000 to 10,000.[69] Indeed, starting from Mehmed II's reign, the *yeniçeri* corps became the "nucleus"[70] of the Ottoman military force, to the extent that the central authority established its supremacy through the expansion of the corps, the Sultan choosing the commanders personally. To the same end, Mehmed II established *yeniçeri* garrisons in newly-conquered provinces to support the representatives of the central government. These garrisons, again, were subordinate neither to the local governor nor to any other local authority, but took orders direct from the capital,[71] İstanbul, as the channel through which the central authority was effectively extended.

Moreover, as I have noted, the *kuls* were assured administrative as well as military appointments. With the expansion of the *kul* system, Mehmed II created the classical type of Ottoman Grand *Vezir* by selecting them from among his *kuls* and entrusting them as his personal deputies with an elevated position in the state. Indeed, of the Grand *Vezirs* who served under him after the execution of Çandarlı Halil Paşa all except the last, Karamanî Mehmed Paşa, had a *kul* background,[72] and among them Rum Mehmed Paşa and Mahmud Paşa were executed for the purpose of suppressing any opposition, even if it came from those highest in authority after the Sultan.[73]

Underlying successive Sultans' policies was always the idea of the enhancement of military power, not for its own sake but for the conquest of new territories and hence acquisition of new sources of income. This found public expression by Mehmed II, prior to the

conquest of Constantinople, in the combined logic of physical and spiritual *raison d'être*: "The *gaza* is our basic duty as it was in the case of our fathers."[74] As the Sultan's authority increased on his filling the *askerî* class with *kuls*, or "men of the Sultan", and as his conquests surpassed those of all other contemporary Muslim sovereigns, he came to be regarded by the Ottomans as the greatest Muslim ruler "since the first four Caliphs"[75] He, in fact, considered himself and his state as the fighting force and protector of all the Muslims:

> "For we have the sword of Islam in our hand. If we had not chosen to endure these tribulations, we should not be worthy of being called *Gazi*."[76]

Here, the key factor was indeed military force. In one of his *nâme-i hûmayuns* (imperial letter) informing the ruler of the Karakoyunlu state, Cihanşah b. Kara Yusuf Bey (1437–1467) about the conquest of the Despotate of Morea in 1458–1460, Mehmed II refers to this force as "the victorious soldiers of Allah, whom Allah supports in all campaigns"[77] thus displaying to the Muslim world the legitimacy and strength of the military as a pillar of centralized power and authority. And the pivot of the system was the person of the Sultan himself. For not even the Grand *Vezir* was entitled to issue orders directly to the chief-officer of the *yeniçeri* corps (*Yeniçeri Ağası*), who was responsible only to the Sultan.[78] By such means did Mehmed II establish his supremacy through the consolidation of a personal force and become, after a series of some thirty successful campaigns by the 1480s, the true founder of an "Islâmic gazi sovereign state",[79] namely the Ottoman Empire.

The death of Mehmed II in 1481 was followed by a struggle for the throne between his two sons, Cem and Bayezid, in which the importance of *kul* support, and especially that of the *yeniçeri* corps, was demonstrated.[80] The disappearance of central authority coupled with weariness from numerous campaigns which continued, contrary to Ottoman practice, even in winter, had paved the way for a *yeniçeri* revolt and general discontent in the Empire.[81] The last Grand *Vezir* of Mehmed II, Karamanî Mehmed Paşa, leader of the non-*kuls* in their support of Cem, was assassinated by the *yeniçeris*, who sided with Bayezid.[82] In the ensuing armed struggle between the brothers, Bayezid had the allegiance of two *kul*-origin ex-Grand *Vezirs* of Mehmed II – Gedik Ahmed Paşa, a former *devşirme-yeniçeri* and the idol of the corps, and his father-in-law, İshak Paşa – who were instrumental in placing Bayezid on the throne.[83] The pattern of Ottoman political life thus continued unabated.

For the assertion of his authority, Bayezid II (1481–1512) needed to gain the goodwill of the *yeniçeris* who, by then, had become the most powerful instrument at his disposal. According to a reliable source, on his accession to the throne he had to promise the *yeniçeris* that non-*kuls* would not be brought into positions of power,[84] such as that of the Sultan's deputy or military commander. Hence, we find that during his reign, among the seven Grand *Vezirs* who served under him, six had a *kul* (*devşirme*) background.[85]

Bayezid II's successful campaigns in the north against Moldavia were followed by six long and exhausting campaigns in the south against the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria, which ended indecisively in 1491. Although he had established his authority over the military forces by leading them to the victories of 1484, his inconclusive Mamluk campaigns prompted him to reform his military and modernize them, increasing the number of field-guns and firearms.[86]

On the other hand, his renunciation of some of Mehmed II's harsher policies, notably the restitution of *vakıf* and reversion to private ownership of *emlâk* which had been converted into *timars*, seems to have been unable to prevent the growth of large-scale social discontent, particularly after his less successful later campaigns. For his supposed weakness reinforced disaffection among some Anatolians, including the semi-nomadic, Turkish, tribal groups who were opposed to the centralizing tendencies of the government, not least because of its systematic taxation policies. Their revolts, starting in about 1500, appeared under the banner of the heterodox religious belief of the *Kızılbaş* (Red Heads),[87] as they came to be known, who were hostile to uncompromising Sunni orthodoxy – the unifying force of the Ottoman régime. People such as those who had formed the Akkoyunlu state in eastern Anatolia but had formerly been subjugated by Mehmed II in 1473, now supported a new, Turkish, religious leader, İsmail Safavî (1502–1524), who in the 1510s challenged the Ottoman central authority. After extending his hold over Azerbaijan (Azerbaycan) and Iran, he assumed the ex-officio political leadership of those Ottoman subjects who were rising in revolt even around western Anatolia.[88] It significant that these revolts tended to be led by former *sipahis* who had been dispossessed of their *timars*. Although I shall have to discuss the political and military implications of the already changing conditions of warfare more fully at another point, it may briefly be noted here that there is clear evidence of the use of siege artillery in the early fifteenth century and by the middle of the century the Ottomans were using field-guns. But more important was the introduction of small firearms slightly earlier,[89]

the development of which, during the fifteenth century,[90] reduced the military importance of "feudal" cavalry. Thus, the provincial military came to be of reduced weight militarily and were in the process of becoming dysfunctional politically. Meanwhile, their economic importance was growing because of the need to finance guns and artillery, the increased adoption of which accelerated the military obsolescence of the *sipahis* in the later sixteenth century. It is, then, significant that the *sipahis* participated in large numbers in the *Kızılbaş* rebellions.

Thus, as might be expected, the introduction and use of firearms emphasised the need for *devşirme* (*kul*) foot-soldiers (*yaya*) and especially for those of the élite corps, the *yeniçeris*, from the military and political standpoints simultaneously. One result of this development was the enforced abdication of Bayezid II in favour of his son, Selim, which occurred while the continuing *Kızılbaş* insurrection was spreading into north-west Anatolia – insurrection coinciding with the struggle for the throne among Selim and his brothers begun in 1511 under the impetus of the already uncontrollable situation in Anatolia. And it was Selim I (1512–1520), with his call for strong action against İsmail Safavî, who managed to win the support of the *yeniçeri* corps and thus created the circumstances for the abdication of his father in April 1512.[91]

Selim I's campaigns against his brothers and against the supporters of İsmail Safavî in Anatolia, followed by decisive victories over İsmail Safavî himself in Azerbaijan and over the Mamluk, Tuman Bay (1516–1517), in Egypt between 1514 and 1517, bear, apart from the geographical extension of the Empire, significant aspects or patterns which had been present from the beginning of the Ottoman Empire and continued afterwards.

Selim I utilized the loyalty of the *yeniçeris* for the elimination of his brothers, especially Ahmed (d.1513). Hence, during a *yeniçeri* uprising in İstanbul towards the end of September 1511, they had tacitly expressed their support for him against Ahmed, although the Sultan had strongly expressed his preference for Ahmed's succession to the throne[92]

Having enjoyed the support of his professional élite corps in the fratricidal struggle that took him two years to conclude, the new Sultan concentrated on conquest in Muslim lands. After slaughtering some 40,000 followers of İsmail Safavî in Anatolia, he prepared a campaign against him, the official justification for which may be seen as confirming my analysis. In one of his *nâmes*, dated 920 Sefer (1514 April), sent from İzmit, Selim I accuses İsmail Safavî of acting against Islâm and of misconduct towards and oppression of Muslims, and declares his intention to occupy Iran