

**HISTORICIZING THE NATIONALIZATION IN ALBANIAN PROVINCES:
DIVERGENT STRATEGIES, STATE-FORMATION, AND GEO-POLITICAL
COMPETITION**

by

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ABSTRACT

The problem of invoking the concepts of “nation” and “state” as a category of analysis in the Ottoman historiography created a *nationalist teleology* that cut nationalization practices loose from their socio-historical preconditions by ignoring their uneven and combined development. This historical research proposes that a proper understanding of the socio-historical conditions of nationalization processes requires focusing on *the dynamic interplay* between the internal socio-political conflicts mediated by social-property relations, the state-formation, and the international geo-political competition. In this framework, the research reveals that this dialectical nexus rooted in different levels of class conflict provided the dynamics of political conflicts which influenced and transformed the course of Albanian nationalization. The research analyzes how the regionally-specific and internationally-mediated resolutions of class conflicts depending on the uneven balance of class forces and structures directed the strategies among heterogenous Albanian actors (i.e., rules and forms of conflict and cooperation), their sources of identity-formation, and constituted the social preconditions of Albanian nationalism as a contested practice.

Keywords: Nationalization, Albanian provinces, Ottoman transition, social-property relations, state-formation, international geo-politics

ÖZET

Osmanlı tarihyazımına hakim olagelen “ulus” ve “devlet” mefhumlarını analiz kategorisi olarak ele alma problemi, uluslaşma pratiklerinin eşitsiz ve bileşik gelişimini gözardı ederek onları ait oldukları toplumsal-tarihsel ön koşullardan koparan *milliyetçi teleoloji* ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bu tarihsel araştırma, uluslaşma sürecinin toplumsal-tarihsel koşullarının anlaşılmasının, toplumsal-mülkiyet ilişkileri aracılı içsel sosyo-politik çatışmalar, devlet oluşumu, ve uluslararası jeo-politik rekabet arasındaki *dinamik etkileşime* odaklanarak ortaya koyulabileceğini ileri sürmektedir. Bu çerçevede çalışma, köklerini sınıf çatışmasının farklı düzeylerinden alan bu diyalektik etkileşimin, Arnavut uluslaşmasının güzergahını etkileyen ve dönüştüren çatışma dinamiklerini oluşturduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, sınıf güçlerindeki denge ve yapıya bağlı olarak bölgelere-özgü ve uluslararası-aracılığında gerçekleşen sınıf çatışmalarının çözümünün, heterojen Arnavut aktörleri arasındaki stratejilere (ör., çatışma ve iş birliği kuralları) ve kimlik-oluşumu kaynaklarına nasıl yön verdiğini ve böylece çekişmeli bir pratik olan Arnavut milliyetçiliğinin toplumsal ön koşullarını nasıl teşkil ettiğini çözümlemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uluslaşma, Arnavut vilayetleri, Osmanlı geçiş tartışmaları, toplumsal mülkiyet ilişkileri, devlet oluşumu, uluslararası jeo-politik

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for any award or any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. It is affirmed by the candidate that, to the best of his knowledge, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.



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‘Tarihi düzünden okumaya ayaklanan çocuklar’ a

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ABBREVIATIONS

BOA	Başbakanlı Osmanlı Arşivi (Prime Ministers' Archives)
BEO	Babıali Evrak Odası (Sublime Porte Document Collection)
CPU	Committee of Ottoman Progress and Union (Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti)
CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (Osmanlı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti)
DH. SYS	Dahiliye Nezareti Siyasi Kısım (Interior Ministry Political Reports)
DH. SFR	Dahiliye Şifre Kalemi (Interior Ministry Secret Reports)
HR. SYS	Hariciye Nezareti Siyasi Kısım (Foreign Ministry Political Reports)
MMZC	Meclis-i Mebusan Zabıt Cerideleri (National Assembly Reports)
Y.A. HUS	Yıldız Hususi Maruzat (Yıldız Palace Personal Submissions)
Y.PRK.ASK.	Yıldız Askeri Maruzat (Yıldız Palace Military Submissions)
Y. PRK. HR.	Yıldız Hariciye Nezareti Maruzatı (Yıldız Palace Foreign Affairs Submissions)
YEE	Yıldız Esas Evrakı (Yıldız Palace Documents)



Introduction: Challenging Nationalist Teleology

The Research Problem

Concepts like 'nation', 'society', and 'culture' name bits and threaten to turn names into things. Only by understanding these names as bundles of relationships, and by placing them back into the field from which they were abstracted, can we hope to avoid misleading inferences and increase our share of understanding.¹

Throughout the long nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire was divided into various nation-states, including Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Albania, Armenia, and Turkey, as well as a series of Arab states. This variety renders Ottoman history a promising field to account for different types and patterns of nationalization processes and provide significant theoretical and historical contributions by exploring their interconnection with the Ottoman transition. This substance is rooted in the uneven and combined development of nationalization practices on an imperial and world scale.² While these practices had their own peculiarities depending on different dynamics of socio-political conflicts, they emerged as the outcome of the same world-historical context of the Ottoman transition. However, many scholars are united in invoking nationalism *per se* as an explanatory category to address the divergent socio-political conflicts that led to the development of nationalization and the demise of the empire. Therefore, the historicity of nationalization practices falls between the cracks within the monolithic and unidirectional narratives with ignorance of their uneven and combined development; thereby, they are cut loose from their socio-historical preconditions. This research argues that this fallacy stems from two main categorical problems dominating many of the existing theoretical attempts and historical studies, especially in

¹ Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2010), 3.

² In this study, I use the concept of uneven and combined development to express the dialectical interconnection of the peculiar tempo-spatial developmental variations with their wider contexts on two scale: (1) inter-regional differences in imperial scale, and (2) country-specific variances of the empire within the international world-historical scale. For the elaboration of the term, see Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*, trans. Max Eastman (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008).

the Ottoman historiography, which occasionally coincide in the studies of the great transformation of the empire: *nationalist teleology* and *state-centered approach*.

As a concept, teleology is defined as a philosophical-epistemological attitude of explaining the end of things by reference to goal-directed historicity, which creates a tendency to interpret historical events backward through a retroactive chronology within *post hoc ergo propter hoc* narratives.³ As Mazower puts it differently, “historians often explain why what happened had to happen.”⁴ It implies that teleology works back from a specific outcome to its presumed causes, scanning antecedent circumstances for elements or reasons for that outcome at the cost of picking through the pasts electively while ignoring other crucial factors.⁵ In other words, considering the historical processes as a series of inevitable events leads to overlooking alternative ways that do not fit the retroactive logic. Although manifesting itself in different forms, nationalist teleology essentially implies a tendency to attribute inevitability and priority to the emergence of the nation-state while overlooking or delegitimizing other social alternatives which were very much present in the imperial context.⁶ The timing and direction of historical change are unpredictable and only retrospectively intelligible, but its uneven and combined development is neither contingent nor preordained but susceptible to rational understanding and explanation.⁷ In this sense, teleology decontextualizes the nationalization process and undermines the validity and fertility of historical evidence on which the interconnections between the tempo-spatially differentiated dynamics of political conflicts and nationalization within the general context of transition can be built.

In this sense, apart from being a philosophical position, *nationalist teleology* emerges as a methodological problem or an optical illusion; as Marx identifies for another context, it is the mistake of considering “the form of appearance of things directly coincided with their essence.”⁸ The long-nineteenth century of the Ottoman Empire was marked by the geo-political competition amongst the Great Powers, central and provincial elements of the Ottoman ruling classes, tribal

³ Henning Trüper, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Historical Teleologies in the Modern World* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, an imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015),

⁴ Mark Mazower, *Balkans: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2007), 81.

⁵ Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650-2000*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2004), 38.

⁶ For the definition and critique of the term, see Çağdaş Sümer, “Milliyetçi Teleolojiyi Aşmak: Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Karşılaştırmalı Milliyetçilik Çalışmaları,” *Alternatif Politika*, 5, no. 1 (April 2013): 1–27.

⁷ Benno Teschke, *The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics, and the Making of Modern International Relations* (London New York: Verso, 2003), 95.

⁸ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* v.3, Capital (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981), 956.

groups, and peasant producers over imperial resources. The Empire witnessed a great transformation in which successive waves of crises and state-formation processes triggered various socio-political conflicts ranging from peasant revolts against high taxation and dispossession, local resistances of tribal groups against taxation and conscription, and sectarian violence against non-Muslim groups, and revolutionary or/and nationalist movements. However, the nationalist teleology relegates different types and forms of socio-political conflicts inherent in the Ottoman transition to the status of the pre-history of the self-realization of each particular “nation” by prioritizing the “moment” that nationalism prevails. In other words, the divergent forms and patterns of the political conflicts come under the exclusive umbrella of nationalism while ignoring the other socio-political options and strategies open to the people of that era.⁹ As Blumi underlined, “there is no possible justification for writing an exclusively ‘national’ story prior to the demise of the Ottoman state.”¹⁰ Therefore, the fact that the Ottoman Empire was divided into nation-states does not legitimize considering its history as the struggles among “Turks,” “Arabs,” “Bulgars,” “Greeks,” “Armenians,” “Serbs,” “Kurds,” and “Albanians” as bounded groups acting out of conflicting national interests. That being said, considering the process of transforming into a nation-state as inevitable or unrivaled and analyzing the nationalist movements as a conscious and systematic action of national groups, elites or bourgeoisie is nothing but a teleological, nationalist, idealist, and elitist reading of history.¹¹

The nationalist teleology limits the attempts to explore the deeper and more complex causal connections between the transformation processes, different types and forms of political conflicts, and the patterns of nationalization practices representing long-term world-historical tendencies in their relational interconnection. Thus, an alternative framework is not only crucial for apprehending the socio-historical conditions of the possibility of nationalization practices in the Ottoman Empire but also for enriching theoretical attempts to explain the relationship between transition and nationalization within a holistic view. The nationalist teleology is hitherto produced and reproduced by two primary sources: (1) theories of nationalism which ascribe an ontological

⁹ Erik Jan Zürcher, “Turning Points and Missed Opportunities in the Modern History of Turkey: Where Could Things Have Gone Differently?,” in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation-Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 285–86.

¹⁰ Isa Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans: Alternative Balkan Modernities, 1800-1912* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 7.

¹¹ James L. Gelvin, “‘Arab Nationalism’: Has a New Framework Emerged?,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 1 (February 2009): 10–12.

foundation to the nation as a unit of analysis, and (2) the neo-Weberian idea of “strong state tradition”¹² in the Ottoman historiography which focus on the patrimonial state or/and its elites/bureaucrats as the main protagonist or motor of the late Ottoman history. The fallacy in the literature for taking the concepts of “nation” and “state” as a category of analysis leads the diversity and complexity of socio-political conflicts inherent in the Ottoman transition to be reduced to antagonistic categories such as the center-periphery or/and state–society/nation, and thereby fall into the ideological reductionism or/and dichotomic paradigms.

Theories of Nationalism: The Problem of Category

The classical theoretical attempts to understand and explain nationalism, either primordialist or modernist, produce and reproduce nationalist teleology in different ways. The primordialist approach treats nations or ethno-cultural groups as real, fixed, and unchanging entities depending on objective or primordial characteristics or ties such as blood, language, culture, religion, race, and customs which operate as constitutive parts of and coercive power on a human being.¹³ The natural outcome of primordialist theory is to search for the roots and histories of nations whose existence reaches back to immemorial and their national awakenings. Although the primordialist straw-man falls into disuse among serious academic circles, except those abusing history for the sake of nationalism, its legacy of reifying the nations as bounded groups is maintained by most of the modernist approaches as well. Despite emerging as a reaction to primordialism by emphasizing that nations and nationalism are modern phenomena, modernist theories also consider nations as real, collective, and fixed entities. Modernist theories tried to understand the emergence of nationalism by focusing on its relations with modernization within specific, mono-causal, and functional mechanisms such as the congruence of political and cultural units through (national) high cultures as a result of industrialization and modern education¹⁴, the rise of modern national market interests and development of mass support¹⁵, the attempt of a rising

¹² For the definition and critique of the term, see Demet Dinler, “Türkiye’de Güçlü Devlet Geleneği Tezi’nin Eleştirisi,” *Praksis* 9 (2003): 17–54.

¹³ See Clifford Geertz and Robert Darnton, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

¹⁴ See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983).

¹⁵ See Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

bourgeoisie¹⁶, and the emergence of modern state-building and peripheral reactions.¹⁷ The teleological development of nationalism is prevalently expressed in Hroch's three successive phases, (a) starting point in the minds of the intelligentsia or/and bourgeoisie, (b) continuing through the politicization of the idea, and (c) successful period of mass mobilization and independence.¹⁸ Therefore, the modernist theories avoid questioning the agency of the nation as a category of analysis, and the linear and universal development of nationalism.

Along with the paradigmatic shifts in the theories of nationalism, two main alternative frameworks attempted to deconstruct the category of nation. On the one hand, the ethno-symbolist approach reinforced the cultural aspect of nationalism by combining primordialist and modernist approaches within the concept of ethno-symbolism, which focuses on the politicization of pre-modern *ethnies* through social, political, economic, and cultural changes in modernity.¹⁹ On the other hand, the constructivist approaches to nationalism challenged the category of the nation as an entity and its legitimacy by focusing on the social construction process of the nation. The pioneering constructivist conceptualizations of the nation are “invented tradition” consisting of a set of practices produced with the process of social engineering by Hobsbawm²⁰ and “imagined communities,” including the putative sense of horizontal comradeship with its external limits and internal sovereignty by Anderson²¹. Their focus on the socially-constructed nature of nationalism attracts attention to the nation-building processes and their different forms and types –i.e., the conflicts between state-led and state-seeking forms of nationalism²², state-building processes and peripheral reactions²³, and state-framed and counter-state nationalist movements²⁴. Despite providing an alternative and sophisticated approach to analyzing the formation process, the constructivist theories prioritized the category of “the state” as an agent of nationalism instead of the category of “the nation.” Therefore, the complex causal connections between the modern state-

¹⁶ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: NLB, 1977).

¹⁷ See Michael Hechter, *Containing Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival*, 1–31.

¹⁹ Anthony D. Smith, *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

²⁰ See E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

²¹ See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London New York: Verso, 2006).

²² Charles Tilly, “States and Nationalism in Europe 1492-1992,” *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (February 1994): 133.

²³ Hechter, *Containing Nationalism*, 15–17.

²⁴ Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2006), 142.

formation and the different types of political conflicts are reduced to nationalism, while the role of the international remains out of the picture.

In this respect, the problem is to reduce the multi-dimensional historical phenomena of nationalization emerging from different socio-historical contexts to a universal fact within law-like generalizations. Hence, socially uneven and geo-politically combined developmental patterns of nationalization as a process should be elaborated. Recently, an important alternative framework for the role of the international in the development of nationalism has been raised within the world-system approach.²⁵ It argues that the dynamics of the world-capitalist system pushed the pre-capitalist political formations of empires to disintegrate toward a nation-state as a general political form of the world-capitalist system. Therefore, nationalism emerges as the function of the extension of the inter-state system. In this framework, the *long-durée* cyclical patterning waves of the world-capitalist system (i.e., periods of material expansion, financial expansion, and hegemonic crisis) produce political mobilization of state-seeking or state-led nationalist movements.²⁶ Although world-system analysis provides a framework to grasp the long-term developmental patterns of nationalism, its structural explanation and macro-level generalizations bring about deficiencies to account for historical-regional specificities or variations and internal dynamics of the nationalization processes in different temporal-spatial contexts. Consequently, relational and processual conceptualizations of nationalism emerge as a prerequisite to link the uneven developments of nationalization processes with the combined impact of the Ottoman transition and international geopolitics within the dialectical nexus of the internal and external dynamics.

Ottoman Historiography: The Problem of Agency

It is a fact that different approaches in Ottoman historiography went hand in hand with the trends in the theories of nationalism, intermingling with the main conceptual paradigms directing the social sciences and history-writing. Despite differing in their approaches and sources, a tacit acceptance of the agency of the “state” and the “nation” runs through the Ottoman historiography;

²⁵ see Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730 - 1840s*, The Modern World-System (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2011); Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and The Origins of Our Times* (London ; New York: Verso, 1994).

²⁶ Sahan Savas Karataslı, “Financial Expansions, Hegemonic Transitions and Nationalism: A Longue Durée Analysis of State-Seeking Nationalist Movements” (PhD Dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 2013).

therefore, historians are united in invoking the state as the essential agency of the Ottoman transformation, while nationalism emerges as the driving force behind the political dynamics and the dissolution of the empire. Cem Emrence argues that three hegemonic theoretical waves, namely structural-functionalism, macro models, and post-structural approach, have shaped the studies of the late Ottoman history, which appear in the form of “westernization/modernization theory,” “dependency school/world-system theory,” and “post-colonial theory.”²⁷ Modernization theory relies on the framework of top-down political changes and transformation in the Ottoman state-society relationships at the hands of the patrimonial state and its modernized bureaucratic elites and nationalist-peripheral reactions to this process which bring about paradigms such as *decline*²⁸ and *center-periphery*²⁹. The modernist interpretation starts from the assumption that the Ottoman Empire lost its power in the international geopolitical competition in the face of the pressures of military and technological revolution, which caused a deterioration in the classical-traditional institutions of the empire. Therefore, the Ottoman transformation was regarded as the state efforts of “modernization” against the external threat of invasion that caused internal peripheral reactions opposing the modernizing ambitions of the state, taking the form of ethno-national conflicts. In this framework, the emergence of nationalist movements is considered an inevitable outcome of the failure of the Ottoman transition into modernity.

Within this framework, the contemporary politicians of the former Ottoman territories and nationalist historians of successor nation-states celebrated their “national liberation” from the “Turkish yoke” as an oppressed nation, while the European historians traced the growth of ethno-nationalist consciousness among different peripheral subjects of the empire. Those narratives rely on the so-called national awakenings of the different ethno-religious groups of the Ottoman Empire in response to some specific factors such as religious discrimination, Turkish chauvinism, and centralization efforts of the imperial “state.” To illustrate, many monographs of Albanian

²⁷ Cem Emrence, “Three Waves of Late Ottoman Historiography, 1950-2007,” *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin* 41, no. 2 (2007): 137–51.

²⁸ Darling criticizes rise-decline paradigm and offers alternative periodization: Expansion (1300-1550), Consolidation (1550-1718) and Transformation (1718-1923) in Linda Darling, “Another Look at Periodization in Ottoman History,” *The Turkish Studies Association Journal* 26, no. 2 (2002): 19-28.

²⁹ Şerif Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?,” *Daedalus* 102, no. 1 (1973): 169–90; Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey* (Walkington: Eothen Press, 1985); for the examples, see Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Aykut Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden ; New York: E.J. Brill, 1997).

nationalism, such as Kristo Frasheri's *The History of Albania: A Brief Survey*³⁰, Stavro Skendi's *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912*³¹, Edwin Jacques' *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present*³², Noel Malcolm's *Kosovo: A Short History*³³, Miranda Vickers' *The Albanians: A Modern History*³⁴ depicted the narrative of Albanian struggle against the Ottoman state by achieving national consciousness followed by the struggle of national self-determination and independence through a linear developmental process. Although they challenge the explicit nationalist tendencies in these studies and differ in their sources and approaches, many Turkish Ottoman historians reproduced the nationalist teleology by taking the Albanian "nation" as a category of their analysis. Bozbora, in her *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğunun Gelişimi*,³⁵ explored the roots of the development of Albanian nationalism by emphasizing its Islamic character and difference from other Balkan nationalisms. It related the development of nationalism in the socio-economic and political changes of the Ottoman Empire and argued that Albanian nationalism should be understood as a traditional-conservative reaction to the risk of territorial loss against Balkan irredentism and centralization policies of the Ottoman state. Bilgin Çelik's *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Arnavut Ulusçuluğu ve Arnavutluk Sorunu*³⁶ grounded in the same line with Bozbora, but he highlighted the cultural activities of Albanian intelligentsia. He substitutes the idea of conservative reaction by creating a dichotomy between conservative-progressive/modernist tendencies among Albanian nationalists within the North-South axis. In this respect, the study can be considered as a typical example of "retarded nationalism" discussions that try to understand how the development of nationalism gradually gained momentum in the empire. Banu Islet Sonmez's *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*³⁷ relied on Hroch's successive phases in the development of nationalism and Breuly's instrumentalist conceptualization of nation as a form of politics used by

³⁰ Kristo Frashëri, *The History of Albania: A Brief Survey* (Tirana, 1964).

³¹ Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening, 1878-1912* (Princeton N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1967).

³² Edwin E. Jacques, *The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co, 1995).

³³ Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

³⁴ Miranda Vickers, *The Albanians: A Modern History* (London: Tauris, 1995).

³⁵ Nuray Bozbora, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi* (Harbiye, İstanbul: Boyut Kitapları, 1997).

³⁶ Bilgin Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Arnavut Ulusçuluğu ve Arnavutluk Sorunu* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Büke Kitapları, 2004).

³⁷ Banu İşlet Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 1. baskı (İstanbul: YKY, 2007).

national groups to mobilize support against the state.³⁸ She focused on the conservative-progressive dichotomy among Albanian nationalists and interpreted the development of nationalism as a popular political opposition organized by Albanian intellectuals and politicians against the centralization efforts of the state and the risk of foreign intervention. These studies met on the ground of center-periphery or state-society dichotomy and reduce the complex dynamics of socio-political conflicts into a one-way determination of peripheral reactions against the state, which eventually took the form of nationalism.

The dependency school³⁹ and world-system analysis⁴⁰ explain the Ottoman transformation by focusing on the external variables, namely the influx of silver from the new world and trade with the European powers, or integration into the world-economy, within the logic of circulation and the impact of market and trade. These studies attribute an agency to the Ottoman bureaucracy as a 'state-class' and their responses to the pressure of the world-economy are considered as the motor of the transformation and the dynamics of political conflicts. In this explanation, the pressures of the world-economy led the state-class to implement rationalization and centralization of the state through coercion by losing their hegemony for reconciling the interests of different strategic groups in the empire. The development of "peripheral" capitalism brought about a struggle between the interests of state-classes and the non-Muslim comprador bourgeoisie as the primary agents of peripheralization. Hence, the center-periphery dichotomy is substituted by a two-fold struggle or dichotomy between the Empire and the Western powers on the one side and the non-Muslim comprador bourgeoisie and the Ottoman state/bureaucracy on the other. Although the world-system theory offers important insights into the long-term and world-historical dynamics of the Ottoman transformation, its structural determination and state-centered approach pay limited attention to the internal dynamics, including divergent interactions among different socio-political actors.

³⁸ John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982).

³⁹ For the important examples, see Doğan Avcıoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Düzeni* (İstanbul: Tekin Yayınevi, 1998); Stefanos Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye 2: Tanzimat'tan I. Dünya Savaşı'na*, trans. Babür Kuzucu (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1975).

⁴⁰ For the pioneering examples, see Çağlar Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey: A Study in Capitalist Development* (London ; New York: Verso, 1987); Huri İslamoğlu-Inan, ed., *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

The post-colonial initiative⁴¹ adapts the world-system theory to the imperial scale, which stresses domestic struggle and negotiations by focusing on “colonial practices” of imperial state-building efforts towards peripheries. Therefore, the center-periphery dichotomy is expressed in the form of capable and subaltern. Those studies mainly highlighted the violent centralization or “civilization” politics of the Ottoman state toward the internal peripheries and local reactions against them. For instance, Tallon’s “The Albanian Vilayets of the Ottoman Empire: Between Young Turks and Balkan Players, 1909-1912”⁴² and “Ottoman Anti-Insurrectionary Operations in Yemen and Albania, 1910-1912: The End of Ottomanism and the Beginning of an Age of Violence”⁴³ focused on the violent aspects of the CUP policies towards Albanian provinces to impose centralized and standardized means to the detriment of local customs as the central dynamic behind Albanian nationalization.

In this respect, each paradigm left a grand narrative attempting to explain the long nineteenth-century Ottoman transformation and respective socio-political conflicts around different fundamental or/and structural dynamics. Nevertheless, they share the common sense of the “strong state tradition” considered the patrimonial State or its elites/bureaucrats the key actor of the transformation. Thus, either modernization, peripheralization, or colonization, the Ottoman transition was considered as a linear development “from above” in response to the exogenous-structural variables from the *Tanzimat* regime onwards, while the socio-political conflicts were reduced to a struggle between the state and the society (peripheral actors either as reactionaries or subalterns or non-Muslim bourgeoisie) associated mainly with ethno-religious disputes or/and nationalism. These models reduce the complex socio-historical process of nationalization embedded in different types and forms of socio-political conflicts to mono-causal and determinist explanations by restricting the process to the actions of given categories such as the state and the nation and interpreting them within the boundaries of identity, culture, and ideology.

⁴¹ See Selim Deringil, “‘They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery’: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45, no. 02 (April 2003); Ussama Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 768–96.

⁴² James Tallon, “The Albanian Villayets of the Ottoman Empire: Between Young Turks (or CUP) and Balkan Players, 1909-1912,” in *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire V.3: The Young Turk Revolution and Ethnic Groups* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2015), 173–89.

⁴³ James Tallon, “Ottoman Anti-Insurrectionary Operations in Yemen and Albania, 1910-1912: The End of Ottomanism and the Beginning of an Age of Violence,” in *Empire, Ideology, Mass Violence: The Long 20th Century in Comparative Perspective* (München: Herbert Utz Verlag, UTZ, 2016), 45–71.

Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean to argue that the literature on late Ottoman history consists of reductionist and nationalist-teleological accounts. Some revisionist historians exposed the limits of the state-centered structural approaches and nationalist presuppositions by revealing early modern state-formation processes and elaborating actor-based approaches.⁴⁴ Indeed, it seems that Todorova's call for "reconsider[ing] with humility the effects of exporting the nation-state to societies that are ethnic and religious mosaics and creating a mosaic of nation-states in place of the mosaic of nations"⁴⁵ responded by some recent revisionist studies emerging after the 1990s.⁴⁶ After the post-modern break and cultural turn, historical studies shifted their attention from the category of the nation to the local actors, subalterns, women, and alternative histories. Therefore, the revisionist studies turned their attention from the ethno-national conflicts to the broader imperial or/and regional socio-political relations by focusing on the different experiences of the provincial actors, like the practices of co-existence, consensus, and networking through new historical data and perspectives.⁴⁷ Among this literature, Gawrych's *Crescent and*

⁴⁴ See Donald Quataert and Baki Tezcan, *Hakim Paradigmaların Ötesinde: Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj'a Armağan* (Ankara: Tan Kitabevi Yayınları, 2012); Rifa'at Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State: The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 2nd ed (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 2005);

⁴⁵ Maria Nikolaeva Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Updated ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 187.

⁴⁶ For the recent discussion on nationalist teleology and its alternative, see Christine Philliou, "The Paradox of Perceptions: Interpreting the Ottoman Past through the National Present," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (September 2008): 661–75.

⁴⁷ Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2011) which analyze the relationship between Jews, Christians and Muslims in Ottoman Palestine within the concept of Ottoman brotherhood; analyzes the dynamic relationships between the Ottoman center and Arab provinces during the Second Constitutional era Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire (1908-1918)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); edition of alternative accounts of nationalism in the imperial context Karen Barkey and Mark Von Hagen, eds., *After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building: The Soviet Union and the Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires* (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997); on the different aspects of Jewish nationalism on the Balkans Aron Rodrigue, "Jewish Enlightenment and Nationalism in the Ottoman Balkans: Barukh Mitrani in Edirne in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century," in *Minorities in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005); on the possibility of the co-existence of the Ottomans and the Greeks within supra-national political entity Vangelis Kechriotis, "Greek Orthodox, Ottoman Greeks or Just Greeks? Theories of Coexistence in the Aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution," *Académie Des Sciences De Bulgarie Institut D'Études Balkaniques* 1 (2005): 51–71; on communal networks in nationalism Yonca Köksal, "Rethinking Nationalism: State Projects and Community Networks in 19th-Century Ottoman Empire," *American Behavioral Scientist* 51, no. 10 (June 2008): 1498–1515; on transnational networks in nationalism Köksal; on collaborative policies of Kurdish political clubs Janet Klein, "Kurdish Nationalists and Non-Nationalist Kurds: Rethinking Minority Nationalism and the Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1909," *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 1 (2007): 135–53; on recontextualization of Turkification policies Erol Ülker, "Contextualising 'Turkification': Nation-Building in the Late Ottoman Empire, 1908-18," *Nations and Nationalism* 11, no. 4 (2005): 613–36.

*Eagle*⁴⁸ adds a great deal of data and nuance to explain the nationalization in the Albanian provinces. He challenges the narrative of “national awakening” and accounts for the complex relationship among the provincial actors. Still, he maintains the perspective of considering the development of nationalism as an inevitable process emerging as different reactions to the centralization policies of the state. In this vein, one of the most prominent monographs of Albanian provinces is Clayer’s *Aux Origines du Nationalisme Albanais: La Naissance d’une Nation Majoritairement Musulmane en Europe*.⁴⁹ Despite being a monographic study focusing on the genesis of nationalism, its in-depth analysis of the effects of multi-religious and multi-lingual structure and regional differences on the collective identity-formation in the Albanian provinces reveals the different individual and collective strategies ignored within the category of Albanian “nation.” Another critical revisionist study is the comparative analysis of Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen, 1878-1918*,⁵⁰ which succeeded in taking a step forward by deemphasizing the national categories with its focus on the “possibilities of identity” for various groups. This study manifests the problematic nature of national categories by revealing the complex and permeable structure of local and cultural belongings and their formation process within the general transformation of the imperial context.

The revisionist studies made deep inroads into the Ottoman transformation by presenting more processual and relational accounts explaining the complex and variable conducts of the local socio-political actors across different provincial settings. However, despite shifting focus from the state to the agency of societies or peripheral actors, they restrained from problematizing the agency of the state by taking the state or its bureaucracy/elites as a monolithic category. Therefore, their focus on societies reproduced the dichotomic understanding to the extent that the state and now societies are considered two distinct and autonomous entities with antagonistic interests, which misses the co-constitutive relations between the state-formation process and the dynamics of socio-political conflicts. Moreover, the overemphasis on the changing identities and positive practices in the countryside, such as consensus, coexistence, and interaction, led them to slide around

⁴⁸ George W. Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle: Ottoman Rule, Islam and the Albanians, 1874 - 1913*, Library of Ottoman Studies 10 (London: Tauris, 2006).

⁴⁹ for Turkish translation Nathalie Clayer, *Aux Origines Du Nationalisme Albanais: La Naissance D’une Nation Majoritairement Musulmane En Europe*, 2018; Nathalie Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013).

⁵⁰ Isa Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire: A Comparative Social and Political History of Albania and Yemen, 1878-1918* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2003).

explaining the dynamics of socio-political conflicts. That being said, since the revisionist studies do not attempt to present a general or/and holistic framework to analyze the uneven development of provincial relations within their combined relation with the state-formation and the international geo-political competition, they are content with mechanical explanations for the socio-political conflicts, such as the contingency of war and the eventual rise of nationalism.

This gap is filled by another current tendency developing with the neo-liberal wave of the 2000s, which is devoted to questioning the legitimacy of the nation-state rather than legitimizing it. This literature conceptualized nationalism as a political and ideological program and shifted the attention to the “nation-building” and “demographic engineering” processes of the state elites directed against non-Muslims in Anatolia, accompanying the dissolution of the empire.⁵¹ Framed by the division between state-led and state-seeking forms of nationalism, and its invented nature, they focused on the nation-formation efforts of the imperial state and its conflictual and violent aspects. However, they preserve the state-oriented analysis and attribute an ideological power to nationalism in the political mindset or programs of the late Ottoman state elites, particularly that of the Committee of Union and Progress. The socio-political developments in the Second Constitutional Era were interpreted as the period of the nation-building process within the political frameworks of “national economy,” “ethnic cleansing,” or “assimilation” toward non-Turk groups of the empire and their reactions to these processes. In this explanation, the nation-building processes in this period emerged as a peculiar historical moment in which ‘the state-classes’ put the means of violence into play to fashion the society with a modern ideology of nationalism. Therefore, while the socio-political conflicts were explained with reference to nationalism as a

⁵¹ For the studies in that vein see Taner Akçam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Ayhan Aktar, *Varlık Vergisi ve “Türkleştirme” Politikaları* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010); Matthias Bjørnlund, “The 1914 Cleansing of Aegean Greeks as a Case of Violent Turkification,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1 (2008); Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye’nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki’nin Etnisite Mühendisliği (1913-1918)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008); Ryan Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1912 - 1923* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009); Renée Hirschon, ed., *Crossing the Aegean: An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006); Fatma Müge Göçek, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present and Collective Violence against the Armenians 1789-2009* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Nesim Şeker, “Demographic Engineering in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Armenians,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 461–74; Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Rethinking Young Turk ‘Social Engineering,’” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 7, no. 7 (n.d.).

political ideology, its emergence and political impact are predated in a more distant past than may historically be justified.⁵²

This review suggests that, although the paradigmatic shifts in the Ottoman-Turkish historiography, the tendency to take the “state” and the “nation” as a category of analysis preserves their hegemonic power. Despite their divergent theoretical frameworks and conceptualizations, the majority of the studies refer to the “state” as an autonomous entity and its elites as the agent of the Ottoman transition and attribute significance to nationalism as the prime form of the political conflicts in the long nineteenth-century of the empire. Indeed, this center of gravity pulls even the alternative research toward itself. Two recent neo-Marxist interpretations of the Ottoman transition constitute an excellent example of this pull-effect. Duzgun attributed a *sui generis* path to Ottoman transition as the contradictory combination of capitalism and Jacobinism by focusing on the agency of bureaucratic-military elites of the state. He argued that, rather than transition to capitalism, the Ottoman experience of modernization went hand in hand with the nation-formation as a frame of reference for the organization of economic and power relations under the pressure of geopolitical competition.⁵³ Although it does not give too much weight to Ottoman historiography and successfully emphasizes the uneven and combined development of the transition, Anievas and Nisancıoğlu conceptualized the Ottoman social formation as a tributary mode of production by referring to an autonomous, unified, and centralized state who had the control over direct producers and dominant classes.⁵⁴ In this sense, the necessity of an alternative theoretical framework that can accommodate the revisionist studies for explaining the uneven and combined developmental trajectory of the transition and dissolution of the empire without invoking the state and the nation as a category of analysis remains intact.

⁵² As it will be discussed in the following chapters, some Ottoman historians even argued that the Turkish nationalism was on the mindset of the CUP long before 1908 Revolution. See M. Şükrü Haniöğlu, “Turkish Nationalism and the Young Turks, 1889-1908,” in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2002).

⁵³ Eren Duzgun, *Capitalism, Jacobinism and International Relations: Revisiting Turkish Modernity*, LSE International Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

⁵⁴ Alexander Anievas and Kerem Nisancıoğlu, *How the West Came to Rule: The Geopolitical Origins of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2015); For the detailed definition of the tributary mode of production, see Jairus Banaji, *Theory as History: Essays on Modes of Production and Exploitation* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

Theoretical Framework: Strategic-Relational Approach

Building upon the strategic-relational interpretation of the dialectical historical-materialist approach of (geo)political-Marxism⁵⁵ and the post-structuralist theories of nationalism⁵⁶, this research argues that it is possible to go beyond the nationalist teleology and state-centered paradigms through the analysis of the nationalization practices on the basis of *the dynamic interplay* between the internal socio-political conflicts mediated by social-property relations, the state-formation, and the international geo-political competition. From this point of view, the research considers nationalism as a *category of practice* rather than a *category of analysis* by adopting the concept of “*nationness*” or *nationalization* as an event, happening, or/and precarious frame of socio-political actions, including a variable property of relationships that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops within a contingent or/and conjuncturally fluctuating processes.⁵⁷

This stance means deconstructing the concept of the nation as a real entity or substantial-bounded collectivity by avoiding “*groupism*,” the tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, and chief protagonists of social conflicts.⁵⁸ It implies that the so-called national or ethnically-framed conflicts need not be understood as a conflict between ethnic or national groups.⁵⁹ On the contrary, understanding nationally-framed political conflicts requires analyzing nationalization practices in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful and disaggregated terms by giving attention to the socio-historical dynamics and their transformative consequences. This research contends that, instead of recognizing any *a priori* objective criteria for the nation, adopting the concept of nationness can open the way for uncovering divergent positions, interests,

⁵⁵ The term is pejoratively coined by Bois to criticize the theoretical standpoint of Robert Brenner for overemphasizing historical and political explanation at the cost of neglecting economic factors T. H. Aston and C. H. E. Philpin, eds., *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 116; However, Ellen Wood embraced the term and provoked a turn away from structuralisms and teleology towards historical specificity as contested process and lived praxis by prioritizing relational aspect and class struggle. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Also see, Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (London ; New York: Verso, 2017).

⁵⁶ Among different critical approaches to the mainstream scholarship on nationalism, I will follow Rogers Brubaker’s critique of “groupism” and rejection of the category of nation as a category of analysis, see Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*; Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁵⁷ Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed*, 15–19; Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 31–33.

⁵⁸ Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups*, 7–8.

⁵⁹ Brubaker, 9–10.

and strategies adopted by heterogeneous actors toward different forms and types of political conflicts. For the concept of nation is apparently an empty shell as an analytical category to explain the dynamics of socio-political conflicts, it is necessary to substitute an inclusive concept to reveal the relational interconnection of these conflicts with the different stages of state-formation, the international geo-political competition, and nationalization.

The research claims that the social-property relations prevailing within the Ottoman Empire provide the key to unlock the dialectical nexus between the internal and external dynamics of transition and the different political conflicts crystallized in divergent patterns of nationalization. The social-property relations or surplus-extraction relationships (i.e., the relations of exploitation based on the share and appropriation of social surplus such as distribution of property, landholding arrangements, and forms of taxation), that mediate the relations between the major classes and their contradictory strategies of reproduction, define the constitution and identity of the politically constituted institutional structures and their transformations.⁶⁰ While politically constituted property regimes institutionalize class conflict by setting the parameters for class-specific rules of reproduction, they were contested in times of crisis depending on the time-bound balances of class forces and external geopolitical pressures. Therefore, the structure of class relations (i.e., the class forces balance of the direct producers and dominant classes to one another and between each other) leads to different types, forms, and patterns of socio-political conflicts and developments depending on divergent strategies of reproduction.⁶¹ That being said, the changes in social-property regimes restructured the political institutions, the political society, and distinct forms of class relations ranging from conflict to cooperation which explain the uneven developmental patterns of change and the variable conducts of regional actors.⁶²

The relation between the class conflict and the type of political conflict is peremptorily apparent in some examples like the peasant rebellions, but establishing this link in other examples, such as sectarian violence, the resistance of tribal groups, and the articulation of nationalist

⁶⁰ See Robert Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," in *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10–64; and Robert Brenner, "Economic Backwardness in Eastern Europe in Light of Developments in the West," in *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 10–63.

⁶¹ Brenner, "Economic Backwardness in Eastern Europe in Light of Developments in the West," 11–36.

⁶² Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 47–52.

programs requires to elaborate a relational approach to class and class conflict. The concept of class as a relationship and process is the collective social expression of exploitation or objective relations to the means of reproduction and appropriation; while class conflict expresses the relationship between classes including exploitation, domination, and resistance to them.⁶³ Although class conflict is the product of a process of surplus-extraction from direct producers, it does not only take place between the classes of surplus producers and extractors. Instead, the logic of exploitation is a field of relations that proceeds from and generates conflicting practices, which lead to their dissolution and fusion into various forms of class factions and strategic groups transforming class structures. Therefore, the struggle does not occur between antagonistic classes but revolves around different levels –i.e., “(1) between the peasants and lords (*class conflict*), (2) amongst the lords (*intra-ruling class conflict*), (3) between the collectivity of lords, i.e., the feudal ‘state’ and ‘external’ lordly communities (*inter-ruling class conflict*), and (4) amongst the peasantry (*intra-producing class conflict*).”⁶⁴ These horizontal and vertical lines of class conflict govern the patterns of change and cause ontologically similar but different dynamics, forms, and patterns of socio-political conflicts depending on the regionally specific class structures and the balance of class forces. Moreover, the dominant classes appeal to different forms of surplus appropriation, “direct-individual exploitation” in the forms of unfree labor (i.e., slaves, serfs, debt bondsmen), rent from leaseholders, and wage-labour (in capitalism) and “indirect-collective exploitation”, which enables the ruling class controlling the State machinery to extract surplus even from the peasant freeholders (i.e., internal taxation, conscription, compulsory menial services, and external plunder, tribute, etc.).⁶⁵ This difference corresponded with the two distinct mechanisms of surplus appropriation by the dominant classes, “extra-economic or political appropriation” or “private, purely economic capital accumulation”.⁶⁶ In this sense, while the forms

⁶³ G. E. M. De Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World: From the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1989), 43–44; Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, 76–107.

⁶⁴ Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 62.

⁶⁵ De Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, 44, 53, and 205–8.

⁶⁶ Robert Brenner, “The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism,” in *The Brenner Debate: Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 213–329; Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, 50–73; Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, 19–49; De Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World*, 205.

and relations of exploitation and domination crystallized in specific social-property regimes, class conflicts put pressure towards their re-arrangement.

That being said, as a radical change in the social-property or/and class relations, the concept of bourgeois revolution should be elaborated as an analytical category. The classical Marxist notion of ‘bourgeois revolution’⁶⁷ is initially attacked by the liberal revisionist critics, and then is enriched by the Marxist responses to these onslaughts from the 1980s onwards. Among these contributions, two of them have great importance for the elaborated category in this research. First, the revolution is not necessarily carried by the political leadership of the bourgeoisie, even there is no such case in history, but it is bourgeois as long as the bourgeoisie remains its prime beneficiary. Therefore, the bourgeois revolution is understood in terms of its consequences, the creation of political conditions of capitalist domination through a political transformation in the nature of state power. Secondly, the revolution not necessarily produces a liberal-democratic state and the full establishment of capitalism.⁶⁸ In this sense, defining bourgeois revolution as the removal of political obstacles for the establishment of capitalism and nation-state grown in the interstices of the feudal absolutist regime by the bourgeoisie or other social forces problematizes the use of the term for different social formations like the Ottoman Empire or anywhere else but Britain.⁶⁹ In fact, the dominance of capitalist forms of production could only become dominant after the socio-political changes defined as the bourgeois revolution.⁷⁰

This problem is connected to ‘the debate over the transition from feudalism to capitalism’ whose origins goes back to the 1960s.⁷¹ Depending on the contributions of (geo)political-Marxism to this debate, this research argues that defining capitalism as a social relation in which all forces of production, including labour-power, have become commodified and production of goods for

⁶⁷ Four core components of the ‘classical’ notion of bourgeoisie revolution are (1) the assumption of self-conscious and united urban capitalist bourgeoisie as the main agent of revolution, (2) a class antagonism between a conservative feudal nobility and progressive bourgeoisie, (3) revolution as a temporarily compressed, violent and decisive event, (4) the removal of political obstacles for the full establishment and flowering of capitalism and the emergence of a unified nation-state. Benno Teschke, “Bourgeois Revolution, State Formation and the Absence of the International,” *Historical Materialism* 13, no. 2 (2005): 4–6.

⁶⁸ Alex Callinicos, “Bourgeois Revolutions and Historical Materialism,” *International Socialism* 2, no. 43 (Summer 1989): 113–71.

⁶⁹ David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 10–38.

⁷⁰ Heide Gerstenberger, *Impersonal Power: History and Theory of the Bourgeois State*, Historical Materialism Book Series, v. 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 662–63.

⁷¹ Paul Sweezy et al., *The Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism*, New Left Review Editions (London: Verso, 1978).

exchange has become market-dependent and market-regulated, that is competitive reproduction in the market, can provide a starting point for contextualizing the development of capitalism in the Ottoman Empire.⁷² It implies that capitalism requires a specific social-property regime in which propertyless direct producers are forced to sell their labour-power to property-owners. In the pre-capitalist social formations like the Ottoman Empire, the class relations are not economic but predicated upon the possession of the political power expressed in the various forms of extra-economic or politico-legal surplus appropriation, which points out the blurring of different mechanisms of surplus appropriation with the fusion of the economic and the political.⁷³ Contrary to the pre-capitalist geo-political accumulation in which the direct producers possess the means of subsistence and the dominant class reproduces itself primarily by the forced appropriation of peasant surplus by extra-economic compulsion, the capitalist social-property relations depended on private forms of ‘capital accumulation’ where the surplus is appropriated by market mechanisms. In this respect, the logic of capital accumulation requires a shift from personalized forms of domination and appropriation to impersonal relations of power, the separation of the political (coercion) and the economic (exploitation), market and the state, or public and private.⁷⁴ However, the political processes that resulted in this separation stem not from the pressures of the development of the capitalist relations of production or market relations toward the expropriation of personal power, but from the crisis dynamics of the logic geo-political accumulation of the old regimes (i.e., conflicts over share and control the appropriation of the social ‘surplus’ product) rooted in the class conflicts.

As noted by Perry Anderson, the class conflicts are ultimately resolved at the political level of society and the state-formation seals the changes in the social-property relations.⁷⁵ The conception that the political is internal to the property relation, which co-constitutes and reproduces the relations of exploitation, entails an alternative approach to “the State” and the international geopolitics since they are the terrains on which class conflict occurs in and through

⁷² Teschke, “Bourgeois Revolution, State Formation and the Absence of the International,” 11.

⁷³ Brenner, “Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe,” 30–46; Brenner, “The Agrarian Roots,” 231–43; Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, 28–31; Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, 56; Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 47–53.

⁷⁴ Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism: Renewing Historical Materialism*, 19–48; Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Pristine Culture of Capitalism: A Historical Essay on Old Regimes and Modern States*, Verso World History Series (London: Verso, 1992), 10–46; Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 139–50.

⁷⁵ Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolutist State* (London; New York: Verso, 2013), 11.

them. It provided that the state should be conceptualized as a “relation of production” which was (re)constructed through complicated and extensive class struggles.⁷⁶ Therefore, state power is an institutionally mediated condensation of the changing balance of the forces of classes and class factions, in which property, exploitation, and domination are contested political relations that are constantly defined, defended, and renegotiated. In other words, the state is the site, the generator, and the product of different class strategies.⁷⁷ Thus, state-formation is not a once-and-for-all process but is constantly constituted and mobilized in and through political action, such as the pressures of direct producers or intra-ruling class conflicts.⁷⁸ In this process, different types of political regimes emerge as “power blocs,” a fairly stable alliance of the dominant classes or class factions within the “political society,” which granted the use of political rights within their hegemonic interests.⁷⁹ As politically constituted institutions of class conflicts, the political regimes are crystallization or material condensation of past and current strategies, maintaining the political unity of the dominant classes and the existing relations of exploitation.⁸⁰ In other words, rather than the state *as such*, different strategic groups or class factions developed different types and forms of “regime strategies” using the state’s institutional structure and powers.

When political conflicts preclude the reproduction or adaptation of existing social relations and regime strategies, regime crises appear. The crises activate and intensify the domestic fault lines in regionally pre-existing class constellations and lead to power struggles within and between polities that renegotiate and transform property or/and class relations, territorial scales, and state forms.⁸¹ Therefore, they provide moments of both dangers for the resolution of the legitimacy of the political structure and opportunities for political contestation that enable new strategic groups to grab political power.⁸² Therefore, the political regimes constitute a terrain upon which a power bloc consisting of ruling classes impart a specific strategic direction to the state to maintain its

⁷⁶ Philip Corrigan, Harvie Ramsay, and Derek Sayer, “The State as a Relation of Production,” in *Capitalism, State Formation and Marxist Theory*, Philip Corrigan (Londra: Quartet Books, 1980).

⁷⁷ Bob Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in Its Place* (Cambridge, U.K: Polity Press, 1990), 95; Bob Jessop, “On the Originality, Legacy, and Actuality of Nicos Poulantzas,” *Studies in Political Economy* 34, no. 1 (January 1991): 83.

⁷⁸ Jessop, *State Theory*, 268.

⁷⁹ Nicos Ar Poulantzas and James Martin, *The Poulantzas Reader: Marxism, Law, and the State* (London: Verso, 2008), 103; Jessop, *State Theory*, 42.

⁸⁰ Jessop, *State Theory*, 260.

⁸¹ Teschke, “Bourgeois Revolution, State Formation and the Absence of the International,” 21.

⁸² Bob Jessop, “Political Capitalism, Economic and Political Crises, and Authoritarian Statism,” *Spectrum Journal of Global Studies* 7, no. 1 (2015): 8–10.

hegemony in politics, economics, and ideology. However, the characteristics of the crisis and the regime-building strategies depended on the balances of class forces in which different classes or strategic groups clash with each other through different strategies, i.e., pro-regime or anti-regime, to assert their hegemony within the state.⁸³ While pro-regime strategies are concerned with maintaining or developing the strategic orientations of the regime and its hegemonic discourses, the anti-regime strategies challenge the existing structure to transform its current strategic orientation and selectivity through alternative discourses, i.e., nationalism, democracy, etc. In this framework, nationalization practices as manifestations of different forms of political conflicts are predicated on specific forms of class conflict experienced by human beings grouped together by their differing relationships to the dominant mode of production, which is unassignable to constant, *ex-post* national identities. Hence, even if they appeared, or more correctly crystallized, in the form of nationalism, the socio-political conflicts experienced in the long nineteenth century of Ottoman history, particularly in the Second Constitutional period, depended on a specific set of class conflicts, including different strategies.

Within this framework, the different levels of class conflicts created historical moments of transformative convulsion (crises or revolutionary situations), where the ancien-regimes depended on personal power relations are impossible to be maintained without any change, and the bourgeois revolution arose in the political struggles over the redefinition of the state (i.e., forms and practices of power) and the re-arrangement of class relations.⁸⁴ Therefore, the peculiar resolutions of class conflicts in a given social formation brought about different stages and trajectories of state-formations. This approach requires reformulating “the bourgeois revolution as a process”⁸⁵, that can stretch out over decades involving numerable moments of crises or revolutionary situations, in which subordinate classes have opportunities to destruct or reconstruct the state apparatus, and restoration periods, where the political regimes consisting of different power blocs dominating the state apparatus produce strategies to control the revolutionary dynamics. These processes correspond to the successive stages of state-formation which developed not as a linear process of

⁸³ Bob Jessop, *Nicos Poulantzas: Marxist Theory and Political Strategy*, Theoretical Traditions in the Social Sciences (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1985), 138–39; Bob Jessop, *The Capitalist State: Marxist Theories and Methods* (Oxford: M. Robertson, 1982), 20–25.

⁸⁴ Gerstenberger, *Impersonal Power*, 28–31 and 662–66.

⁸⁵ E. Attila Aytekin, “Burjuva Devrimi Tartışmaları Işığında 1908 ve 1923’e Bakmak,” *Ayrıntı Dergi*, no. 25 (March 2018): 30–39.

modern transformation of the state as reactions to military, diplomatic or market pressure, but as the dynamic erosion and renewal of the forms of domination or exploitation as a result of complex socio-political conflicts, that is the dialectic of revolutionary situations and restorations. This reformulation also reveals the problematic nature of disintegrating the revolution process as “from below”, i.e., carried by broad coalitions of classes against the absolute state, which ended up with liberal-democratic political order, and “from above”, i.e., carried by the state to remove the obstacles to bourgeoisie domination that ended up with *sui generis* paths.⁸⁶ Indeed, the widespread categorization of the Ottoman transition in the latter category produced a series of shortcomings, i.e., nationalist teleology.

That said, the uneven country-specific and diachronic socio-political dynamics of the emergence of capitalism and the trajectories of the bourgeois revolution and the state-formation are combinedly connected to and mediated by international geopolitical competition. The developmental potential of regionally-differentiated sets of property regimes generates inter-regional unevenness depending on the internal class structures, which translates into international pressures that spark socio-political crises in ‘backward’ polities.⁸⁷ In other words, the country-specific developments regarding the forms of social-property relations and the state shape and are shaped the timing and form of geopolitical pressure and the political strategies that ‘state-classes’, or more correctly power blocs, were able to design, activate, and implement in the face of domestic class struggle.⁸⁸ Therefore, the developmental trajectories and forms of capitalism, revolution, state-formation, and the respective dynamics of political conflicts should be analyzed within the dialectical nexus between the external imperatives and internal responses, which was formulated against the background of existing class relations, structures, and their balances of forces. In this sense, recasting the nationalization practices as revolutionary situations involving contested class strategies inherited both from different types of internal political conflicts and international geopolitical competition provides an opening to explore the socio-historical preconditions of

⁸⁶ These categories are constructed as the ideal-types to explain the regionally differentiated transitions to capitalism. While the former represents a cycle of ‘classical bourgeois revolutions’ comprises Holland (1572), England (1640), America (1776) and France (1789); the latter represents German and Italian unification, the American Civil War (1861–5), and the Meiji Restoration in Japan (1868). Teschke, “Bourgeois Revolution, State Formation and the Absence of the International,” 7.

⁸⁷ Benno Teschke, “Debating ‘The Myth of 1648’: State Formation, the Interstate System and the Emergence of Capitalism in Europe — A Rejoinder,” *International Politics* 43, no. 5 (November 2006): 534.

⁸⁸ Teschke, 534.

nationalization and its uneven and combined development within its proper world-historical context of the modern state-formation and the transition into capitalism.

Following this strategic-relational interpretation, the research explores the socio-historical preconditions of the nationalization process in the Albanian provinces within *the dynamic interplay* between social-property relations, state-formation, and international geo-political competition. More specifically, this research analyzes the nationalization process in the Albanian provinces in tandem with the Ottoman transition by focusing on how the changing social-property relations within the systemic crises of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime and the successive phases of the state-formation processes materialized in different political regimes affected the regional class structure, the dynamics and forms of political conflicts, and the divergent strategies and discourses of local actors in the Albanian provinces. From this point of view, the research argues that the interface between the crisis and transformation of the Ottoman geopolitical accumulation regime rooted in the different levels of class conflicts, including domestic and international competition and struggles over the politically-constituted powers of exploitation and domination, provided the dynamics of political conflicts which produced a 'revolutionary situation' that rendered Albanian nationalization a historical possibility. My main hypothesis is that the regionally-specific and internationally-mediated resolutions of class conflicts depending on the uneven balance of class forces and structures directed the rules and forms of conflict and cooperation among heterogenous Albanian actors and between them and the political regimes which influenced and transformed the course of Albanian nationalization. It claims that rather than ideology or culture, the rules and geo-political strategies of reproduction and the relative sets of class interests directed the sources of identity-formation and constituted the social preconditions of Albanian nationalization by producing a revolutionary situation that involved contested class strategies.

Given the highly complicated framework articulated, I heuristically use three levels of analysis. First of all, I chronologically examine the dynamics of crisis and transformation in the Ottoman social-property regime within the trajectories of diverging stages of state-formation processes or/and regime-building strategies as the institutionalized forms of class conflict in their relationship with the international context. Secondly, I adopt a developmental-processual perspective to address how the crises and restoration strategies embedded in state-formation

attempts affected the regional class structures and relations that caused uneven and combined sets of political conflicts in the empire. Lastly, I make a causal inquiry into the impacts of these processes on the Albanian provinces in order to reveal how they influenced and transformed the course of Albanian nationalization. Within these methodological strategies, I substantiate my arguments in three chapters.

The first chapter presents the theory of social-property relations and its insights into grasping the crisis of Ottoman geo-political accumulation and the changes in the Ottoman socio-political relations and structure. It analyzes how the logic of geo-political accumulation produced ebbs and flows among the centrifugal tendencies of regional appropriation and the centripetal tendencies of political consolidation depending on the (re)organization and hierarchy of the ruling classes constituting the power bloc. In this framework, the chapter focuses on how the rise of Janina Pashalik of Ali Pasha (1788-1822) and Shkoder Pashalik of Mehmed Bushati (1757-1831) and their fall with the *Nizam-i Cedid* restoration brought significant regional variations regarding the class constellations and their balances of forces in the Albanian provinces which influenced the dynamics of political conflicts in the following centuries. The second chapter discusses the two stages of the state-formation process materialized in the divergent strategies of the *Tanzimat* and the *Hamidian* regimes regarding the r(e)organization of the hierarchy power bloc and the corresponding dynamics of political conflicts in the Albanian provinces within the dialectical nexus between endogenous and exogenous factors. The first sub-chapter delineates how different class structures and constellations inherited from the *pashalik regimes* and the international *realpolitik* brought about uneven regional accommodation of the *Tanzimat* regime in the Albanian provinces. The second sub-chapter demystifies the Albanian League of *Prizren* as the myth of the national awakening by revealing the divergent strategies followed by the different factions within the movement. The last chapter analyzes the regime-building strategies of the CUP regime and the reactions in the Albanian provinces, which materialized in a series of rebellions between 1909 and 1912 that created a ‘revolutionary situation’ for Albanian nationalization. It conceptualizes nationalism as one of the political strategies in the repertoires of the Albanian ruling class and claims that the development of the *nationness* as a possibility depended on the uneven regionally-specific resolutions of class conflicts (which originated in the persistence of geo-political strategies of accumulation and depended on the domestic balance of class forces and structures and internationally-mediated opportunity structures).

A significant part of this research is based on the archival documents collected from the Presidential Ottoman Archive (*Cumhurbaşkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi, BOA*) collected via the method of content analysis and have been processed via qualitative analyses. Considering the biased and processed nature of the archival sources, I multiply my evidence by including *parliamentary minutes* to hear the voices of local actors more as well as public sources such as contemporary newspapers such as *Tanin (Echo)* and *The Orient*; published accounts of foreign diplomats and reporters; as well as memoirs of both provincial leaders and state officials in the region to increase the argumentation, inclusiveness, and the objectivity of the research. The major limitation of this research is the absence of non-Ottoman archival sources, including important information about the Albanian provinces, most notably the Austrian and Italian archives, due to the language barrier of the researcher. I have compensated for this deficiency by crosschecking my data with a large variety of secondary sources, including monographs that used foreign sources. Therefore, I have confirmed the reliability of the domestic information through a comparison with alternative sources.

Another intentional limitation of the research is the exclusion of the majority of ideological writings of the contemporary Albanian nationalist intelligentsia about the Albanian culture and nation. Since the primary goal of this research is to overcome nationalist teleology by providing an alternative theoretical framework, and the majority of the studies on Albanian nationalization already relied on these writings, I only resort to some of their prominent discussions. Despite these possible limitations, the research will meet its objective to the extent that it can provide an alternative analytical framework to reveal the socio-historical conditions of nationalization in the Ottoman Empire in general and the Albanian case in particular within its proper socio-historical context of the Ottoman transition. Therefore, the world-historical and strategic-relational theoretical framework presented in this study will help us answer several unresolved questions and puzzles in the existing literature on nationalism and provide constructive criticism of the teleological paradigms prevalent in Ottoman historiography by developing a provincial approach. The research hopes to enable future studies to increase the scholarly share of understanding of nationalism by placing the concept of the nation back into the socio-historical context from which it is abstracted.

Chapter 1: Beyond Dominant Paradigms: Ottoman *Ancien Regime* and Albanian Provinces

1.1.Rethinking Classical Ottoman Formation without Decline: Geo-Political

Accumulation

The nature of the classical social formation and the state structure of the Ottoman empire perpetuate to be a subject of various debates in historiography depending on different paradigms that attributed different characteristics to the “classical” period. These paradigms directed the explanations of the transformation and dissolution of the empire as well as its periodization with different approaches and sources. The most prevalent among these characteristics are the power and efficiency of the patrimonial state, absolute centralization of the political and land system,⁸⁹ or classless nature of the society⁹⁰, unity amongst the ruling class within the *askeri* (ruling class) and *reaya* (direct producers) distinction providing total control over productive classes, together with the notion of justice ensuring the public service based on merit and state protection.⁹¹ However, a tacit consensus is established on the *sui generis* characteristics of the Ottoman state and society, which makes them not only unique, rigid, and unchanging but also unchangeable through internal dynamics.⁹² This consensus finds its expression in traditionalism, which is emphasized as the legal, organizational, and socio-economic principle of the Ottoman state.⁹³ In this framework, it is assumed that the Ottoman empire started to lose whatever unique features it had once possessed and had begun to decline or disintegrate by the seventeenth century onwards because of external factors, such as military and technological revolution, the influx of silver from the new world, and trade with the Europe or integration into world-economy, which, in varying degrees, caused a deterioration in the classical-traditional institutions of the empire (i.e., the dissolution of the *timar system* (fief) and its substitution with *iltizam system* (tax-farming)).⁹⁴

⁸⁹ These two characteristics were attributed to Ottoman social formation within the context of Asiatic Mode of Production. See Sencer Divitçioğlu, *Asya Üretim Tarzı ve Osmanlı Toplumu* (İstanbul: Alfa, 2005).

⁹⁰ As a variant of Ottoman particularism, this attitude depends on the idea that Ottoman system is different from the feudal formation for Ottoman peasant were free and hinged on center rather than authority of lords. See Ömer Lütfi Barkan, *Türkiye’de Toprak Meselesi* (İstanbul: Gözlem Yayınları, 1980).

⁹¹ The notion of justice implies a kind of contract determining the mutual responsibilities of state and society. See Halil İncalcık, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu: Toplum ve Ekonomi Üzerinde Arşiv Çalışmaları, İncelemeler*, 3rd ed. (Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Eren Yayıncılık ve Kitapçılık, 2009).

⁹² Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 22.

⁹³ Genç argued that the three-pronged trend of provisionalism, traditionalism and fiscalism defined the classical Ottoman structure and relations. See Mehmet Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi* (İstanbul: Ötüken, 2000).

⁹⁴ Bernard Lewis, “Some Reflections on the Decline of the Ottoman Empire,” *Studia Islamica*, no. 9 (1958): 111.

Therefore, these changes are considered signs of “decline” and emerged as a dominant paradigm in Ottoman historiography for a long time. The prominent feature of such periodization is its biological implications which convey a preordained and unilinear, thereby teleological, development of youth ages of foundation, middle age or golden ages of expansion, late ages of stagnation followed by inevitable decay and collapse.⁹⁵ However, it should be reminded that periodization itself is subjective and functions to control daily life;⁹⁶ thereby, they can be regarded as ideological tracts designed to further political aims.⁹⁷ In other words, they should be interpreted within their proper socio-historical contexts. The idea of decline originated in contemporary western sources such as Hammer and Jorga⁹⁸ or the *nasihatnames* and historians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as Mustafa Ali, Koçi Bey, and Naima.⁹⁹ For those writers, the crises and changes in the sixteenth and, especially, seventeenth-century represent a disruption of the *nizam-i alem* (world order) or *nizam-i kadim* (old order), which was described with the idea of “the golden age”; and the resulting changes were portrayed as *tegayür ve fesad* (dissolution and corruption).¹⁰⁰ Therefore, misuse and misinterpretation of that literature by twentieth-century historians dominated the efforts of periodization in Ottoman history with the declinist approaches.¹⁰¹

However, many recent studies proved that despite it is accepted as a symbolic sign of decline and a cause of the breakdown of the *timar* system as the backbone of the classical age, the *iltizam* system (tax-farming) as a method of revenue collection was very much part of the economic policy of the Ottoman empire in the classical ages.¹⁰² It is also revealed that Ottoman military weakness was not irreversible until the nineteenth century, and there was no significant difference between Ottomans and Europe regarding military and naval capabilities, firearms, techniques, or weaponry such as galleons, frigates, cannon boring techniques, light field guns, new-formula

⁹⁵ Ariel Salzmann, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire: Rival Paths to the Modern State*, The Ottoman Empire and Its Heritage, v. 28 (Boston: Brill, 2004), 14.

⁹⁶ Jacques Le Goff, *Tarihi Dönemlere Ayırmak Şart Mı?* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2016).

⁹⁷ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 27.

⁹⁸ Donald Quataert, “Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes Towards the Notion of ‘Decline,’” *History Compass* 1, no. 1 (January 2003): 2–3.

⁹⁹ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Abou-El-Haj, 50.

¹⁰¹ Jane Hathaway, “Problems of Periodization in Ottoman History: The Fifteenth through the Eighteenth Centuries,” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* XX 20, no. 2 (1996): 30–31.

¹⁰² Kate Fleet, “Tax-Farming in the Early Ottoman State,” *The Medieval History Journal* 6, no. 2 (April 2003): 249–58.

gunpowder, and flintlock firearms.¹⁰³ Although such revisionist studies made deep inroads into the declinist approach by substituting the ‘decline’ with the ‘transformation,’¹⁰⁴ an alternative relational and holistic theoretical framework sensitive to the historical and socio-political processes of the transformation continues to be relevant in the Ottoman historiography since a line of tacit acceptance depending on external factors runs through the literature.

The geopolitical competition model is the most outstanding model for explaining the Ottoman transformation depending upon exogenous factors. In this scheme, the inability of the Ottoman Empire in the external wars enforced the reforms toward state rationalization and modernization because of the increasing need for resource extraction and military-technological innovations.¹⁰⁵ Although more recent paradigms developed around world-system theory brought new insight into the Ottoman transition by situating the Ottoman Empire into the world-historical context of the early-modern state-system, their structural explanations by prioritizing the logic of circulation and the impact of market and trade remain insensitive to the internal variations of change.¹⁰⁶ However, of the total trade volume, international trade constituted only a small part of the Ottoman economy, and even in the late nineteenth century, foreign trade amounted to only about 7 or 8 percent of total production (and to between 12 and 16 percent of agricultural production).¹⁰⁷ This model makes it unnecessary to examine the internal dynamics of the early-modern Ottoman transformations by considering these changes irrelevant to the experiences of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More importantly, despite differing in their foci and approaches, these models accepted the State or its bureaucracy or elites as unified actors and

¹⁰³ As a critique to decline regarding military and alternative framework for external causes see Jonathan Grant, “Rethinking the Ottoman ‘Decline’: Military Technology Diffusion in the Ottoman Empire, Fifteenth to Eighteenth Centuries,” *Journal of World History* 10, no. 1 (1999): 179–201; Gábor Ágoston, “Firearms and Military Adaptation: The Ottomans and the European Military Revolution, 1450–1800,” *Journal of World History* 25, no. 1 (2014): 85–124; Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700–1870: An Empire Besieged* (London: Routledge, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Darling offers an alternative periodization, Expansion (1300–1550), Consolidation (1550–1718) and Transformation (1718–1923) to prevent the concept of decline that characterized as “cause, symptom and effect” and bipolarism of “rise and decline” to enable for tracking fiscal and administrative transformations. See Darling, “Another Look at Periodization in Ottoman History,” 21–26.

¹⁰⁵ See Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990–1992* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1992).

¹⁰⁶ Anievas and Nişancioğlu, *How the West Came to Rule*; Immanuel Wallerstein, “The Ottoman Empire and the Capitalist World-Economy: Some Questions for Research,” *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 2, no. 3 (1979): 389–98; Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System III: The Second Era of Great Expansion of the Capitalist World-Economy, 1730–1840s*; Eren Duzgun, “Capitalism, Jacobinism and International Relations: Re-Interpreting the Ottoman Path to Modernity,” *Review of International Studies* 44, no. 2 (April 2018): 252–78.

¹⁰⁷ Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), 48.

explained the transformation through their response to the pressures of geopolitical competition or integration to world-economy by restructuring the domestic socio-political and institutional structures.¹⁰⁸ In other words, the state is seen as the essential modernizer of the society as a response to the external variables because of the fallacy of assessing the early-modern state formation within the concepts of modernization theory and the modern standards of the nation-state.¹⁰⁹

This focus on the State and the external factors are cut loose from their social-historical preconditions by failing to address the social contents of the Ottoman transformation. Therefore, we must reconnect the social content of the transformation to the external dynamics with the internal social property relations that made it necessary for conflictual strategies of reproduction for the pre-capitalist Ottoman classes: which is possible with the concept of *geo-political accumulation*. In the pre-capitalist social formations, the class relations were never economic, but they depended on the social-property relations predicated upon the possession of the means of political accumulation or violence that structured the relations of exploitation between major classes.¹¹⁰ The social-property relations explain the political-institutional structures, conditioning the conflictual and competitive relations of reproduction and surplus appropriation among different classes, which occurred between domestic and international geopolitical scales. In this respect, the social relations of the uneven and combined development of the Ottoman transformation and state-formation processes were predicated on the specific social-property relations, mediating the relations between the major Ottoman classes and strategic groups whose balances of forces find its expression in the politically constituted institutions setting the parameters for class-specific, conflictual rules and strategies of reproduction appeared in different dynamics of political conflicts. From this point of view, the Ottoman transition or/and stages of state-formation processes, including different crises and regime-building strategies, have to be sought in the nexus between internal class structures and relations (i.e., the different composition, hierarchy, and consensus among ruling classes; the organization of direct producers) including both the vertical and horizontal conflicts over the means of exploitation and (re)distribution whose outcome

¹⁰⁸ İslamoğlu-İnan, *The Ottoman Empire and the World-Economy*.

¹⁰⁹ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 8–9.

¹¹⁰ Brenner, "The Agrarian Roots," 236–46; Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 47–54.

depended on the balances of class forces and mediated by the international geo-political competition (i.e., wars, diplomatic relations, geopolitical pressures).

1.1.1.1. *The Ottoman Geopolitical Accumulation Regime: Conquest and Integration*

The classical Ottoman society constituted a system of agrarian production based on peasant labor in which the fundamental sources of wealth were land and peasant surplus. The Ottoman lands were regarded as the property of the dynasty or imperial 'state' (*miri*), ensuring the rights of banning, taxing, commanding, decreeing, and adjudicating the land. This right provided an illusion that the unitary state and its authority delegated to the *askeri* class as representatives of the sultan's power were the essence of classical Ottoman formation.¹¹¹ However, the orthodox arguments of the 'strong state tradition' and *reaya-askeri* division, which imply a classless society with a unified *ruling class*, hinder the intra-ruling class conflict, thus requiring a more refined framework.¹¹² The peasants formed subsistence communities by possessing the means of production within the *miri* system, which granted the right to individual use of state lands workable with a pair of oxen (*çift-hane*).¹¹³ Due to the peasant possession of the means of production, the social-property relations developed over the ownership of the conditions of exploitation. Lack of possession of the means of production, the Ottoman ruling classes reproduced themselves primarily by the extra-economic appropriation of peasant surplus through political, legal, administrative, and military means, which forced them to invest in their means of coercion. Therefore, the domestic class struggle over the share and distribution of social surplus was played out in the political sphere, i.e., the state and its politico-administrative and economic offices.

The basic unit of the Ottoman system fusing the economic and the political was the *timars* (fiefs: nonhereditary fiscal units). The *timar* was not only an agrarian economic unit but also a unit of political and military power as the *timar* was delegated as an office whose holders appropriated the land in tenure with politically constituted rights to exploit the peasant surplus by taxation on the condition of fulfilling military and administrative obligations to the palace. Therefore, the *timar*

¹¹¹ In this framework, the main division of society was drawn between the *reaya* and *askeri* classes: *askeri* corresponded to non-taxed ruling elite administering public service (including the military groups and the *ulema*, religious establishment), while *reaya* were the direct producers and the main tax base of the empire. See, Halil İnalcık, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-160," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Ahmet Tabakoğlu, *Toplu Makaleler: İktisat Tarihi* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2005), 26–30.

¹¹² Suraiya Faroqhi, "In Search of Ottoman History," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 18, no. 3–4 (April 1991): 234.

¹¹³ İnalcık, "The Ottoman State: Economy and Society, 1300-160," 146.

was a conditional and revocable property that gave its holders a legal right to exploit the land and peasant. In other words, rather than a unit of production, *timar* was a unit of distribution that was never separated from its means of administration and coercion. In the absence of private ownership or salary, the *timarli-sipahis* (fief-holders) were not state functionaries but representatives of the sultan's authority, who had to secure their reproduction by political accumulation, i.e., investing in the means of coercion or violence (i.e., *timariot cavalries*). Since the ruling class reproduced themselves based on political accumulation thanks to their access to means of violence, the political power dispersed among the ruling classes and became the sphere of struggle.

In this sense, the imperial center did not have a monopoly over the means of violence but was able to impose a consensus among the ruling classes constituting the power bloc with its capacity of renewing and distributing the political power and surplus and its legitimacy on peasants through the regulation of necessary provisions. However, this relative centralized power to reproduce the hierarchy and control among the ruling classes did not point out 'tributary mode of (re)production' because classical Ottoman politics depended upon the reproduction of a conditional hierarchical organization of power by the imperial 'state' contained both vertical and horizontal relations of contradiction, subordination, solidarity, and coordination among differentiated bearers of political power.¹¹⁴ In this hierarchical structure, the power bloc was constituted through a consensus depending on a distinct share and division of political competencies, powers, and peasant surplus between the imperial center and the local dominant classes who emerged as a coercive power to impose extra-economic surplus extraction to the direct producers. Therefore, politically legitimate violence secured the power of the ruling classes against the peasants and the imperial center. In this sense, Ottoman centralization of the classical age included its own class-bound system of the rotation of appointments to *timars* which gave the ruling class a sense of unity, confidence, and coercive power to exploit the peasants and discourage local resistance.¹¹⁵

The reproduction of the ruling classes depended on the different levels of class conflicts in the share or re-distribution of peasant surplus as circumscribed by the balance of class forces. However, this structure contained the seeds of class conflict because it was conditioned by the

¹¹⁴ Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 47 and 71.

¹¹⁵ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 12–13.

limits of the long-term productivity growth in the agrarian economy, which formed a pressure for ruling class reproduction. This pressure led the Ottoman ruling classes to further re-invest in the means of violence to intensify the domestic exploitation or/and expand the surplus base through external geo-political and military competition, which was reflected in the cycles of conquest and redistribution. Therefore, the consensus among the ruling classes kept safe with the wars, expansions, and redistribution of surplus or wealth, which made the classical Ottoman Empire “a conquest state,” depending on the logic of geo-political accumulation. The mechanisms of geo-political accumulation depended on increasing absolute surplus and accumulating wealth from conquered lands as a means of ruling class reproduction.¹¹⁶ The wars and conquests not only brought about the share of the contraband of war among the ruling class but also provided the material conditions for the reproduction of the ruling class with the new lands included in the *timar system* and a new taxable population.

Consequently, the internal social-property settlement within the *timar system* and the expansionary strategy of geo-political accumulation provided the social formation of the classical Ottoman Empire. The specific dynamics of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime produced divergent relations of consensus and conflicts and their uneven and combined developments in different regions concerning different class structures. The conquered regions were integrated into the Ottoman power bloc hierarchy through different techniques ranging from eradication, accommodation, or co-optation of the conquered local nobility by managing their differences and diversity under the concept of *istimalet* (a policy of accommodation).¹¹⁷ Moreover, the syncretic approach to religion made the participation of different elements into the system.¹¹⁸ Therefore, the pushes of the intra-ruling class conflict were balanced with a consensus and hierarchy of power bloc on sharing the sources of revenues through a limited number of public service appointments relatively equally and based on merit, which depended on the imperial ability of conquest.¹¹⁹ The fact that the methods of increasing absolute surplus value and its political accumulation were feasible, especially with conquests, decreased the need to intensify the

¹¹⁶ Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 83; Darling, “Another Look at Periodization in Ottoman History,” 25.

¹¹⁷ Halil İnalcık, “Ottoman Methods of Conquest,” *Studia Islamica* 2 (1954): 103–29; Karen Barkey, *Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1–50.

¹¹⁸ Tijana Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

¹¹⁹ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 59.

exploitation of the peasants and prevented the class conflict among the dominant classes and the direct producers. Indeed, the idea that the Ottoman empire had an ideology of protecting the peasants against *timar*-holders as representative of the imperial state and that the Ottomans were a classless society stems from this ability of the ruling class.

1.1.2. *The Old Regime and Albanians: Accommodation Strategy*

The conquest and integration of Albanian territories into the Ottoman geo-political regime constitute a clear example of the accommodation policies and socio-religious syncretism through which the Albanian ruling classes were integrated into the Ottoman power bloc. Before the Ottoman conquest, the Albanian lands were divided into two main territories consisting of different geographical, socio-political, and economic characteristics. The mountainous regions north of the river were populated by the highlander tribal groups called the Malisors, who were organized along a clan-based system revolved around *fises* (tribe) based on a family organization ruled by tribal chiefs who were generally the oldest male of the parental generation. Several tribes coalesced into a *bajrak* (clan) which was a territorial-political unit in which each tribe assumed the control of a territory, while non-members were excluded from possessing a land.¹²⁰ These units were governed by the *bajraktar* (chieftain) within the particular customs and regulations, such as the unwritten customary law called the Code of *Lek Dukagjini*. This code had a juridical value in the mountain regions of the north, which settled the matters of law with *besa* (word of honor).¹²¹ As the natural outcome of the mountainous region, agriculture was very limited in northern Albania; thus, the livelihood of the tribes depended on livestock, raiding, and mercenary activities. The limited sources of revenue led the *bajraks*, including Shale, Shosh, Shkrel, Grude, Kastrot, Hoti, Klementi, and Pulati, to compete with each other by developing different alliances (*miqesi*) or *tarafs* (fraction), which made the feuding and vendetta as the traditional way of intra-ruling class competition.¹²² In this respect, the tribal groups invested in means of violence as the primary reproduction strategy, which has been the decisive factor in the balance of class forces in the pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Albanian provinces.

¹²⁰ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 17.

¹²¹ Stavro Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1967), 12–15.

¹²² Clayer, 17

Unlike the northern parts, the central and southern parts of the Albanian provinces consisted of lowland territories in which agrarian relations dominated the socio-political and economic structure. Except for scattered tribes around central parts of Kurvelesh and Himare, the southern territories consisted of agricultural units in which peasant producers were exploited within serfdom relations in the estates of feudal landowning families, among which the bigger ones such as Balshaj, Thopia, Dukagjini, Muzaka, Arianiti, and Kastrioti linked to the lesser lords.¹²³ The ethno-religious affiliation in these territories was also very complex; due to the 1054 schism, most of the north consisted of Catholic people, while Orthodox Christianity was more common in the South.¹²⁴

When the Ottoman empire conquered Albanian territories, the imperial center faced these two powerful regional powers of tribal organizations and aristocratic families. These groups demonstrated initial seigneurial resistances and revolts against the Ottoman authority, such as the movement of George Kastrioti Skenderbeg, who attempted to mobilize the feudal families and tribal groups against the empire. Despite attaining direct or tacit support from neighboring states and some groups among the ruling classes, the Skenderbeg rebellion failed to create a united movement because of the intra-ruling class competition in which many Albanian ruling classes developed strategies of preserving their local powers rather than uniting against the Ottoman regime. Some even cooperated with the Ottomans against Skenderbeg's struggle to establish his absolute authority in the Albanian region.¹²⁵ Along with the intra-ruling class competition, this situation resulted from the successful accommodation policy, which enabled the imperial center to integrate the dispersed tribal organizations and feudal landowning families into the imperial power bloc. Especially in the central and southern parts of the region, the former Albanian feudal landowners were integrated into the hierarchy of the power bloc by being assigned with *timar* holding in return for recognizing the imperial authority.¹²⁶ Although the *timar system* imposed some restrictions on their land tenure system, it enabled these feudal elements to preserve their ownership of the conditions of exploitation and reproduction through the politically constituted

¹²³ Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 20.

¹²⁴ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 7.

¹²⁵ İnalçık, Halil, "Arnavutluk'ta Osmanlı Hakimiyeti'nin Yerleşmesi ve İskender Bey İsyanının Menşei," in *Fatih ve İstanbul* (İstanbul, 1953), 158.

¹²⁶ Halil İnalçık, *Fatih Devri Üzerine Tetkikler ve Vesikalar Cilt 1* (Ankara: TTK, 1987), 164.

rights of *timar*-ownership.¹²⁷ Moreover, the syncretic understanding of religion made integration easier because conversion to Islam was not obligatory for Albanian feudal lords to be assigned as *timar* holders. To illustrate, in the record books of *timars*, more than seventy percent of the *timars* were held by Albanians in southern and central Albania, and some were recorded as Christian.¹²⁸

Unlike the landed classes, the tribal groups in the mountainous regions in the northern territories to whom the *timar* system failed to reach were granted relative autonomy in return for recognizing imperial sovereignty, paying a tribute of tax, and functioning as auxiliary troops.¹²⁹ Therefore, the tribal groups secured their traditional regulations and laws, such as the Code of Lek Dukagjini, and their control over the means of violence. The logic of geo-political accumulation strategy constituted the basis of this consensus: while the tribal groups secured their control over the means of violence, which ensured their reproduction through plundering and further invasions, the imperial center benefitted from the tribal groups in order both to secure its Western borderline and new conquests towards Adriatic coast.¹³⁰ In this respect, the different class structures and balance of class forces in Albanian territories created different patterns of integration into the hierarchical organization of the imperial power bloc. While the tribal groups were incorporated within a privileged status by preserving their traditional regulations and means of violence, the landed classes were well integrated into the Ottoman power bloc, which was reflected in the extensive conversion into Islam for the part of the landed classes.¹³¹ The Bektashi version of Islam, which was pantheistic and easy to adapt, prevailed in the Albanians, making inroads into the *devsirme* system.¹³² As a result, many converted Tosk Albanians reached high positions in provincial administration, military posts, and high bureaucracy in the imperial service by the reign of Mehmed II onwards, and even as grand viziers like the Koprulu family.¹³³

¹²⁷ Bozbor, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 53–54.

¹²⁸ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 5–6.

¹²⁹ Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century Vol.2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 83; Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 43–44.

¹³⁰ Bozbor, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 79.

¹³¹ Peter Bartl, *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, trans. Ali Taner (İstanbul: Bedir, 1998), 26–27.

¹³² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 21.

¹³³ There are many grand viziers of Albanian origin, such as Ayas Mehmed Pasha (1536-39), Kara Ahmed Pasha (1553-55), Semiz Ali Pasha (1561-65 and 1579-80), Koca Sinan Pasha (1580-82 and 1589-91 and 1593-95), Kemankes Kara Mustafa Pasha (1638-44) and the Köprülü vizierial dynasty (1656-1683), Giritli Mustafa Naili Pasha (1853-54 and 1857), Avlonyalı Mehmed Ferid Pasha (1903-1908).

1.2. The Crisis of Ottoman Geo-Political Regime: Extension of Power Bloc towards the Provinces

1.2.1. A New Hierarchy among Ottoman Ruling Class: “*grandee politics*”

While geo-politically constituted property regimes institutionalized the social conflicts along with divergent class strategies, they were contested in times of crisis. The Ottoman external conquests slowed down and turned into defensive wars in the face of geopolitical competition with similar early modern state-formations in the neighboring Habsburgs and Safavids, which intensified with the price revolution and military technologies around the 17th century. Thus, the Empire experienced a fiscal crisis due to the increasing military expenditures and taxation from the late sixteenth century onwards.¹³⁴ The limits for increasing the absolute surplus with the international geo-political balance also brought a gradual decline in the ruling class capacity for surplus extraction. The decreasing of conquests deteriorated the consensus among Ottoman ruling-classes by increasing the intra-ruling class conflict and competition over the terms, share, and the distribution of the means of appropriation, which concentrated on the state-sanctioned rights and privileges over taxation. In other words, the internal redistribution of resources and jurisdiction emerged as the logical alternative to external conquests for the Ottoman ruling classes. The fiscal and reproductive crises resulted in intense experimentation with taxation through shifting from taxation in kind to taxation in cash. Together with the central treasury's insatiable demand for cash and the given level of exploitation moved away from meeting the demands of money, caused the erosion of the older consensus depending on a relatively equal share of surplus within the *timar* system.¹³⁵

The struggle appeared in the vertical conflict between the court factions including high-ranking bureaucrats, *devsirme* groups, and business elites who tended to possess extensive sources of revenue depending on their positions in the palace and the local factions including *timar* owners, former aristocratic elements of conquered lands, and horizontal conflicts between *sipahis* and the janissaries within the army. Therefore, the intra-ruling class conflict over the control and distribution of internal surplus transformed the composition and organization of the Ottoman

¹³⁴ Linda T. Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy: Tax Collection and Finance Administration in the Ottoman Empire, 1560-1660* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996), 81; Halil İnalcık, “Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700,” *Archivum Ottomanicum* 6 (1980): 311.

¹³⁵ Salzman, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, 206; Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 59.

power bloc as well as intensified the exploitation of direct producers.¹³⁶ Consequently, the court factions cooperated with the janissary factions in the military and corroded the power of the local factions. Therefore, the Janissaries became the striking power and the side of intra-ruling class competition that transformed the political field in the empire.¹³⁷ The *timarli sipahis* losing their capacities of reproduction mobilized the peasants dealing with the intensified exploitation against the court faction, which struck the Ottoman countryside in the form of *Celali Rebellions* in the 17th century.¹³⁸ In this respect, despite the *Celali Rebellions* were the reflection of intra-ruling class conflict, their forms and characters depended on the strategies and forms of peasants' resistance against the ruling classes. The peasant producers developed three primary forms of resistance to exploitation: joining the military ranks, withdrawing their labor power through flight, or direct resistance to tax payment. In this respect, rather than the determinant impact of external factors of trade¹³⁹, military revolution, or ecological and demographical processes, the dialectic of internal and external dynamics of class conflict and exploitation, which were embodied in specific forms of crisis, provides the analytical framework to make sense of the dynamics of the crisis and change. Therefore, the crisis of the old regime can be understood as the reflection of the first (between the ruling and productive classes) and the second (intra-ruling) levels of class conflicts which were mediated by the inter-ruling class conflicts taking the form of geopolitical competition.

The social crises provided the conditions for structural change by crystallizing competitive social interests. After the crisis, the imperial center introduced the *iltizam* (tax-farming) system as a strategy of income provision, which provided new income opportunities both for the central and provincial factions of dominant classes in the form of office venality. The tax-farming system was a system of selling the offices, ranks, titles, customs revenues, and, more importantly, the right of tax collection (*mukataa*) to private investors in return for cash for the treasure.¹⁴⁰ In other words,

¹³⁶ Taner Timur, *Osmanlı Toplumsal Düzeni* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2001), 135; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2012), 94–96.

¹³⁷ Suraiya Faroqhi, "Crisis and Change: 1590-1699," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire: 1300-1914*, ed. Halil İnalcık and Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 413–15.

¹³⁸ Oktay Özel, "The Reign of Violence, The Celalis 1550-1700," in *The Ottoman World* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 185.

¹³⁹ İslamoğlu argued that the tendency to meet the commercial demands of market society was the main dynamic for the dissolution of timar system in favor of tax-farming. See Huricihan İslamoğlu-İnan, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Devlet ve Köylü* (İstanbul: İletişim yayınları, 2010), 51–61.

¹⁴⁰ Şevket Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türkiye İktisadi Tarihi 1500-1914* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 148.

it implies that the imperial state shared and transferred its extractive powers to private financiers. Hence, the state offices became a commodity that brought not only a source of wealth and capital investment but also a means of political power and influence. Given the commodified nature of the offices, they were sold and traded among investors by auctions. The individuals who obtained the tax-farming leases (*mültezims*) paid the revenue in advance and performed relative private ownership for a certain period.¹⁴¹ The commodification of the lands with the *tax-farming system* went hand in hand with the *çiftlik* (farms) processes, where the relations of production were subjected to change. In some *ciftliks*, the employment of the paid-workers became the dominant form of relations, while some lands were loaned out to cultivators or sharecroppers.¹⁴² However, this process did not bring a considerable reorganization of labor or a significant intensification of production since the social-property relations in the *çiftliks* were marked by political accumulation rather than capital investments.¹⁴³ Still, these changes paved the way for further establishment of the commodification of land and experimentation with revenue extraction towards monetarization, which transformed the composition and hierarchy of the ruling classes as well as their capacity of reproduction.¹⁴⁴

Unlike the *timar system* in which offices were shared among the ruling class based on relative equality and merit, the *iltizam system* and *ciftliks* intensified the offices in the hand of some groups of the ruling class organized in the bureaucracy. Many big villages, lands, and *çiftliks* were assigned as the sources of revenue for grandees (high-ranking bureaucrats in central government, royal favorites, and their dependents) in different forms like *arpaliks* (fiefs of barley) or tax-farming leases. While the *timarlı sipahis* and *kapi kullari* (standing army) lost their power and share over the surplus, a collective leadership based on a civilian oligarchy, institutionalized as vizier and pasha households, consolidated their power and control in the Ottoman polity with their

¹⁴¹ Mustafa Akdağ, "Osmanlı Tarihinde Ayanlık Düzeni Devri," *DTCF Tarih Araştırmaları Dergisi* 8, no. 14 (1963): 51.

¹⁴² Keyder, Çağlar, "Introduction: Large-Scale Commercial Agriculture in the Ottoman Empire?," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 1–4; Gilles Veinstein, "On the Ciftlik Debate," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 37–38; Halil İnalcık, "The Emergence of Big Farms, Çiftliks: State, Landlords, and Tenants," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 23–27; Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türkiye İktisadi Tarihi*, 157–58.

¹⁴³ Veinstein, "On the Ciftlik Debate," 27–49.

¹⁴⁴ Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire*, 19–39.

access to the tenure of offices.¹⁴⁵ The rising power of the grandees and their condensation in provinces symbolized a political and institutional change revolving around a new consensus among the ruling classes with the emergence of a more centralized power bloc. Therefore, by the end of the seventeenth century, about forty households in Istanbul controlled more than half of the appointments to government positions such as high offices and imposed their style of governance on the provinces, which is called “grandee politics.”¹⁴⁶

Although some claimed that the *iltizam* system was a sign of decline since it decentralized the authority by transferring the means of political accumulation toward provinces, the imperial center absorbed and integrated the provincial dominant classes into the new power bloc through private shares in public power, while at the same time, maximized, secured, and predicted its tax revenue.¹⁴⁷ In other words, this change corresponded to a transformation from an absolutist-patrimonial “conquest-state” to a tax/office state, which found its expression in the dominance of the tax-farming system.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, the new system brought about a new hierarchy and consensus with the changes in the constellations or balance of class forces which intensified the accumulation of the surplus in the hand of “grandees” with the institutionalization and legalization of office venality as forms of early modern government in a regime of geo-political accumulation.¹⁴⁹ In this hierarchy, the vizier and pashas founded their own household-like network in which the local landed classes who mediated between the central interests and the local dominant classes were linked to the grandees as lesser tax-farmers or subcontractors.¹⁵⁰ As grandees resided in Istanbul and were far from their sources of revenue, they were marginalized in provincial affairs; thus, they systematically empowered and relied on provincial notables (ayans) as deputies (*mütesellims*) for the collection and delivery of the revenues as well as administration

¹⁴⁵ Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, “The Ottoman Vezir and Paşa Households 1683-1703: A Preliminary Report,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 4 (October 1974): 439–46.

¹⁴⁶ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 45.

¹⁴⁷ Darling, *Revenue-Raising and Legitimacy*, 119–21.

¹⁴⁸ Suraiya Faruqi, “Empires before and after the Post-Colonial Turn: The Ottomans,” in *Beyond Dominant Paradigms in Ottoman and Middle Eastern/North African Studies: A Tribute to Rifa’at Abou-El-Haj* (Istanbul: İSAM Yayınları, 2010), 57–77.

¹⁴⁹ Salzmänn, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, 206; Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 59.

¹⁵⁰ Darling, Linda T., “Public Finances: The Role of the Ottoman Centre,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3 1603-1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 26.

of the units in their absence by selling the position on short-term contracts.¹⁵¹ In this sense, rather than contributing to political decentralization or disaffection, the politics of grandee fostered a distinct form of socio-political integration –vertically, grandee households in Istanbul cultivated extensive networks across the empire to manage their assets; and horizontally, the provincial ruling class invested in smaller-scale tax farming and contractorship as means of creating spheres of influence within cities and the countryside.¹⁵² It means that the new consensus expanded the political society with networks linking different ruling class groups into a power bloc. As Salzmänn underlines it, tax-farming fostered a complex circuitry of redistribution and fiscal patronage that bound members of grantees, the ulema, and other factions of the ruling class to one another.¹⁵³

1.2.2. *Competition and Reorganization among Ottoman Ruling-Class: “politics of notables”*

Eventually, the leasing or patronage system involving grandee households and local ruling classes generated a secondary apparatus consisting of thousands of contractors across the imperial provinces. This new group of local office-holders, who more directly supervised the process of surplus extraction as agents of the grantees, further invested in the field of tax-farming, which decentralized the distribution of resources through provinces.¹⁵⁴ As a natural outcome of the spread of brokerage, the excessive control and regulation over the tax-collection system increased the socio-political power and material base of the provincial ruling classes, which provided them opportunities to extend their power and influence. These provincial notables, called *ayan*, came from diverse origins, mainly from local landed families, regional governors (i.e., heads of the district or provincial governors), *devsirme* groups (i.e., janissaries), *ulema* groups (i.e., judges, religious scholars) and wealthy merchants or bankers who gradually combined the functions in all of these fields.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, these groups formed different alliances through marriage or joint

¹⁵¹ Ali Yaycıoğlu, “Provincial Power-Holders and the Empire in the Late Ottoman World: Conflict or Partnership?,” in *The Ottoman World* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 444; Robert Zens, “Provincial Powers: The Rise of Ottoman Local Notables,” *History Studies* 3, no. 3 (n.d.): 437–41.

¹⁵² Salzmänn, *Tocqueville in the Ottoman Empire*, 11.

¹⁵³ Salzmänn, 78–92.

¹⁵⁴ Yerasimos, *Az gelişmişlik Sürecinde Türkiye 2: Tanzimat’tan I. Dünya Savaşı’na*, 479; Yücel Özkaya, “XVIII. Yüzyılda Mütesellimlik Müessesesi,” *Ankara Üniversitesi DTCF Dergisi* 18, no. 3–4 (1977): 368–85.

¹⁵⁵ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 16.

investments in tax-farming leases.¹⁵⁶ The growing monetarization of the economy with the privatization and commodification of land and revenues through the spread of tax-farming provided the local ruling classes with opportunities to increase their control over the process of surplus extraction from peasantry and their accumulation from taxation and trade.¹⁵⁷

The rise of *ayans* brought about a profound crisis of intra-ruling class solidarity with the competition over the tax-farmership or sub-contractorship as the primary source of power and exploitation, which led to the gradual disintegration of the power bloc and the imperial authority.¹⁵⁸ The consequent corrosion of intra-ruling class consensus and hierarchy was manifested by a growing decentralization of socio-political authority, and the share and distribution of resources in favor of local dominant classes.¹⁵⁹ The commodification of governmental posts such as *sancak beyi* (heads of a district), *valilik* (governorships), or socio-economic positions such as *voyvoda*, *muhasıl* enabled local ruling classes to further consolidate their material underpinnings and socio-political power and domination by assuming provincial offices.¹⁶⁰ In other words, the extra-economic powers of accumulation were decentralized toward the provincial ruling classes. As a result, this process corresponded to a breaking point that had a determinant impact on the composition of the ruling class structure and the balance of class forces, as well as the main characteristics of Ottoman polity, which constituted the essential mechanism of the transformation from “politics of grandee” to “politics of notables.”¹⁶¹

As the local dominant classes relied more on office ownership rather than absolute property as a source of profit, they tended to strengthen their means of political accumulation to extract peasant surplus in the form of taxation. Together with the permanent war-state, fiscal crisis, and the increasing power of the *ayans* intensified the super-exploitation of the peasantry through excessive taxation in order to maximize their short-term profit, which generated a deterioration in agricultural production and peasant discontent.¹⁶² This dual process triggered the militarization of

¹⁵⁶ Zens, “Provincial Powers: The Rise of Ottoman Local Notables,” 436.

¹⁵⁷ Ariel Salzmann, “An Ancien Régime Revisited: ‘Privatization’ and Political Economy in the Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire,” *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993): 393–423.

¹⁵⁸ Zens, “Provincial Powers: The Rise of Ottoman Local Notables,” 439–41.

¹⁵⁹ Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 13–14 and 37–40 and 60.

¹⁶⁰ Darling, Linda T., “Public Finances: The Role of the Ottoman Centre,” 126.

¹⁶¹ Albert Hourani, “Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: The Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 41–68.

¹⁶² Pamuk, *Osmanlı-Türkiye İktisadi Tarihi*, 148–49.

provinces. On the one hand, the increasing intra-ruling class conflict caused local dominant classes to surround themselves with expanding militia groups to further strengthen their means of coercion; on the other hand, the class conflict led peasants either to resist taxation or to enter into military service by forming banditry groups or joining the service of the dominant classes as a way out of exploitation. The imperial center attempted to balance this conflict by converting the tax-farming into a life-long period, within the *malikane system*, in 1695.¹⁶³

The *malikane* contracting was a form of fiscal privatization depending on the commodification of the land through which the imperial state reduced its redistributive privileges in the renegotiation of the terms of political authority.¹⁶⁴ In other words, the system rendered venal offices perpetual and hereditary privatized source of income through which the local dominant classes reproduced themselves via both land-rents and tax incomes. The system provided a higher degree of security and autonomy in the land tenure, patrimonialized with the rights of inheritance, for the children of the *malikane* holders were prioritized in the rebidding process.¹⁶⁵ Khory argued that the extension of proprietary rights with the *malikane system* brought local ruling classes into the power bloc through reorganization of its hierarchy by redefining the relations of (re)distribution of revenues in the empire towards provinces.¹⁶⁶ In other words, the *malikane system* extended the political society towards the provincial ruling classes, which increased their share and control over the surplus and political power by taking the lion's share from the revenues extracted from the most important and lucrative sources in the empire. In this respect, the increasing role of the provincial ruling classes within the Ottoman power bloc resulted from the competitive (re)distributionary strategies of ruling classes for surplus extraction. Nevertheless, the dual pressures of the domestic peasant resistance and external threats prevented the total fragmentation of the ruling classes. In this respect, the central government rested on the organization of power between the centrifugal tendencies of localized appropriation and centripetal tendencies of political

¹⁶³ Genç, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi*, 104; Şevket Pamuk, "The Evolution of Financial Institutions in the Ottoman Empire, 1600–1914," *Financial History Review* 11, no. 1 (2004): 16–17.

¹⁶⁴ Nadir Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli: Osmanlı'da Vergi, Siyaset ve Toplumsal Adalet (1839-1908)*, Birinci basım (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 2015); Halil İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700"; Salzmänn, "An Ancien Régime Revisited," 399–402.

¹⁶⁵ Halil İnalçık, "Military and Fiscal Transformation in the Ottoman Empire, 1600-1700," 329; Taner Güven, "Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Ayanlar, Sermaye Birikimi ve Girişimcilik," *Türkiye İslam İktisadı Dergisi* 3, no. 1 (2016): 70.

¹⁶⁶ Dina Rizk Khoury, "The Ottoman Centre versus Provincial Power Holders," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: The Later Ottoman Empire, Volume 3 1603-1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9–20 and 78.

consolidation, balanced by the fragile solidarity among the ruling classes for controlling peasantry and external conquest or defense.¹⁶⁷

However, as the *tax-farming* leases turned into an arena of intra-ruling class conflict and competition, the change in the balance of class forces contained a danger for the fragmentation of the power bloc. The intra-ruling class conflict forced powerful local dominant classes to further invest in the means of violence in the face of increasing competition. These groups integrated the irregular *sipahi*, brigandage forces, and the tribal groups in the frontier zones into their services. Such militias consisting of peasant and tribal groups, either as irregular troops in the service of local ruling classes or as independent cetes, increased the militarization of the provinces, especially in the Balkans. Faced with increasing geopolitical pressure with the ongoing rivalries and wars with the Habsburgs and Russians, the imperial state relied more on the power of the provincial dominant classes, not only for revenue extraction and internal security (i.e., combatting against brigandage or peasant rebellions) but also for providing armed forces for the war-making against external aggression of foreign powers. Especially after the incompetence of the Ottoman army in the 1768-74 Russo-Ottoman war, provincial powers who were able to recruit and lead private irregular troops assumed more political power and legitimacy.¹⁶⁸ Hence, the provincial ruling classes usurped the local political power depending on their 'private' lands and public offices, thereby building personal networks like households with socio-political and military power through relations of patronage, subcontracting, and alliance. In other words, the crises paved the way for the regionalization of political power and competencies.

These opportunity structures led some powerful local dominant classes to create *semi-autonomous regional regimes* by abusing their privileges by patrimonializing their estates and offices as non-revocable and hereditary *malikanes*, which provided their material basis for socio-political and special military power and domination. In other words, the imperial aristocracy of service turned into a kind of feudal aristocracy in its own right by acquiring a local power base. The *regional regimes* were organized around the families of influential provincial notables, which were surrounded by a larger household community, generally termed *kapı halkı* (community of the gate), which included servants; household officers such as a treasurer, secretaries, and

¹⁶⁷ Teschke, *The Myth of 1648*, 63–64.

¹⁶⁸ Yücel Özkaya, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Âyânlık* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi, 1977), 156.

stewards; and armed militia units under the command of various captains as well as different groups of partners, supporters, clients and allies such as lesser families, tribal groups, local communities.¹⁶⁹ These dynastic regimes, such as ‘Azm in Hama in Damascus, Hasan Pasha and his son Ahmet Pasha in Baghdad, Ahmet Cezzar Pasha of Akka, the Karaosmanoğlu family in western Anatolia, Pasvandoğlu Osman in Vidin, Caniklioglu Tayyar in Trabzon, Çapanoğlu in Çorum-Yozgat, Karaosmanoğlu in Manisa, Tirsiniklioğlu of Ruse (later Alemdar Mustafa), Mehmed Ali Pasha in Egypt, Ali Pasha in southern Albania, and Bushati family in northern Albania, became the prime actors in Ottoman socio-political life.

Therefore, the rise of regional regimes corroded the central power with a thorough fragmentation and regionalization of power which ended the existing ruling-class hierarchy and solidarity by turning these regimes into potential rivals against both the imperial center and each other. Still, the reorganization of hierarchy among ruling classes and the characters of *pashalik regimes* developed socio-temporarily uneven regarding regional variations depending on different class structures and strategies of surplus appropriation. For instance, while some of these regimes monopolized the means of political accumulation within a vertical hierarchy and even engaged in their own foreign policies, such as the regime of Ali Pasha of Janina, some regimes were organized within a horizontal hierarchy as stable alliances like the Bushati regime of Shkoder. Moreover, the degree of power and integration of the semi-autonomous forces such as tribal groups and armed *cetes* greatly impacted the regional variations and strategies of each provincial regime.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, these groups played critical roles in every socio-political conflict in the empire, such as international warfare, intra-ruling class competition over surplus extraction, raising, quelling, policing rebellions, and nationalization.¹⁷¹ In this framework, the different characteristics of the Bushati and Ali Pasha regimes affected the regional variations (i.e., class constellations and balances of class forces) that brought critical regional variations in the Albanian provinces appeared in divergent forms of political conflicts and regime-building strategies in the following centuries.

¹⁶⁹ Yaycioğlu, “Provincial Power-Holders and the Empire,” 441–42.

¹⁷⁰ Fikret Adanır, “Semi-Autonomous Forces in the Balkans and Anatolia,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 3 1603-1839* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 160–61.

¹⁷¹ Jane Hathaway, “Introduction,” in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 1–13.

1.2.3. *The Rise of Regional Regimes in Albania: Uneven Class Structures*

The seventeenth-century crisis was mostly felt in the southern parts of the Albanian provinces, where the *timar* system was the backbone of the reproduction of the ruling class. However, all of the Albanian ruling classes, including tribal groups, had their shares in the crisis of geo-political accumulation since the ‘warlike Albanians’ who were renowned for their contribution to the military campaigns until the seventeenth century, started to decline from the power as well as from their sources of revenues. Consequently, the decline in the sources of ruling class income increased the intra-ruling class conflict and competition over the share and distribution of surplus in the Albanian provinces. While the *timar holders* attempted to compensate for their loss by intensifying the exploitation of peasants in the southern territories, the reproductive crisis accelerated the traditional competition and rivalries in the northern regions within the form of inter-*fise* feuds.

The introduction of the *tax-farming system* caused further conflict and competition among the *timar-holders*, consisting mainly of tribal chiefs, landed families and urban notables, to obtain tax-farming contracts of their former *timars* and the ones which belonged to their rivals.¹⁷² Therefore, the intra-ruling class conflict and competition over the tax-farmership as the primary source of power and exploitation or income transformed the composition and hierarchy of the Albanian ruling classes. Thanks to their connections in the imperial center and extensive *timars*, some of the greater landed families, such as Arslanpashalıs, Libohovas, and Vlores in Janina; Begollis in Pec, Dukagjins in Shkoder, Hoxhollis in Debar, dominated the tax-farming leases as well as commercial activities and local administrative positions which increased their capacity of surplus extraction and reproduction.¹⁷³ These groups imposed a new hierarchy and domination among the ruling classes in Albanian provinces by creating their network of cooperation with the lesser partners. Although most of the northern tribal organizations maintained their relative autonomy and privileged position, the inter-*fis* competition and *tarafs* (fractions or alliances) coincided with the family networks of the landed classes. These networks, which were not stable alliances but changing relations of interests and strategies depending on the personal, socio-economic, and political balance of power, marked the patterns of intra-ruling class conflict in the

¹⁷² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 16–19.

¹⁷³ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 23–25.

Albanian provinces.¹⁷⁴ In the same line with the general trend in the empire, there was no substantial difference in the conditions of Albanian peasants as they dealt with intensified exploitation. Therefore, the Albanian provinces witnessed small-scale insurrections ranging from peasant revolts against taxation and feudal dues levied by tax-farmers (the first level of class conflict) and intra-ruling class competition (the second level) throughout the eighteenth century.¹⁷⁵

The ongoing wars and occupations in the Ottoman Balkans intensified the intra-ruling class competition in the Albanian provinces, which went hand in hand with the militarization of the region.¹⁷⁶ Together with the increasing turmoil, the intra-ruling class conflicts and competition led some influential provincial notables in Albanian provinces to increase their power and position vis-à-vis their local rivals and imperial center. Consequently, the rise of two great *provincial dynastic regimes* by the second half of the eighteenth century in Southern and Northern Albania, namely Janina Pashalik of Ali Pasha (1788-1822) and Shkoder Pashalik of Mehmed Bushati (1757-1831) left critical marks in Albanian provinces.¹⁷⁷ By taking advantage of his local political power and the militarization of the provinces, Ali Pasha patrimonialized his land tenure and public office, around which he created a *dynastic provincial regime* similar to grandee households in Janina which became a major administrative center in the Adriatic world expanding from southern Albania to the Peloponnese and Thessaly by asserting his dominance over local dominant classes.¹⁷⁸ Ali Pasha monopolized the means of political accumulation by seizing the *timars* and farms, even some villages, in possession of himself and his household as tax-farming or *malikane/çiftliks* and built his personal network within a vertical hierarchy of patronage, subcontracting, and alliance with lesser partners.¹⁷⁹ Therefore, the centralized political strategy of accumulation in Ali Pasha's *regional regime* undermined the access of smaller landowning classes and tribal groups in the region to the political means of appropriation and created a gap between

¹⁷⁴ Clayer, 44.

¹⁷⁵ Bozbora, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 152–57.

¹⁷⁶ War with the Venetians 1715-1718, which ended the Venetians occupation of the Morea/Peloponnesus 1700-1715, War with the Habsburgs in 1716-1718, 1736-1739, 1788-1791 which resulted in the occupation of Belgrade 1716-1739, the Banat 1775 onwards, and Oroşova 1791-onwards, War with the Russians in 1711, 1736-1739, 1768-1774, 1787-1792. See Aksan, *Ottoman Wars, 1700-1870*.

¹⁷⁷ Frederick F. Anscombe, ed., *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830* (Princeton, N.J: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 87–113.

¹⁷⁸ Bozbora, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 128–30.

¹⁷⁹ Dimitris Dimitropoulos, "Aspects of the Working of the Fiscal Machinery in the Areas Ruled by Ali Paşa," in *Ottoman Rule and the Balkans, 1760 - 1850: Conflict, Transformation, Adaptation: Proceedings of an International Conference*. (Rethymno: Univ. of Crete, Dep. of History and Archaeology, 2007), 61–72.

the regime and the peasant population.¹⁸⁰ While this accumulation strategy constituted the socio-political power base of his regime, Ali pasha consolidated the regime militarily by employing Albanian tribal and brigandage groups in the service of his competition with rival local powers, such as Pasvandoglu and Bushatis, and the imperial center.¹⁸¹ Moreover, his prominent role in quelling the Serbian rebellion and his extensive politico-military power led him to rise within central politics when he was assigned as the governor of Rumelia in 1802. Ali Pasha, whom Lord Byron depicted as “the Muslim Bonaparte,” emerged as an influential international actor in the Balkans by engaging in personal international relations with different states.¹⁸² There was also a significant expansion of the Bektashi version of Islam in southern Albania during Ali Pasha regime, who is believed to have been a Bektashi himself.¹⁸³

In northern Albania, the conflict between two great families, Begolli and Chaously, in Shkoder paved the way for the Bushati family to come to power out of their conflict. Unlike the Janina regime, Bushatis founded a regime with horizontal hierarchy depending on a relatively stable alliance of the local ruling classes. Mustafa Bushati gained the support of powerful tribal groups, smaller landowning classes, and guilds of leather in his competition with the rival families in the region, which enabled him to take possession of the Shkoder governorship and the title of *pasha*.¹⁸⁴ After consolidating power around Shkoder, his regime expanded on the Adriatic coasts of the Gulf of Drin. Rather than a centralized political strategy of accumulation, Bushati shared the political means of appropriation with the lesser partners of the regime within horizontal relations in which the regime led the tribal and smaller landowning groups to preserve their existing lands and increase their power in the region by granting them with *tax-farmings/çiftlik*s to provide their support for the regime. Therefore, the regime depended on the dominant class solidarity with a decentralized political accumulation regime.¹⁸⁵ Coming from the background of a tribal family, the Bushati regime provided strong military power, especially during the time of Kara Mahmud Pasha, by increasing the role of the *bajraktars* on the battlefield.¹⁸⁶ However, this

¹⁸⁰ Süleyman Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk* (İzmir: Yeni Asır matbaası, 1944), 159.

¹⁸¹ Bozbora, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 128–30.

¹⁸² Yaycioğlu, “Provincial Power-Holders and the Empire,” 437–38.

¹⁸³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Stefanaq Pollo and Arben Puto, *The History of Albania: From Its Origins to the Present Day* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 95.

¹⁸⁵ Bozbora, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 122–25.

¹⁸⁶ Skendi, 14

regime strategy compelled the Bushati family to ensure the continuous cooperation of the dominant classes in the region, which limited their domination and strategies. To illustrate, Mahmud Bushati's efforts to extend the regime against the political center were sometimes limited by the opposition of his lesser partners since the regime needed their support.¹⁸⁷

Along with the rise of *regional dynastic regimes*, the Albanian provinces were increasingly militarized due to the intensification of class conflicts. While the tribal groups extended their control over the means of violence by participating in the networks of the *dynastic regimes*, the inter-*fis* competition as part of the intra-ruling class conflict intensified the militarization of Albanian provinces. Therefore, the intra-ruling class competition coincided with the logic of *taraf* (fractions or alliances) among the tribal groups. For instance, there were *fises* in Vlore separated between Ali Pasha Janina and Ibrahim Pasha of Vlore or villages separated between the alliances of Abdi Bey Toptani and Akif Pasa of Elbasan and Esad Pasa Toptani and Sevkete Bey Verlaci.¹⁸⁸ In addition, the peasants also got access to the means of violence by entering the service of the *dynastic regimes* as irregular troops as well as founding their own brigandage groups, called by different names such as *cetes*, *hayduts*, *klepths*, *armatolos*, by benefitting from the opportunities provided by international wars and the intra-ruling class conflict in the region.¹⁸⁹ Many of these groups consisted of *sipahi* or *levends* who had previously served as irregular soldiers in the Ottoman army. After their service in the military, they were employed by the *dynastic regimes* or acted independently. These groups consisted mainly of peasants, who banded together for the pursuit of protection and profit; still, they can also be regarded as “social bandits”¹⁹⁰ since they took up arms against unjust practices of intensified exploitation processes that challenged their moral economy.¹⁹¹ In this respect, these groups constituted a source of violence in the provinces and manpower for political conflicts, which sometimes took the form of nationalist movements.

¹⁸⁷ Bozborra, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 123.

¹⁸⁸ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 44.

¹⁸⁹ See Frederick F. Anscombe, “Albanians and ‘Mountain Bandits,’” in *The Ottoman Balkans, 1750-1830*, Anscombe, Frederick F. (Princeton: NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), 87–113.

¹⁹⁰ The point about social bandits is that they are peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions, avengers, fighters for justice, perhaps even leaders of liberation. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (New York: Penguin Books, 1971), 25.

¹⁹¹ E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,” *Past & Present* 60 (1971): 76–136.

For instance, these militarized peasants became the muscle of the Serbian and Greek revolts and the Ottoman troops trying to suppress these revolts.



Figure 1. Southern Brigandage group (by Paul Siebertz, before 1900) Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/siebertz/#top>

As a result, the rise of two great *provincial regimes* in the Albanian provinces brought about the reorganization of hierarchy among Albanian ruling classes, which caused a change in the balance of class forces that appeared in two uneven class structures. This division was presented in the contemporary and current sources along the *Gheg* (North)-*Tosk* (South) line, which corresponded to the Bushati and Janina regimes.¹⁹² Although the Gheg-Tosk division had a path-dependent¹⁹³ impact on the following dynamics of political conflicts predicated upon the divergent class structures in these regions, the complexity of class strategies in these conflicts made the Gheg-Tosk division an ill-defined concept.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 21.

¹⁹³ “The idea that the order in which things happen affects how they happen, that the trajectory of change up to a certain point itself constrains the trajectory beyond that point, that choices made at a particular moment eliminate whole ranges of possibilities from later choices...” Charles Tilly, “The Time of States,” *New School for Social Research* 61, no. 2 (1994): 270.

¹⁹⁴ For the further discussion of this complexity, see Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 20–29; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 20–36.

1.3. Crisis, Change, and State-Formation: New Hierarchy in the Power Bloc

In the Ottoman historiography, the trend towards decentralization with the rise of *regional regimes* was analyzed within “center-periphery” or “state-society” dichotomies, which attributed clear-cut distinction and inherent conflict and confrontation between the center (i.e., the state or bureaucracy) and periphery (i.e., provincial elites or society) as a zero-sum game within centralization versus decentralization.¹⁹⁵ Such dichotomic understandings were vested with a categorical problem of reducing the different forms of political conflicts into competing ideologies and an agency problem of creating a dichotomy between “state” and “society” or “nations.” In this framework, the eighteenth century of the Ottoman Empire was regarded as the decline in the state power with the rise of peripheral powers, while the nineteenth century was understood as the efforts to re-claim the political and economic control which found its expressions in the attempts of Ottoman reformers (i.e., state elites or bureaucrats) to build a state modeled after the nation-state.¹⁹⁶ However, the long nineteenth century of the Ottoman Empire was marked by the geo-political accumulation crisis in which the imperialist ‘great’ powers, Ottoman ruling classes, and peasants competed over scarce resources of the empire. This competition brought about different domestic dynamics of political conflict, including the struggle of provincial ruling classes against the political center and each other, peasant revolts against high tax ratio and dispossession, sectarian violence against the non-Muslim population, local resistances of tribal groups against taxation and conscription appeared in the form of banditry, and *chete* activities, which intertwined with the international geo-political dynamics and crisis congregated in “Eastern Question”.

The general social and political crises constituted the conditions of structural changes with the force of contradictory social interests depending on the balance of and hierarchy among different class forces constituting the political society. That being said, the trend towards decentralization with the rise of *regional regimes* should not be understood within “center-periphery” or “state-society” dichotomies since the political power and competencies were shared between different fractions of the ruling classes generating the power bloc. Rather than a direct controversy, the possibility of central government always rested on different consensus and

¹⁹⁵ Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?”; Halil İnalcık, “Centralization and Decentralization in Ottoman Administration,” in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History* (Carbondale IL, 1977), 27–52.

¹⁹⁶ Mardin, “Center-Periphery Relations: A Key to Turkish Politics?,” 173–75.

hierarchy among the ruling classes as they created a common interest uniting them against external threats and appropriation of peasant surplus whose share and distribution was the source of struggle. In this respect, the political decentralization with the rise of regional regimes was neither the result of institutional absences nor the signs of 'decline' but expressions of the specific Ottoman social-property regime and its forms of politics in which the reproductive crisis brought about intra-ruling class conflict over the political accumulation of land and peasant surplus. Therefore, the form of the 'state' and the following state-formation processes should be understood in light of social-property relations governing the (re)distributional conflicts and political relations among the major Ottoman classes rather than as state-society conflicts. In this respect, the state or regime-building strategies should be analyzed within the internationally-mediated internal class relations as the decisive factor in establishing the new strategies and institutions of reproduction and political domination.

1.3.1. The New Order Restoration: A Search for a New Consensus

The crisis of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime almost brought the political integrity of the empire into question. While the fragmentation of the ruling classes with the rise of regional regimes challenged the internal sovereignty of the imperial political center, the increasing geo-political competition, such as the Austro-Ottoman (1789-91) and Russo-Ottoman (1789-92) Wars, threatened the existence of the empire with the territorial losses. In relation to these dynamics, the militarization of the provinces through the proliferation of violence and banditry derived from the super-exploitation of peasants caused instability and insecurity in different regions. Therefore, the peasant producers, predominantly non-Muslim peasants in the Balkans who were exploited twice due to the categorical inequalities, created pressure towards extending the political society. Otherwise, the peasant unrest turned into rebellions, as in the case of the Serbian uprising of 1804, which materialized in the form of ethno-religious conflict.¹⁹⁷ Faced with losing its political authority and legitimacy, the Ottoman power bloc underwent a restoration process to overcome the external and internal dynamics of the crisis by re-establishing the fragmented power bloc and consolidating the existing political society.

¹⁹⁷ Robert Zens, "Pasvanoğlu Osman Paşa and the Paşalık of Belgrade, 1791-1807," in *Mutiny and Rebellion in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 92–94.

The restoration, called *Nizam-i Cedid* (New Order), policies implemented in Selim III's reign, tried to develop strategies to overcome each aspect of the crisis: it aimed to impose a new consensus on the fragmented power bloc, control militarization of the population and peasant uprisings, to face international pressure (mainly Russia, which after two disastrous wars emerged as the main threat to Ottoman power in Balkans). As an integral part of this aim, New Order dignitaries embarked on a restoration program to re-gain the control over the indirect-collective means of political accumulation by forming a new army and treasury. While the new army was a mechanism for imposing a new consensus and hierarch on the fragmented Ottoman power bloc by reorganizing the power balance among the ruling classes and for controlling the militarization of the provinces through conscription with the central monopoly over the means of violence, the new treasury was the mechanism of re-controlling privatized tax resources to increase the share of political center in the surplus extraction through redistribution of tax resources.¹⁹⁸ In addition to overcoming the domestic crisis, these changes were primary mechanisms to meet the imperatives of waging international wars in the face of increasing geopolitical competition. When the 1787-1792 Russo-Ottoman War demonstrated the inefficiency of Janissary troops and the dependence of the Ottoman army on the irregular troops of the regional regimes, the *Nizam-i Cedid* group decided to form new troops, known as "New Order troops," to consolidate its control over the violence. Subsequently, they created a new treasury, *Irâd-i Cedid* (New Revenues Treasury), which was charged with retaining *tax-farming* leases, state bonds, and the *timars* outside the existing *malikane system* as means of extending the revenue sources of the imperial center.¹⁹⁹ The government also granted the new treasury the authority to control and collect major tax resources on commodities such as alcoholic beverages, cotton, wool, and oak apple.²⁰⁰ This new treasury provided a political and economic power base for the restoration group by liquidating the power groups in opposition.²⁰¹

In this sense, the restoration strategy triggered new conflicts and opposition among the ruling class. By using its control over the redistribution of *timars* and tax-farms, the regime created

¹⁹⁸ Ali Yaycıoğlu, "Sened-i İttifak (1808): Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Bir Ortaklık ve Entegrasyon Denemesi," in *Nizâm-ı Kadîm'den Nizâm-ı Cedîd'e III. Selim ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2010), 670.

¹⁹⁹ Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli*, 46.

²⁰⁰ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2010), 45–46.

²⁰¹ Kemal Beydilli, "III. Selim: Aydınlanmış Hükümdar," in *Nizâm-ı Kadîm'den Nizâm-ı Cedîd'e III. Selim ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2010), 41.

a new faction among ruling classes who supported and took advantage of the restoration program, while others were eliminated from the power bloc and turned into opposition.²⁰² While the regime managed to integrate many lesser notables into a relatively centralized structure of rule and appropriation, the opposition against the New Order came from different groups within the ruling classes: the Janissaries, whose privileges and resources as the primary military power of the empire were threatened by the creation of the new army, bigger ulema groups in coalition with the former, and the grandees who were swept out of central politics.²⁰³ The position of provincial regimes were ambivalent toward the restoration program, which weakened the position of the *ulema* and the janissaries as their main rivals for power in the provinces. While the greater regional regimes in the Balkans, such as Pasvandoglu and Ali Pasha, resisted the extension of the restoration program towards their power base, others, mainly in Anatolia, were integrated into the new power bloc by sharing their local political power. Popular attitudes were also mixed, but the additional taxes levied on peasant producers to support the new treasury brought about popular discontent against the regime. Eventually, the coalition of the central segments of *ulema* and janissaries, who demanded the abolition of the new army and the discharge of the restoration group, dethroned Selim III and enthroned his cousin Mustafa IV in 1807.

The leading elements within the New Order group made a common cause with the provincial ruling classes and went under the protection of the most potent *ayan* in the Balkans, Alemdar Mustafa Pasha of Ruse, who had a well-equipped army of 30.000 men, which even enabled him to threaten the imperial capital.²⁰⁴ Alemdar Pasha was convinced that the reform program was necessary to preserve the imperial integrity against the double threats of domestic turmoil and partition from outside, which was only possible through a delicate consensus among the Ottoman ruling classes. For this reason, Alemdar Pasha and the remaining restoration group marched into the capital. Despite failing to prevent Selim's assassination, they deposed Mustafa IV and enthroned Sultan Mahmud II the throne, known as a reformist, by eliminating the janissary-backed ruling group. The leading role in the restoration program was assumed by Alemdar Pasha as grand vizier, indicating the participation of provincial ruling classes as transformative figures

²⁰² Yaycioğlu, "Sened-i İttifak (1808): Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda Bir Ortaklık ve Entegrasyon Denemesi," 682.

²⁰³ Mehmet Mert Sunar, "Ocak-ı Âmire'den Ocak-ı Mülgâ'ya Doğru: Nizâm-ı Cedîd Reformları Karşısında Yeniçeriler," in *Nizâm-ı Kadîm'den Nizâm-ı Cedîd'e III. Selim ve Dönemi* (İstanbul: ISAM Yayınları, 2010), 513.

²⁰⁴ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 56.

in imperial politics, marking the heyday of the provincial notables in the empire.²⁰⁵ Therefore, a new consensus was built among some segments of the provincial ruling classes and central government, which was reflected in the negotiation contract, participated by the representatives of provincial notables, leading grandees of the central government, dignitaries, and sultan Mahmud II in 1808, known as *Sened-i Ittifak* (the Deed of Alliance).

The contract reinforced the reform agenda with a new consensus among the ruling class in which the imperial center accepted the provincial dominant classes as the legitimate partners by sharing its sovereignty over the means of indirect-collective exploitation in return for their support in the continuity of the reforms, the well-being of sultanate and the integrity of the empire against international pressure. Moreover, the provincial notables promised to guarantee each other's personal safety and their families.²⁰⁶ In this sense, the imperial state officially accepted the process of privatization of the means the geo-political accumulation in return for the integration of provincial ruling classes into a power bloc to gain their support for preserving the continuity of the new regime against domestic and international conflict and competition. The contract implies that the Ottoman state neither belonged to the sultan nor the central bureaucracy but was an institutional ensemble based on the common interests and strategic orientations of the ruling classes.²⁰⁷ In other words, the contract reflected the mutual need for cooperation between the imperial center and the provincial ruling classes for their hold over the peasantry in times of increasing rebellions and their collective defense against external powers, which circumscribed the contradictory relations among the ruling classes over the rights of domination and exploitation.

However, this new consensus was far from embodying an important part of the ruling classes, and the imperial center was lack of an administrative and military organization to impose the new hierarchy on the fragmented ruling classes. Before long, Alemdar Pasha was killed by another Janissary revolt. The clearance of a strong contender on the political scene paved the way for Sultan Mahmud II to implement a more decisive program for a new regime-building. As the experiences of Selim III and Alemdar Pasha's fate showed, the regime-building process was impossible without eliminating the groups in the power bloc whose interests relied on the

²⁰⁵ Yaycıoğlu, "Provincial Power-Holders and the Empire," 449.

²⁰⁶ BOA. HH no: 35242 (October 1808) and Server Tanilli, *Anayasalar ve Siyasal Belgeler* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1976), 3–8. Yaycıoğlu, "Sened-i İttifak (1808)...", s. 706.

²⁰⁷ Yaycıoğlu, "Provincial Power-Holders and the Empire," 449.

privatization of the means of political accumulation. As the major challenge before this process, the imperial state attempted to impose a new hierarchy and consensus on the provincial regimes either integrating the local dominant classes into the hierarchy of a new power bloc depended on a more centralized structure of domination and appropriation either by cooperation or coercion. Therefore, the loyal provincial ruling classes, such as Cabbarzade and Karaosmanoglu families, turned into petty nobility by sharing their local political power with the central government in return for being integrated into the hierarchy of the power bloc. However, the stronger provincial ruling classes, generally *regional dynastic regimes* like Ali Pasha Janina, who resisted surrendering their means of political accumulation to the monopoly of the political center, were eliminated through coercion.²⁰⁸ In such cases, the elimination of provincial regimes turned into a campaign in which the regional variations, such as the relations with foreign powers, the class structure of the regime, and its military might, brought about different processes and outcomes. As discussed in the following, the uneven elimination processes of the Bushati and Janina regimes in Albanian provinces covered all these different dynamics and resulted in different outcomes.

By 1821, Mahmud II's strategy of decreasing the power of *semi-autonomous provincial regimes* and increasing the control of the central government over the means of geo-political accumulation was accomplished to a great extent in Anatolia and Eastern Rumelia. Nevertheless, many frontier regions maintained their political strategies of accumulation to the extent that the imperial center could not form the mechanisms of centralizing the political means of appropriation, namely a regular army depending on the compulsory conscription under the control of the central government and a taxation system ensuring the flow of agricultural surplus into the imperial treasury. To this end, the new regime attempted to centralize the mechanisms of violence and surplus appropriation within the bounds of geo-political accumulation. Having disgusted by the attitudes of janissary troops in the Greek campaigns and admiring the modern army of Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt, the imperial center declared the revival of the *Nizam-i Cedid* army under the name of *Muallem Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammadiye* (Trained Victorious Soldiers of Muhammad) in 1826.²⁰⁹ Called the "Auspicious Event," the destruction of the Janissary corps, and the establishment of a new regular army changed the balance of power within the Ottoman political system and made way for imposing the hierarchy on the ruling class and intervening in the crisis

²⁰⁸ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 60–62.

²⁰⁹ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 39–45.

dynamics in the provinces.²¹⁰ Moreover, as Quataert shows that the removal of the janissaries not only served as a means of coercion, but it had socio-political and economic importance for restructuring the urban economy, such as the abolishment of restrictive privileges and monopolies of guilds and artisans supported by the janissaries.²¹¹ Therefore, the elimination of the Janissaries, the most organized segment of the Ottoman power bloc as traditional power brokers, provided the regime to create a geo-political, economic, and ideological space to intervene in all aspects of the nineteenth-century crisis.

In the Anatolian and Eastern Rumelian provinces, where the provincial regimes were eliminated earlier, establishing reserve units and military conscription were accompanied by new forms of taxation, which increased the control of the central government over the means of political accumulation. Moreover, the regime attempted to make a census to increase the efficiency and control of surplus extraction and military conscription processes as means of further curbing the power base of the provincial ruling classes. However, the introduction of the centralized appropriation strategies to the boundary regions such as Western Balkans, including Bosnian, Albanian, Eastern Anatolian, and Arab provinces, where the class structure and forces were ramified by tribal groups, boundary dynamics, and ethno-religious complexities, took place gradually and interrupted by a series of resistances. More importantly, the new regime retained the existing political property regimes of political accumulation which rested on personalized praxes of domination, carrying a decentralizing drive depending on the balances of class forces to the extent that it could not create a differentiation between the economic and the political. In other words, the new regime failed to create an imperial-wide fiscal and administrative system to guarantee private exploitation through the medium of the state monopoly over violence and establish the unity of the ruling class on the basis of collective interests. Instead, it created mechanisms for provincial ruling classes to extract peasant surplus by participating in a state mechanism by means of taxation. Therefore, although the reforms brought radical structural or/and institutional changes, the new regime fell short of separating the economic and the political but still took pioneering steps toward it.

²¹⁰ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 37.

²¹¹ Donald Quataert, "The Age of Reforms: 1812-1914," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire: 1300-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 761–70.

Considered the emergence of “modern bureaucracy” in the Ottoman Empire for a long time, the new regime underwent essential structural or/and institutional changes by reorganizing bureaucracy based on ministries, such as the interior, foreign affairs, and finance, in a more hierarchical pattern. Moreover, the consultation mechanisms of the executive were institutionalized with the foundation of the Deliberative Council of the Sublime Porte and the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances. The regime also established new schools or revitalized old ones, such as the Royal Medical Academy, the School for Surgeons, the School for Military Sciences, and the Military School for Engineering, to raise administrative cadres for state service.²¹² These structural reforms and new institutions brought about fundamental changes in the reproductive strategies of the Ottoman ruling classes by preparing the ground for the unity of the ruling class on the basis of collective interests rather than holding on to their private power base, i.e., investing in their political means of accumulation. Another major step in this direction was the adoption of cash salaries in place of the allocation of taxation rights as a source of revenue in 1838, which implied giving a share to the ruling classes from the social surplus. Despite the emergence of a more centralized and bureaucratic state, it was an absolutist rather than ‘modern’ since these changes could not replace the existing social-property regimes depending on the fusion of the political and the economic or the public and the private with personalized power relations. In this respect, the imperial state came to rest on a new constellation of classes with different degrees of integration in the hierarchy of a new power bloc in which the imperial state increased its control over the means of political accumulation. Nevertheless, these steps formed the embryonic limbs of the separation of the political and the economic or extra-economic and private surplus extraction as the ruling class strategy of reproduction, which provided the basis for the regime-building strategies of the *Tanzimat* period towards the emergence of public strategies based on collective interests of the ruling class through the development of impersonal power relations.

1.3.2. *The Fall of Regimes in Albanian Provinces: Uneven Levels of Integration*

In 1812, the Albanian provinces were under the control of two semi-autonomous *provincial regimes*, Shkoder Pashalik of the Bushati family in the North and Janina Pashalik of Ali Pasha in the South. As it was discussed, as the product of the crisis of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime, these *provincial regimes* gave rise to two distinct regions regarding their

²¹² Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 62–70.

class structures and balance of class forces. Although their internal organizational hierarchy was different, the common characteristic of these regimes was their political strategies of accumulation, which caused investments in the means of violence. This reality forced the New Order regime to make a compromise with these regimes by sharing its sovereignty over the means of violence since it had to rely on the power of these regimes both for controlling the increasing turmoil and violence caused by the peasant rebellions colored by the nationalist discourse in the Balkans and for creating a defensive barrier in the boundary regions against external aggression. In other words, the cooperation between the imperial center and the *provincial regimes* against the peasant rebellions and defensive wars against the external powers prevented the intensification of their rivalry. However, there was a constant tension between the centrifugal tendencies of the *provincial regimes* and the centripetal tendencies of the imperial state to control the means of political accumulation.

Despite the constant tensions between Ali Pasha Janina and the political center, the 1806-1812 Russo-Ottoman War and the Serbian Revolt prevented the central government from taking a step against Ali Pasha; while he also supported the political center during the Serbian revolt to eliminate one of his principal rivals in the region, namely Pasvandoglu *regime*, as means of extending his power base. However, the conditions emerging after the Congress of Vienna in 1815 restructured the relations between the imperial state and *provincial regimes* in Albanian provinces. After the end of the Napoleonic Wars and the Treaty of Paris, European powers established a temporary balance of power, namely the “Concert of Europe,” in which the quest of the Metternich system for stability guaranteed the political boundaries of European states and opposed any revolutionary movements. Although the Ottoman Empire was not an active participant in the process, its geo-strategical position was strategic for preserving the status quo since, especially, the Ottoman Balkans emerged as a subject of strategic rivalries between Britain, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Along with the elimination of Alemdar Pasha in central politics, the decrease in the geo-political pressure over the empire allowed the central government to advance towards the clearance of *provincial regimes* to increase its control over the means of geo-political accumulation by imposing a new hierarchy and consensus within the power bloc. To this end, the political center attempted to integrate the *provincial regimes* into the hierarchy of a new power bloc either by cooperation or coercion.

The relations between the central government and Bushati and Janina *regimes* constituted an excellent example of this complex oscillation of conflict and cooperation. Faced with the state-building program of the new regime, Ali Pasha of Janina was torn between submitting his control over the means of political accumulation to the political center by supporting the new regime or resisting the regime by mobilizing these mechanisms against the imperial state. Before taking action, Ali Pasha searched for foreign support from the European powers, notably Russia and France, but the concert of Europe prevented their open support.²¹³ Therefore, Ali Pasha turned into the internal rivals of the new regime and made an agreement with the Greek revolutionary organization, *Filiki Eteria* (Society of Friends), including a simultaneous and co-joint rebellion against the imperial state.²¹⁴ Due to the centralized political strategy of accumulation in Ali Pasha's *regional regime*, he developed a bureaucratic apparatus within a vertical hierarchy where many Orthodox Greek groups increased their power as part of that mechanism, while the Muslim landowning class and tribal groups gradually lost their access to the political means of accumulation.²¹⁵ Therefore, it is possible to argue that, as the Pasvandoglu regime paved the way for the Serbian uprising, the Janina regime laid the foundation for the Greek revolution of 1820 since many people who served in Ali Pasha's regime played essential roles in the Greek rebellion.

The elimination of the Janina regime turned into a military campaign: the conflict between the Ottoman army and Ali Pasha's troops started in 1820, and the latter resisted until the beginning of the Greek insurgence of 1821, since Ali Pasha expected the Greek incident would divide the Ottoman army. On the contrary, the Ottoman troops focused on their fight against Ali Pasha, and the fight ended up with the defeat of Ali Pasha and the clearance of his *provincial regime*. In this sense, the centralized political strategy of accumulation depending on curbing the power of the Muslim dominant classes and the intensive exploitation of the peasantry limited the ability of mobilization of these groups in support of Ali Pasha; thus, he could only gather 40.000 armed troops.²¹⁶ Meanwhile, as the main rival of Ali Pasha in the region, Mustafa Bushati cooperated with the political center in its campaign against the Janina regime as well as the Greek rebellion by sending his troops to support the Ottoman army.²¹⁷ Therefore, the intra-ruling class conflict

²¹³ Bozbora, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 131.

²¹⁴ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 103.

²¹⁵ Dimitropoulos, "Aspects of the Working of the Fiscal Machinery in the Areas Ruled by Ali Paşa," 72.

²¹⁶ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 103.

²¹⁷ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 190; Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 23.

enabled the imperial state to cooperate with the provincial ruling class against one another. After the successful campaign of the imperial state, the Janina regime of Ali Pasha was eliminated in 1822. Thanks to his support during the campaign against Ali Pasha and the suppression of the Greek rebellion, the Bushati regime maintained its local power by being integrated into the hierarchy of the new power bloc. However, since the Bushati regime depended on a decentralized political accumulation strategy, the tribal groups and smaller landowning groups within the regime attempted to increase their share over the means of political accumulation. Together with the pressures of the political center, this struggle resulted in the gradual dissolution of the regime. Therefore, the imperial state eliminated the Bushati regime with a series of small-scale conflicts in 1831.²¹⁸

However, eliminating *provincial regimes* in Albanian provinces, neither terminated the intra-ruling class conflict and anti-regime opposition nor imposed its new hierarchy among Albanian dominant classes. The attempts of the central government to impose its program in the region produced different results regarding the regional variations regarding the uneven class structure and forces inherited from the divergent strategies of *provincial regimes*. After the clearance of the *provincial regimes*, the political center divided the territories formerly under these regimes into four administrative units, *vilayets* of Shkoder, Kosovo, Janina, and Monastir.²¹⁹ In the former territories of the Janina regime, namely *Toskland* (including the Southern provinces of Janina and Monastir), the dominant classes consisted mainly of Muslim landowners, whose access to the means of political accumulation was limited by the regime strategies of Ali Pasha, tended to cooperate with the central government. Having eliminated the Janina regime, the political center abolished *timar* and *tax-farming leases* by confiscating the privatized lands left by Ali Pasha's households and redistributing these lands to the local dominant classes loyal to the new regime.²²⁰ Moreover, the local landholding class was gradually reduced from political-administrative positions in favor of the officials appointed by the political center, while the irregular troops left by the Janina regime were either dispersed or integrated into the units of the New Order army.

Contrarily, since the ruling classes, consisting of tribal groups and landed families, maintained their means of political accumulation in the *Gheghland* (including the northern

²¹⁸ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 121.

²¹⁹ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 197; Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 104–6.

²²⁰ Bozbor, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*, 134–35.

provinces of Kosovo and Shkoderr), which corresponded to the previous base of the Bushati regime, intra-ruling class conflict prevailed in the region. The different composition of ruling classes, particularly the weight of the tribal groups possessing their private means of violence, and the mountainous geographic character of the region limited the ability of the political center to impose its program. Therefore, many of the privileges possessed by the *Gheg* ruling classes were maintained, and the introduction of the New Order program developed only gradually and mainly remained as *de jure* practices. In other words, despite the structural changes in the administrative units, more often than not, the tribal or family leadership, bureaucratic positions, and landowning overlapped in the hands of the provincial ruling class of the Albanian regions. Moreover, the tribal groups resisted giving up their control over the means of political accumulation and interrupted the attempts of regular tax collection and military conscription with strong resistance movements. To illustrate, the destruction of fortresses of tribal leaders such as Abdul Koka and Tafil Buzi and the attempts at military conscription sparked two significant uprisings in Kosovo and Shkoder around 1830 and 1835.²²¹

In this respect, the New Order regime provided different degrees of integration to the hierarchy of the new power bloc in the Albanian provinces depending on the variations in the regional class structure and balance of class forces, mainly inherited by different political accumulation strategies of the Bushati and Janina regimes. Therefore, while the regime succeeded in increasing its share and control over the means of political accumulation in the *Tosk* provinces by integrating the dissolved local dominant classes into the hierarchy of the new power bloc, the private means of violence in the hand of the *Gheg* ruling classes, mainly tribal groups, limited its control in these provinces since they resisted to surrender their mechanisms of reproduction. That being said, the means of violence possessed by the Albanian ruling classes persisted in being the area of conflict to the extent that the new regime retained the existing social-property relations depending on the political accumulation. Therefore, the class conflicts over the control and share of the means of political accumulation produced different dynamics of political conflicts in the Albanian provinces during the following stages of the state-building process.

²²¹ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 23–24.

2. Chapter 2: Divergent Strategies, Alternative Compromises: Albanian Provinces in Tanzimat and Hamidian Regimes

2.1. Tanzimat Regime: The Nascent Separation of The Economic and The Political

It is generally assumed that the outcomes of the long-nineteenth-century struggle in the Ottoman Empire crystallized in the transformation represented the establishment of a modern state structure organized around an impersonal, centralized, and rational system of government resting on the law and bureaucracy. The traditional interpretations of the Ottoman transition assumed that “the State” or its bureaucratic elite underwent a reform process modernizing the empire under the whip of the intensified geopolitical pressure (i.e., wars, foreign intervention) and the domestic turmoil associated with ethno-religious disputes. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, along with the pressures of external wars and domestic disputes within nationalism, the crisis of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime and the following state-building attempts were the results of the conflict and fragmentation among the Ottoman ruling classes over exploitation. The restoration strategies to resolve the crisis implemented during the New Order regimes succeeded in establishing a relatively centralized authority and a stable power bloc through a series of structural changes such as the emergence of new institutions, an extension of bureaucracy, and the demilitarization of the provincial regimes with the creation of a new army and the physical clearance of the provincial regimes.

Nevertheless, the independent political centers of power persisted to the extent that the political regimes could not replace the existing social-property regimes, depending on the politically-enforced exploitation of the direct producers, which continued under more centralized but still privatized rights of coercion in favor of impersonal relations of power, share, and distribution. The regional varieties, such as class constellations and forces, geographical characteristics, and geopolitical contexts, also limited the success of the regimes. While many of the local ruling classes in the central provinces of the empire were integrated into the hierarchy of the New Order power bloc by sharing their control over the means of violence, the ruling classes in the distant frontier provinces such as Albania, Bosnia, Kurdistan, Syria, where they included tribal groups, resisted against the new regime. Therefore, failing to replace the logic of political property and impose the new hierarchy of the new power bloc, the New Order regime could not totally resolve the crisis dynamics of the geo-political accumulation, providing opportunities for the emergence of new provincial regimes. Ironically, Sultan Mahmud II died in 1839 when the

Ottoman armies were defeated by the forces of Mehmed Ali Pasha, the provincial powerholder in Egypt, at Nizip.

As a result, the *Tanzimat* (Reorganization) regime started in the middle of another crisis, namely the second Egyptian crisis, when the foreign minister Mustafa Reşit Pasha read *Gülhane Hatt-i Hümayunu* (the Imperial Edict of the Rose Garden) outside the palace gates to an assembly of Ottoman dignitaries, the leaders of religious communities, and foreign diplomats, which also indicated the shift in the center of gravity from the Palace to the Sublime Porte. The edict made four main promises: the guarantee for life, honor, and property of all the subjects, a new regulation of compulsory conscription for the army containing all subjects of the empire, and a new system of taxation by salaried officials to replace the system of tax-farming, and equality before the law of all subjects, without any religious exception.²²² As the experiences of the previous regimes proved, balancing the inherent conflict between the individual-political mechanisms of exploitation in the hands of the dominant classes and the indirect-collective means of exploitation in the hands of the state as means of ensuring the survival of the empire in the time of an international geo-political competition was the main problem before the *Tanzimat* reformers. To this end, the main task of the *Tanzimat* government was to create an administrative-financial system that enabled the state to increase its share in the social surplus based on the taxation of agricultural production and its control over the means of violence without fragmenting the power bloc. As another dynamic of crisis, the *Tanzimat* government attempted to redefine the boundaries of the political society to mollify the domestic disputes articulated by the peasant producers, which were generally framed by ethno-religious terms. Therefore, the success of the *Tanzimat* regime depended on increasing and stabilizing the conditions of the exploitation of the peasant producers to procure ruling-class cooperation, while simultaneously controlling the internal and external consequences of this framework in times of peasant rebellions and foreign interventions.

As a reflection of such critical tasks, the promises of the Edict attempted to provide political legitimacy to the regime by reorganizing the hierarchy and boundary of the power bloc through a new consensus among the Ottoman ruling classes and extending the political society. The *Tanzimat* regime attempted to fortify the state monopoly over the means of violence-coercion in

²²² For the original text of the Gülhane Edict Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, eds., *Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüze Türk Anayasa Metinleri* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2000), 11–13.

the form of military reforms like compulsory conscription and means of political accumulation in the form of taxation like centralized surplus extraction (i.e., indirect-collective means of exploitation) as means of depriving the provincial ruling classes of their political properties. Simultaneously, it institutionalized the power of local dominant classes in estates and the other representative and corporative bodies to ensure the ruling class reproduction. Moreover, the regime extended the political society to balance the pressure of exploitation of peasant surplus. Therefore, the regime attempted to create the administrative, political, and legal framework and mechanisms of new capitalist social-property relations through an extensive reform program in which socio-political restructuring and state-formation processes coincided with the concept of *Ottomanism*.

2.1.1. Reorganizing the Power Bloc: Ottomanism as Political-Legal Framework of Accumulation

Since the primary financial goal of the *Tanzimat* regime was to increase the share of the central treasury over agricultural surplus, the main source of revenue in the empire, the government reformed the taxation system. After the proclamation of the Gulhane Edict, the High Council ordered to abolish the *tax-farming* system, particularly on tithe (*aşar*) collection and state leases (*mukataas*), in 1840 and introduced a range of measures to assure tax payment based on ‘equality’ measured in proportion to means as had been promised in the Edict.²²³ All of the additional excise taxes (*tekalif-i orfiye*) were replaced by “an appropriate tax” (*vergi-i mahsusa*) except the *ser’i* taxes, namely tax on the produce of the land (tithe, *asar*), tax on animals (*agnam resmi*) and the poll-tax on non-Muslims (*cizye*).²²⁴ The proportion of tithe, ranging from one-tenth to half of the value of the production depending on the productivity of land, was fixed all over the empire.²²⁵ In addition, as an essential mechanism of exploitation and the leading cause of the unrest among peasants (*reaya*) in the Balkans, the corvée was immediately abolished.²²⁶ More importantly, the tax-farming system was replaced by a more centralized tax-office system in which revocable and salaried agents of the state (*muhasil-i emval*) were equipped with powers to supervise the tax-collection, particularly the tithe, as well as local administration. The main goal of this new method of tax-collection was to reduce the power of tax-farmers, their creditors (i.e., bankers,

²²³ Halil İncalcık, *Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects* (Lisse: Peter de Ridder Press, 1976), 8–9.

²²⁴ Carter Vaughn Findley, “The Tanzimat,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern Turkey, IV: Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 18.

²²⁵ Oğuz Oyan, *Feodalizmden Kapitalizme, Osmanlı’dan Türkiye’ye* (İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2016), 296.

²²⁶ İncalcık, *Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects*, 11.

moneylenders), and provincial magnates or/and governors as a class to supervise more effective tax collection for increasing the share of the central treasury by ensuring the direct flow of revenue from the provinces.²²⁷

As the imperial finances were the main concern of the *Tanzimat* reformers, the prescribed administrative innovations were essentially designed to balance the power of the provincial governors and to realize a substantial increase in state revenues by utilizing a more centralized revenue system. In 1842, the government revised the hierarchy of the administrative district into three levels, namely province (*eyalet*), district (*sancak*), and sub-district (*kaza*) – and later village (*karye*) added in 1864– appointed civil officials as governors in province and district level, while governors of sub-districts were elected among local notables. New provincial administrative councils (*meclis*), i.e., administrative councils, municipal councils, and the court systems, were set up to enable provincial ruling classes to participate or/and be represented in administration at various levels by enabling members of the local community to consult with the district governor linked to the central mechanism of the Supreme Council of Judicial Ordinances (*Divan-i Ahkam-i Adliye*), which laid the basis for representative government.²²⁸ Subsequently, a series of experimentations and regulations in 1849, 1852, and 1858 were made to designate the task sharing and hierarchy of authority among governors and councils towards establishing a balance amongst central bureaucracy, regional governors, and local propertied class.²²⁹ In the capital cities of the *sancaks*, upper councils (*buyuk meclis*) were formed and led by central officials with authority to decide on civil, judicial, and financial matters; while lower councils (*kucuk meclis*) consisting of four to six members of town notables were established in the counties. Throughout this mechanism, the government expected provincial directors (*muhassils*) and local councils to balance the power of the provincial governors and local magnates to end fraudulent tax practices and other abuses made possible by the old regime.²³⁰

However, in many places, *muhassils* were immediately seen as a direct attack on the prerogatives of the local dominant classes and thus provoked strong resistances. More often than

²²⁷ Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli*, 40.

²²⁸ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 41–57.

²²⁹ İlber Ortaylı, *Tanzimat Devrinde Osmanlı Mahallî İdareleri: 1840-1880* (Ankara: TTK, 2000), 43.

²³⁰ Nadir Özbek, “Tax Farming in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire: Institutional Backwardness or the Emergence of Modern Public Finance?” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 49, no. 2 (August 2018): 230; İnalçık, *Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects*, 11–12.

not, the provincial dominant classes prevailed in the councils and government positions since the lower-level administrators and deputies were selected among them.²³¹ The *Tanzimat* government attempted to preserve its control by calling delegates from the provinces to the capital and sending commissioners to inspect the provinces.²³² In addition, a hierarchy of councils was regulated: an administrative council (*meclis-i idare*), consisting of the higher officials together with the local heads of the *millets* and other elected members among local ruling classes, and a general council (*meclis-i umumi*) brought representatives of all the districts in the province together once a year for a meeting to discuss development issues of province-wide interest.²³³ Therefore, the councils created the mechanisms for integration of the local dominant classes into a politico-legal framework of domination and exploitation by participating and being represented in the central politics.²³⁴

However, as the structural features of the economy and international geopolitics conditioned the form of the new system, the new regulations pointed in the direction of decentralization in combination with the centralizing administrative structure.²³⁵ In other words, while the relations of exploitation shifted towards a relatively centralized tax-regime in which the state remained as a class-like surplus extractor through indirect-collective exploitation and tended to increase its share and control over the taxation, some of the provincial ruling classes tried to preserve their means of political accumulation.²³⁶ Therefore, despite the *Tanzimat* government multiplied administrative-financial institutions, the scope of the government remained limited in the frontier regions. The pressure of the great powers on the *millets* and the regime's dependency on the support of local dominant classes ended up with the increase in the power and influence of local councils and the provincial governors together to the detriment of the central government. Since the survival and the political unity of the empire depended on the hold of the Ottoman ruling class together over the peasantry and their collective defense against external pressure, the new

²³¹ Findley, "The Tanzimat," 24–25.

²³² Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 46–47.

²³³ Carter Vaughn Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform in the Ottoman Empire: The Sublime Porte, 1789-1922*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 311.

²³⁴ Hasan Kayali, "Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1919," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 27, no. 3 (August 1995): 266; Duzgun, *Capitalism, Jacobinism and International Relations*, 2022, 116.

²³⁵ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 182.

²³⁶ Brenner, "Agrarian Class Structure and Economic Development in Pre-Industrial Europe," 55.

changes did not alter the fundamental logic of the accumulation regime. Hence, rather than an objective contradiction or zero-sum game between the center and periphery over the rights of domination and exploitation, the intra-ruling class relationships and conflicts were circumscribed by the double threats of the peasant rebellion and geo-political pressure.

That being said, the selective strategies of the *Tanzimat* regime in reorganizing imperial finance, military, and provincial administration corresponded to the class character of the regime. As the finance and tax regime of the *Tanzimat* regime depended on the domination of a propertied class, the administrative changes reflected the reproduction of that domination within a new consensus to prevent the emergence of a new crisis.²³⁷ This consensus was built upon the redefinition of the power bloc hierarchy on the ground of sharing agricultural surplus among the central and provincial segments of the Ottoman ruling class. The *Tanzimat regime* attempted to introduce the mechanisms of private-individual exploitation for the propertied classes over peasants through economic means rather than political or extra-economic coercion by institutionalizing their power in estates, representative and corporative bodies. However, unable to totally bypass the political accumulation of the local dominant classes, the government offered them the opportunity to hold positions in the provincial administration in a balance with centrally-appointed officers, particularly within the local councils, as means of allocating and collecting taxes.²³⁸ Therefore, provincial ruling classes attempted to increase their share in agricultural surplus as being part of the provincial administration. Nevertheless, in most instances, an oligarchy of local dominant classes mostly happened to be the landowners controlled the administration of local affairs by dominating the councils and influencing the governors.²³⁹ It implies that the *Tanzimat* regime was not only the product of a strategic group in central power and their top-down centralization program, but it was also the product of different strategies followed by various factions of ruling classes to increase their financial and political powers.

Similarly, despite the official rhetoric of its demise, *Tanzimat* reformers maintained the farming-out revenue collection to provincial entrepreneurs by modifying the system repeatedly throughout the century by experimenting with different types of contracts and regulatory frameworks, such as terms and procedures for bids, in pursuit of limiting the power of tax-farmers

²³⁷ Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli*, 35.

²³⁸ Özbek, "Tax Farming in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," 232–33.

²³⁹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 49, 141.

as well as more effective and controlled extraction methods.²⁴⁰ The fact that tithe revenues fell badly in 1840 forced the government to abolish the office of the *muhassil* and to reimpose the tax-farming system by giving two-year rights to collect taxes in specific *mukata'as* to those who promised the highest return to the state in auctions held in the provincial and *sancak* capitals.²⁴¹ Moreover, the geographical extent of the contract of tax-farming was limited to the sub-district or even the village level to reduce the power of provincial ruling classes.²⁴² Therefore, the enforcement of the new system was limited in many provinces owing to a lack of means and personnel supplements and the powerful resistance of the propertied class for tax evasion. Moreover, the costs of replacing tax-farmers with salaried collectors exceeded the revenues collected in many places.²⁴³

Although the regime attempted to return to the tax collection by *muhassils* during extraordinary times such as Crimean War, immediately following the war, the government's first step to solving its financial problems was restoring the tax-farming system again for all tithe collections, with new regulation in 1855.²⁴⁴ Following the period, the regulations on methods and appointment of tax collection and financial administration were repeatedly experimented—in 1879, 1886, 1894, 1896, and finally 1902—but, with some exceptions, tax-farming survived until the end of the empire.²⁴⁵ The tax reforms also involved shifting the tax burden from the land to urban wealth by abolishing many of the historic exemptions and privileges that had been granted over the centuries to redistribute public wealth.²⁴⁶ However, the propertied classes in the provinces resisted self-taxation and gave up their gains in the tax-farming system. Still, despite the seeming failure with the reintroduction of the tax-farming system, the government's share and transfer of surplus—i.e., taxes collected on property, agricultural produce, etc.—to the central treasury improved in general during the *Tanzimat* era.²⁴⁷ However, this increase in the revenue was rooted not in the taxation of urban wealth but in the new system increased the collective exploitation of

²⁴⁰ Özbek, "Tax Farming in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," 229.

²⁴¹ Stanford J. Shaw, "The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 6, no. 4 (October 1975): 422.

²⁴² Özbek, "Tax Farming in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," 228.

²⁴³ Findley, "The Tanzimat," 25.

²⁴⁴ Shaw, "The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System," 426.

²⁴⁵ Nadir Özbek, "The Politics of Taxation and the 'Armenian Question' during the Late Ottoman Empire, 1876–1908," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 4 (October 2012): 778.

²⁴⁶ Shaw, "The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System," 421.

²⁴⁷ Özbek, "Tax Farming in the Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Empire," 225.

the peasants. In other words, the burden of reform was loaded on the Ottoman peasants since the primary tax revenue of the state remained to be collected on agricultural production.

Consequently, the penetration of central institutions into the provinces did not liquidate the existing hierarchical structure, but it created additional layers tying centrally-appointed officers to the existing provincial political arrangements. While the pre-*Tanzimat* power bloc consisting of provincial governors/tax-farmers, moneylenders, and dignitaries in bureaucracy was dissolved, there emerged a new alliance or political coalitions between the new petty tax-farmer entrepreneurs operating within the confines of a sub-district (*kaza*) or village, provincial governors-councils and central bureaucracy, particularly on the share of tithe at the district and sub-district level.²⁴⁸ This new consensus was critical in keeping the peasantry under control to secure the extraction and transfer of surplus as well as the survival of the empire. In this framework, while the local dominant classes relatively retained their economic mechanisms of exploitation, they were forced to decrease their politico-military powers.

As a complementary aspect of this new consensus, the *Tanzimat* regime introduced the Land Code of 1858. The goals and meaning of the Code have perpetuated an intense discussion in Ottoman historiography. Many historians assert that the Ottoman state attempted to protect peasant property as its main source of revenue and increase its share from agriculture surplus by flowing the agriculture income directly to the treasury by eliminating local intermediary notables through the Code. The orthodox argument interpreted Article 8 of the Code, which forbids the register or transfer of land of a village or a town to a collectivity or individual and granted the right of possession of separate pieces of land to an individual with a title-deed, as a mechanism to undermine the power of provincial landed classes by depriving them of one of the most important bases of their wealth and influence.²⁴⁹ However, rather than protecting the peasantry, this regulation can be regarded as an effort to extend the tax base of the empire in parallel with the strategy of increasing the collective exploitation of the state, whose main tool was the tithe collection.²⁵⁰ As discussed above, despite different experimentations, the main method of tithe collection remained as tax-farming, which was controlled by the new coalition of provincial

²⁴⁸ Özbek, 224–44.

²⁴⁹ E. Attila Aytekin, "Agrarian Relations, Property and Law: An Analysis of the Land Code of 1858 in the Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 6 (2009): 935–36.

²⁵⁰ Oyan, *Feodalizmden Kapitalizme, Osmanlı'dan Türkiye'ye*, 294.

government-landed notables-bankers. In the last instance, the Land Code would increase the capacity of surplus extraction as a means of reproduction for the Ottoman ruling class as a whole.

The regulations extended the right of circulation and transaction of the agricultural land corresponded with the landed interest of the Ottoman propertied classes.²⁵¹ The Code blurred the distinctions between the categories of public-private land and concepts of ‘possession’ and ‘ownership’, which accelerated the development of capitalist social-property relations by commodifying the land by eliminating obstacles before its transfer, sale, purchase, mortgaging, and inheritance.²⁵² In this respect, the Code took an important step towards the legal privatization and individualization of landed property. Therefore, the Code not only entrenched the petty peasant property, which was taxed by an increasingly centrally-organized state but also paved the way for uneven and combined development of capitalist social relations of production in agriculture in which ruling classes expropriated surplus produced by sharecroppers and waged-labors through economic mechanisms of individual exploitation depending on their property rights under the new political and legal terms guaranteed by the state as well as taking possession of peasant lands. When viewed from this framework, instead of strengthening or preserving the livelihood of petty peasants by limiting the access of local dominant classes to the land, the article that restrained the land of a village or a town from being registered into title-deed to a collectivity or person, removed the collective forms of property as an obstacle before the commodification of land by defining the individual as the sole object of the land. In 1860, new regulations allowed the forced sale of public land for bad debt to a state, and in 1869 deficit in general, which emerged as yet another step in the ‘bourgeoization’ of Ottoman land law and paved the way for provincial dominant classes to seizure the lands of peasants.²⁵³

In this respect, the strategic line of the *Tanzimat* reforms on property relations and land tenure ran into the vested interests of the Ottoman dominant classes, which assured the flow of surplus from direct producers to propertied classes through the forms of tax, rent or interest and ensured the dominance of capitalist relations of production in the long run. In other words, the strategic priority of the *Tanzimat* reforms was to ensure the political unity of the Ottoman ruling class through a new consensus that developed to the detriment of peasants. It implies that the

²⁵¹ Aytekin, “Agrarian Relations, Property and Law,” 948.

²⁵² Aytekin, 939–48.

²⁵³ Aytekin, 939.

reasons for the relative inability of reforms on centralization should be sought in the class structure of the power bloc.²⁵⁴ For the reaction of non-Muslim peasants to the tax burden remained an important dynamic of political conflict in the empire, redefinition of political society emerged as a prerequisite to justify the new regime. Though ethnically and religiously heterogeneous, at least in theory, the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic state ruled on the basis of sharia, an Islamic law.²⁵⁵ Within this framework, religion constituted the crucial organizing category of social and political life within the context of the *millet system*.²⁵⁶ As the series of peasant rebellions in the Balkans during the previous regimes proved, the coincidence between the exploitation and religious affiliation became a critical aspect of the political conflicts, which was reflected in the form of inter-ethnic tensions expressed in nationalist discourses mostly among non-Muslim peasants.²⁵⁷ Since these rebellions attracted the intervention of kin-states such as newly independent Greece and Serbia or/and great powers and caused erosion of state's legitimacy; the *Tanzimat* government underwent an expansion of Ottoman political society, including non-Muslims as means of re-establishing its legitimacy through new sources. The introduction of subject-status and promise of equality of all populations regardless of their religion in the Gulhane Edict served both as a new source of state legitimacy and justification for Ottoman sovereignty and as a maneuver to limit the pressures and interventions of Great Powers, especially pan-Slavism of Russia, under the pretext of protecting non-Muslim communities living in the empire. The Reform Edict made a step further as an explicit manifesto of *Ottomanism* by elaborating the rights and duties on an equal basis in the legal and public sphere within more clear-cut definitions. The 1869 Nationality Law (*Tabiiyet-i Osmaniye Kanunnamesi*) was the most important and decisive step for the *de jure* basis of equal citizenship and the first distinct law or regulation for nationality in the empire. In the same year, secular *nizamiyye* courts were established to administer justice based on new codes.

Nevertheless, the equality of non-Muslims, composed mainly of direct producers, should have also corresponded to existing social-property or/and exploitation relations. Although the

²⁵⁴ E. Attila Aytekin, "Tax Revolts During the Tanzimat Period (1839–1876) and Before the Young Turk Revolution (1904–1908): Popular Protest and State Formation in the Late Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Policy History* 25, no. 03 (2013): 319.

²⁵⁵ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 10.

²⁵⁶ Fatma Müge Göçek, ed., *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East* (New York: SUNY Press, 2002), 18.

²⁵⁷ Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation-Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 57.

regime attempted to replace the dichotomic imagination of political society along ethno-confessional lines with new equality-based relations of nationality within the context of *Ottomanism*,²⁵⁸ the subject-status did not signify full citizenship on an individual basis but was defined on a collective level based on the *millet system*. In this respect, the regime recognized, institutionalized, and legalized the *millet system*, which organized the social and political life around communities and religious leaderships.²⁵⁹ While the Law of Nationality removed the inequalities in the juridical and public spheres,²⁶⁰ the recognition of different *millets*, i.e., Rums (1860), Armenians (1863), and Jews (1865), reproduced “categorical inequalities” by reorganizing the society along religious-communal lines.²⁶¹ Therefore, as the class structure of the regime did not yet allow for the mechanisms of political representation of ‘full citizens’ on an individual basis through a constitutional regime, the *Tanzimat* regime established a system granting a political role to the religious leaders of the *millets* as a new control mechanism which provided a new land of privilege, exploitation, and negotiation by reflecting the privileges of the religious leaders as privileges of the *millet* themselves. Therefore, the *millet* leaders were integrated into the representative councils as an essential tool for reconstitution of the state legitimacy on the peasants, especially non-Muslims, and for maintaining their exploitation. For instance, the government left the poll-tax collection to the local communication as a community, and *millet* leaders, as part of the Ottoman ruling class, were made entirely responsible for turning them over to state officials.²⁶²

As another mechanism of state-formation regarding power and control, the efforts to monopolize violence constituted another task in the *Tanzimat* regime.²⁶³ The monopolization of

²⁵⁸ Sezgi Durgun, *Memalik-i Şahane’den Vatan’a* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 82–85.

²⁵⁹ Anagnostopoulou Sia, “Millet, Ethnicity, Colonial Community. Views of the Authoritarian Transition to Modernity, 19th-Early 20th c. From the Ottoman to the British Empire,” in *Religious Communities and Modern Statehood, The Ottoman and Post-Ottoman World at the Age of Nationalism and Colonialism* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2015), 25–26.

²⁶⁰ Kemal H. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era,” in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982), 133.

²⁶¹ “Categorical inequality” implies defined social relations of inequality among class, ethnic, religious or gender groups which legalized by the political power and reproduced through mechanisms of exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation. See, Charles Tilly, *Durable Inequality*, Nachdr. (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2009); Charles Tilly, *Contention and Democracy in Europe, 1650-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–42.

²⁶² Shaw, “The Nineteenth-Century Ottoman Tax Reforms and Revenue System,” 425.

²⁶³ For the relationship between state-formation and monopolization of coercion see Tilly, *Coercion, Capital, and European States, AD 990-1992*.

the military was institutionalized in the new regular army during the New Order period, but its consolidation required the introduction of compulsory service and recruitment and liquidation of the private means of violence in the provinces. In fact, military resources or recruitment capacity depended on establishing central authority over provincial governors and dominant classes, who were required to send soldiers to the army.²⁶⁴ Despite the establishment of a reserve army, Victorious Reserve Soldiers (*Asakir-i redife-i mansure*) after the Prussian example in 1834, due to the lack of a real system of recruitment and manpower, those enrolled in the corps remained under arms for an unspecified period, in most cases, lasting life-long period. Relying on the proposition of the Military Council on a five-year term of military service, the *Tanzimat* Edict declared that the military burden was equally distributed to each province, and the length of service was reduced to four to five years.²⁶⁵ In accordance with the edict, in 1843, new army regulations were promulgated to establish a regular *Nizamiye* army manned by conscripted soldiers (*muvazzafl*) who served for five years. Following the Prussian system, the reserve system was elaborated as additional seven years in the army after completing the proper service with the regular army and those who had drawn a low number in the drawing of lots (*kur'a*). Later, the conscription system was reviewed and codified several times through regulations on drawing lots in 1848 and 1871.²⁶⁶

However, this regular procedure did not coincide with *de facto* processes in different provinces because of the local resistance to holding their control over the means of violence. For example, the provinces where tribal groups were powerful and recruited as irregular militias, such as Albania, Kurdistan, and Syria, either resisted the process of conscription, or the recruits were selected and sent by their tribal chiefs if accepted.²⁶⁷ The rationality behind the attempts of conscription from these areas was not only increasing the manpower of the army but, after the elimination of provincial regimes, the political means of accumulation in the hands of tribal groups and irregular troops such as brigandage remained the most crucial impediment before the state's monopoly over the means violence. The tribal groups played an essential role in provincial politics depending on their control over violence; thus, the organization and monopoly over violence was

²⁶⁴ Erik Jan Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice 1844-1918," in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 79–80.

²⁶⁵ Zürcher, 81.

²⁶⁶ Virginia H. Aksan, "Military Reform and Its Limits in a Shrinking Ottoman World, 1800-1840," in *The Early Modern Ottomans, Remapping the Empire* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 131–33.

²⁶⁷ Zürcher, "The Ottoman Conscription System in Theory and Practice 1844-1918," 84.

a prerequisite for the state-formation process and application of reforms in the *Tanzimat* regime. In this respect, the disarmament of tribal groups through conscription emerged as a significant step for integrating these areas into the administrative and financial system of *Tanzimat*.

Moreover, different groups, such as inhabitants of the holy places, religious functionaries and students in religious schools, members of professional groups, and nomads, were exempted from military service.²⁶⁸ Another problem regarding the conscription was about the non-Muslims in the empire who were included in the drawing of lots within the context of *Ottomanism* after the abolishment of the poll-tax. Still, the *Tanzimat* regime provided different alternatives, such as introducing the exemption tax in the name of military payment (*bedel-i askeri*) to overcome the conscription of non-Muslims. Nevertheless, although the regime employed various strategies of coercion or mediation depending on regional and tribal dynamics, the attempts of conscription in such areas only became possible through military operations and violence.²⁶⁹ For example, having constituted close-knit communities and a striking capacity for feuding, the Syrian tribes met the attempts of the monopolization of violence –i.e., conscription and disarmament – with fierce resistance against Ottoman forces.²⁷⁰

In this respect, the forms and applications of *Tanzimat* strategies were neither simultaneous nor homogenous but possessed great tempo-spatial varieties depending on different regional class structures and their exchanges with central government, such as negotiations, conflicts, or cooperations, as well as geopolitical conjuncture.²⁷¹ The intense mobilization of the peasant producers and the strong resistances of the provincial ruling classes in frontier regions sets limits to the total separation of the political and the economic during the *Tanzimat* regime. Therefore, different law codes, tax regimes, and privileges, eagerly defended by the provincial ruling classes, rendered the regional varieties and the risk of ruling class fragmentation endemic. In this sense, despite the regime formed a centralized state structure and made several attempts to establish the

²⁶⁸ Zürcher, 86.

²⁶⁹ See Yonca Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation: Centralization and Sedentarization of Tribes in the Ottoman Empire," *Middle Eastern Studies* 42, no. 3 (2006): 469–91.

²⁷⁰ Dick Douwes, "Reorganizing Violence: Traditional Recruitment Patterns and Resistance against Conscription in Ottoman Syria," in *Arming the State: Military Conscription in the Middle East and Central Asia, 1775-1925* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999), 118–25.

²⁷¹ Yonca Köksal, "Imperial Center and Local Groups: Tanzimat Reforms in the Provinces of Edirne and Ankara," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (2002): 107–38; Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*; Eugene L. Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire: Transjordan, 1850-1921* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

politico-legal foundations of capitalist relations –i.e., individual land ownership, conscripted army, mechanisms of representation, the settlement of these relations developed unevenly in different parts of the empire, depending on the regionally-specific class constellations.

2.1.2. *The Forms of Reactions to Tanzimat*

While providing solutions to the crisis dynamics of the old-regime, the *Tanzimat* regime caused new dynamics of political conflicts appearing in the forms of peasant rebellions, the resistance of tribal groups and some segments of the landed classes in different regions, as well as political opposition in the center. The reactions against the *Tanzimat* regime varied regarding the social-property relations and class structure inherited by the old regime and the level of coincidence of class conflict with the ethno-religious distinctions, the level of integration for different segments of the ruling class into the new power bloc, and geo-political conjuncture. The first dynamic of political conflict derived from intra-ruling class struggle or competition over the forms and mechanisms of surplus extraction –i.e., struggle over benefiting from the privileges granted to office holders and civil servants in a context of the upward reorganization of the state in the provinces. There was an inherent conflict and competition in the provinces among the central government, provincial governors, and local propertied class over the surplus share relied on tax-collection. Although the reorganization of the tax regime and provincial administration generated a new consensus for the long-term stability of the system in regions such as Southern Albania, many conflicts arose in the regions where the new consensus could not be established. Especially in Bosnia and Northern Albania, the remnants of the great landowners or traditional tribal groups resisted *Tanzimat* reforms by using their patronage relationship to preserve their regional power after the dissolution of provincial dynasty regimes.²⁷² These regions witnessed political conflicts in which the *Tanzimat* regime broke the resistance of local power groups through coercive means. The other dimension of the intra-ruling class developed around the political-factional rivalries for procuring strategic positions in the central government, which was solidified in the constitutionalism of the Young Ottoman movement.²⁷³

As the class character and selective strategy of the *Tanzimat* regime prevented providing a solution to the crisis by meeting the demands of peasants at the cost of alienation of landholders,

²⁷² For the revolts in Bosnia, see Zafer Gölen, *Tanzimat Dönemi Bosna İsyanları, 1839-1878* (Ankara: Alter, 2009).

²⁷³ Findley, "The Tanzimat," 30.

the most important dynamic of political conflict in the *Tanzimat* regime was the resistance of peasants against individual and collective mechanisms of exploitation and the threat of dispossession. The early elimination of provincial regimes enabled the settlement of new social-property regimes in Central and Western Anatolia, where the new consensus among the ruling class prevented the peasant resistance against private and collective exploitation from taking the form of collective political action. However, in Northern Balkans, where the division between landholders and direct producers coincides with religious division, the resistance of Muslim ruling classes to preserve their extra-economic means of accumulation and the overburden of taxation and risk of dispossession for non-Muslim peasants worsened the conditions of the latter.²⁷⁴ To illustrate, *Tanzimat* reforms, especially on the land system and taxation, deepened the crisis among the Muslim landowners, Christian notables (*corbaci* and *kocabasi*), and non-Muslim peasants, which resulted in two great peasant uprisings in the Nish and Vidin.²⁷⁵ Although the uprisings were directed against the oppressive and exploitative actions of Muslim landowners rather than the state, the coincidence of class conflict with religious affiliation turned the rebellion into sectarian violence in which different domestic and international actors engaged. The fact that the exploitation has concentrated on non-Muslim peasantry also put the legitimacy of the regime at risk. Moreover, when peasant resistance turned into sectarian violence, it also created a way for foreign interventions.

In the frontier regions such as Western Balkans, Eastern Anatolia, and Syria, the specificities of local power and property relations prevented the total elimination of regional power regimes since tribal groups and powerful landholding families could keep their extra-economic means of accumulation to varying degrees. More importantly, the frontier relations of tribal groups emerged as a barrier to state monopoly over coercive force/violence and taxation. As the *Tanzimat* reforms attempted to strengthen the state control over the mechanisms of political accumulation through conscription, taxation, disarmament, and forced settlement, in many instances, tribal groups strongly resisted to preserving their existing privileges and relative autonomies inherited by the old regime. As the power of tribal groups depended on decentralized political authority, they considered the reforms a threat to existing traditional social relations and privileges, particularly conscription meant to unguard them against the other strategic groups they compete

²⁷⁴ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 64.

²⁷⁵ İnalçık, *Application of the Tanzimat and Its Social Effects*, 5–31; Aytekin, “Tax Revolts,” 316.

for local sources. Moreover, the tribal groups demonstrated a remarkable capacity for feuding and fighting, while living conditions in the frontier/boundary regions meant the violent character of provincial power relations may have been encouraged by external violence through irredentist attacks.²⁷⁶ Therefore, the tribal groups mobilized their hierarchical means of political accumulation into violent rebellions against the new regime. The answers of the *Tanzimat* regime to these resistances showed regional variance regarding the geo-strategical conditions by putting a series of political, coercive, and ideological means into action.²⁷⁷

2.2. Exigency of *Reelpolitik*: Regional Variance of the *Tanzimat* in Albanian Provinces

Albanian provinces were important examples where the attempts of the *Tanzimat* regime to increase the state control over the means of political accumulation resulted in various dynamics of political conflicts by creating pressure on the existing social-property relations. Having eliminated the *provincial regimes* of Bushatli Kara Mustafa and Ali Pasha of Janina, the New Order government attempted to wipe out the dynamics for the emergence of new regional regimes by establishing control in the region. Meanwhile, the landed classes tried to benefit from the power vacuum left by the *provincial regimes* to regain their local power and positions. In 1832, Mehmed Resid Pasha invited the landed classes in the Southern Albanian provinces, who regained their dominance after the elimination of Ali Pasha, on the pretext of reward and murdered about five hundred of them in Monastir.²⁷⁸ Meanwhile, in Northern Albania, after Mustafa Bushatli surrendered, some of the landowners and tribal leaders, who allied with his regime, were deported to Asia Minor, and their fortresses were destroyed. Such physical eliminations enabled the New Order regime to increase its control over the means of political accumulation, such as the confiscation and redistribution of *çiftlik* estates left from *pasalik* regimes, appointing central officers for provincial administration, proper taxation, and conscription.

In the Southern provinces, the government appropriated most of the land and estates and distributed some of them to their former owners, whose influence and resources had sunk low under the domination of pashalik regimes, to divide the power among smaller landed classes.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Douwes, "Reorganizing Violence: Traditional Recruitment Patterns and Resistance against Conscription in Ottoman Syria," 115–18.

²⁷⁷ Köksal, "Coercion and Mediation," 487–88.

²⁷⁸ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 23.

²⁷⁹ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 104–5.

Although their fragmentation limited the resistance of the local dominant classes in the Southern provinces, the Muslim landowners became the focus of local resistance or opposition against the regime. After the massacre of Monastir, some of the landed notables who had fled to Greek territory organized an uprising in 1833 to force the provincial administrative officials to leave. The uprising was followed by another revolt a few months later in the district of Gjirokastra, where many government employees were killed. When another rebellion started in Southern Albania the following year, the Ottoman government had to come to terms with the rebels.²⁸⁰ However, in the Northern provinces, where relative autonomy and privileges persisted for a long time by the tribal groups, the reform attempts, particularly on taxation and conscription, were faced with powerful resistance. In 1835, attempts to recruit soldiers for the regular army ended with a rebellion where the governor of Shkoder was killed with his 1500 soldiers. This was followed by another rebellion ending with the expulsion of the governor of Prizren in 1839.²⁸¹ Therefore, the Albanian provinces witnessed a series of uprisings against the government throughout the 1830s that were generally led either by the landed classes or the tribal groups.

Due to the ongoing resistance, the *Tanzimat* reforms were gradually put into practice in the Albanian provinces; Kosovo was included in the *Tanzimat* regime in 1843, Shkoder in 1844, and Janina and Monastir in 1845.²⁸² Moreover, the inherent conflict and competition between the local ruling classes and the central government over the means of political accumulation and the share of surplus forced the *Tanzimat* government to enforce its reform program without further fragmenting the power bloc. Therefore, the application of the constituent strategies of the *Tanzimat* regime in the Albanian provinces and their methods were neither temporally nor spatially homogenous. Despite its uneven development in the different regions of Albanian provinces, the reforms (i.e., assigning of *muhassils* for tax collection and the provincial government, compulsory conscription, new legal forms and courts, abolishment of traditional privileges) brought about considerable socio-political consequences and dynamics of political conflicts in the region crystallized in series of rebellions. For some historians, these rebellions were regarded as

²⁸⁰ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 23–24.

²⁸¹ Skendi, 24.

²⁸² Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 105.

reactionary movements against state modernization;²⁸³ some others argued that they laid the socio-political foundations of a process from which Albanian nationalism would arise.²⁸⁴ However, the local reactions against the *Tanzimat* regime included more complex strategies, ranging from consensus and cooperation to opposition and resistance, built around different interests depending on the regional class structure.

Moreover, the constituent strategies of the regime also developed in exchange with such strategies developed by different socio-political or class groups, including a series of social and geopolitical factors ranging from geographical characteristics to boundary relations.²⁸⁵ To illustrate, the increasing competition of Russia and Austria Hungary as well as the newly-emerged Balkan nation-states, particularly Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro, towards the Ottoman Balkans by relying on the different *millets* of the empire, was an integral part of the forms and patterns of the application of reforms and local reactions.²⁸⁶ In this respect, it is essential to consider the interplay between the regional (i.e., class and social structure, geographical characteristics) and trans-regional context of international (i.e., pressures of neighboring states) in the implementation of and reaction to the *Tanzimat* reforms in the Albanian provinces. The following parts will locate three main regional patterns regarding the internal class structures and the international geopolitical context and their impact on the consequent dynamics of political conflicts created by the *Tanzimat* regime: Northern Albania (*Ghegland*), Southern Albania (*Toskland*), and Central Albania. Nevertheless, these three regions also had important varieties and different dynamics in themselves.²⁸⁷

2.2.1. *The land of Ghegs: Resistances to Tanzimat*

After the Provincial Law, the Northern regions (*Gegeni* or *Gegalik*) comprised the provinces of Shkoder (including the *sancaks* of Shkoder and Durrës); and Kosovo (of Novi Pazar, Pec, Prishtina, Prizren, Skopje as well as Debar from Monastir province).²⁸⁸ The region mainly

²⁸³ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*; Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*; Bozborra, *Osmanlı Yönetiminde Arnavutluk ve Arnavut Ulusçuluğu'nun Gelişimi*; Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*; Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*.

²⁸⁴ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*; Malcolm, *Kosovo*; Vickers, *The Albanians*.

²⁸⁵ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 18–21.

²⁸⁶ Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 186.

²⁸⁷ Nathalie Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, trans. Ali Berktaş (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2013), 43–97.

²⁸⁸ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 28–29.

comprised mountainous areas where tribal groups such as Hoti, Klement, Skrel, Kastrati, Grude, Shale, Shosh, Toplana, Nikaj, described as Malisors in general, and Merdita consisting of religiously mixed, Muslim and Catholic population, enjoyed a relative autonomy under various socio-political organizations and settled their own matters through conventional laws called Lek Dukadjin.²⁸⁹ Many contemporaries argued that the religious diversity of the tribal population indicates tribal loyalties were more substantial than religious affiliation.²⁹⁰ In this sense, the social-property relations did not coincide with the religious divisions in the *Ghegland*; but instead, there were competitions and conflicts of interests amongst the tribal groups consisting of different factions (*taraf*). However, these factions were also not persistent but changing relationships regarding the socio-political and economic relations and balances of power.²⁹¹

Both in Kosovo and Shkoder provinces, the government control was minimal, almost non-existent outside of a few towns and valleys due to the mountainous geography of the region and the socio-political power of the tribal groups were rooted in their military power, who, in theory, provide irregular troops during the war and paid a small lump-sum tax in lieu of regular conscription and taxation.²⁹² In many instances, the regions were subjected to the authority of the tribal chiefs (*bayraktars*) as responsible for sub-districts who collected the revenue and led the troops themselves rather than government officials.²⁹³ Upon mobilization for war, the Ottoman government recognized the tribal chief (*bayraktar*) of the Hoti tribe as the chief of the irregular troops and expected 34.850 soldiers under the arm of the tribal forces.²⁹⁴ As the feuds were part of the social life, the conventional laws and armament constituted both significant socio-political power for the tribal groups and a strong barrier against the state control over the violence regarding the lack of overall integration and autonomous firepower. Therefore, the tribal groups acted as a class depending on their control over the means of violence as the primary strategy of surplus

²⁸⁹ Mary Edith Durham, *Some Tribal Origins Laws and Customs of the Balkans* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928), 13–92.

²⁹⁰ Anthropologist Durham living in Northern Albania argues that “for the Malisors tribal instinct is far stronger than Church law [although most of them are] Catholic” Durham, 15. While Ahmed Cevdet asserts that tribalism (*kavmiyyet*) constituted more important forces than religion among the Malisors, BOA YEE, No: 79/8, 4/7/1909 79, p. 8.

²⁹¹ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 44–50.

²⁹² BOA YEE, No: 79/8, 4/7/1909.

²⁹³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 17–24.

²⁹⁴ BOA YEE, No: 79/8, 4/7/1909.

appropriation and reproduction. To illustrate, the raids of the tribal groups caused many tensions between these groups and landowners and peasants living in the valleys and towns.²⁹⁵



Figure 2. Highlanders of Shkreli (by Alexandre T. Degrand, 1890s) Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/deggrand/index.html>

Along with the long tradition of privilege, autonomy, and military power as sources of resistance against state control, the geo-strategic position of the region played an important role in the government policies toward the region. The imperative of geopolitics and the intense mechanisms of political accumulation in the hands of tribal groups (i.e., irregular troops) forced the *Tanzimat* government to rely on the power and support of the Albanian tribes in the borderline territories rather than attempts to impose the reforms through coercion to avoid possible conflicts. In Shkoder, the critical geopolitical location near the border with the autonomous principality of Montenegro and Austrian-Italian competition and its influence over the Catholic population forced the *Tanzimat* government to pursue consent-formation and cooperation by retaining the privileged

²⁹⁵ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 36.

positions of the tribal groups in the region. Similarly, the social and geopolitical realities of Kosovo, which covered a larger territory and population with an ethno-religiously diverse population in the strategic boundary of Serbia, brought about further autonomy and privileges for the tribal groups in the region. Therefore, the conditions of the boundaries, the balance of religious groups, and the relations between tribal groups and imperial officers depending on the regional and international conjuncture determined the balance of power in the *Gheglands*.²⁹⁶ In this respect, the geo-political realities of the region stuck the Ottoman government in “a dilemma between the exigency of *realpolitik* and the ambitious *Tanzimat* reform policy” in the region.²⁹⁷

From the 1830s onwards, the tribal groups resisted state-formation efforts that began infringing on their relative autonomy, privileges, and local power. When *Gheglands* was included in the *Tanzimat* regime around 1844, the government attempts at reforms, such as assigning *muhasils* for tax collection and the provincial government, compulsory conscription, new legal forms and courts, and abolishment of traditional privileges, intensified the resistance of tribal groups against the regime as these reforms were regarded as a threat to their autonomy and traditional way of life. There had been numerous instances of local resistance, mainly by highland tribal groups such as Labëria, in the provinces of Skopje (Usküb), Tetove (Kalkandelen), and Prishtina around 1845-1846; which turned into a significant rebellion following year in Gjakove (Yakova). Initially, the rebels won several victories against the local troops, but it was crushed with reinforcements from the Macedonian provinces.²⁹⁸ Since applying reforms through force might cause the tribal groups to change sides and deepen the security problem in the borderland regions, the *Tanzimat* government took cautious steps in the region regarding the reforms on taxation and conscription after crushing the rebellion by coercion. Therefore, it was not until 1850 that the first comprehensive attempts at reforms were initiated in the *Ghegland*.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁶ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 59.

²⁹⁷ Maurus Reinkowski, “The Imperial Idea and Realpolitik - Reform Policy and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire,” in *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 460.

²⁹⁸ Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 223; Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 24–25; Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 24–26.

²⁹⁹ Maurus Reinkowski, *Düzenin Şeyleri, Tanzimat’ın Kelimeleri: 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Reform Politikasının Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırması*, trans. Cigdem Canan Dikmen (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2017), 78–84.

Due to the necessity of tribal support for the defense of the boundaries and the predictably violent tribal resistance to taxation and conscription, the regime spent less time focusing on increasing its monopoly over the means of political accumulation but adopted selective reforms to increase government capacity and control over the region. To this end, after settling down the rebellions and maintaining control in the region around 1855, the governor-general of the vilayet of Shkoder, Mustafa Pasha, established a new organization for the Orthodox, Catholic, and Muslim tribal groups around the province, the Mountain Committee of Shkoder (*Iskodra Cibali Komisyonu*) where representations of the tribes (*fises*) were ensured under the leadership of Muslim notables as means of an intermediary institution between tribal leaders and the government.³⁰⁰ Therefore, the regime attempted to increase its influence over tribal groups by linking them with each other under a committee of representatives by giving formal titles and salaries in return for ensuring stability and control in the region under the hierarchy whose commander (*sergerde*) was chosen among the landed notables of the city.³⁰¹ This committee attempted to establish more control and a power base over the tribal groups near the Montenegrin border. However, the government took a different track and applied the reforms in the region of Catholic Mirdites, which were distant from the border, by working with the Catholic clergy to prevent the blood feud and vendettas.³⁰² Moreover, the regime appointed the members of tribal groups in the newly created police stations or the principals of the new schools in the region as means of further control and stability in the region through cooperation.³⁰³ After tension between the governor of Shkoder and members of the council, the tribal groups next to Montenegrin and Serbian borders continued to enjoy the traditional accommodation policy since the government, with the recommendation of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha, attempted to integrate secure borders gradually into the *Tanzimat* regime through consent and cooperation rather than force.³⁰⁴ Therefore, the government had to integrate itself with local cliques to take advantage of tribal rivalries and competitions to exert its influence in the region. Nevertheless, the resistance of mountaineer tribes against the state control over the means of political accumulation, especially compulsory

³⁰⁰ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 33.

³⁰¹ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 15.

³⁰² Reinkowski, *Düzenin Şeyleri, Tanzimat'ın Kelimeleri: 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Reform Politikasının Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırması*, 120–30.

³⁰³ Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 80.

³⁰⁴ Reinkowski, *Düzenin Şeyleri, Tanzimat'ın Kelimeleri: 19. Yüzyıl Osmanlı Reform Politikasının Karşılaştırmalı Bir Araştırması*, 190–91; Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 113.

conscription, disarmament, and regular taxation, remained the central dynamic of political conflict in the Northern parts of the province.³⁰⁵

2.2.2. *The land of Tosks: The Bearers of Tanzimat*

The Southern regions (*Toskeri* or *Toskalik*) comprised of the provinces, Janina (including the *sancaks* of Yanya, Ergiri, Berat, and Preveze); and Bitola (of Manastir, Elbasan, Görice, Serfice, and Debre) after the Provincial Law.³⁰⁶ The region mainly comprised fertile valleys, coastal areas, and ethnoreligious complex populations where the Bektashi sect of Islam and Greek Orthodox Church was dominant.³⁰⁷ The tribal organizations had disintegrated early in the course of history and left their place to the powerful landed families and peasants engaging in agricultural production. After the clearance of the provincial regime of Ali Pasha, the former landowning families competed to regain their previous power in the region amongst each other and against the state. In this competition, a few wealthy Muslim families owned large estates of *çiftliks* and state lands and bonded the less-wealthy landowning families through patronage networks.³⁰⁸ Along with the opportunities provided by the Land Code, the two competitive and significant families, the Vlores and Vrionis, succeeded in possessing large estates in the fertile plain of Muzakia in the *sancak* of Berat and exerted a powerful influence over the provincial administration and councils as well as assuming critical positions in Istanbul.³⁰⁹

The enclosure process transformed the social-property relations by causing an increase in the dispossession of the peasantry, who gradually lost their lands and were employed as paid-workers in the estates of the landowners, while some loaned their small lands as sharecroppers. Together with the higher taxation, fluctuations in prices, and debts, the intensified peasant dispossession increased the dependence of the peasantry on the landed classes.³¹⁰ Therefore, the landed classes ruled over the peasantry, mainly consisting of non-Muslims cultivating their lands under harsh labor conditions and exploitation. The report of Austrian consul Ippen in 1868 asserted that Christian peasants were subjected to heavy taxes by Muslim landowners in the *Toskland*.³¹¹

³⁰⁵ Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 50–51.

³⁰⁶ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 28–29.

³⁰⁷ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 92.

³⁰⁸ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 19; Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 82.

³⁰⁹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 23.

³¹⁰ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 108–9.

³¹¹ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 20.

Similarly, an outsider viewed Tosk society as divided essentially into two classes, the “oppressor” Muslim landowners and the “oppressed” Christian peasants.³¹² Along with the individual exploitation of the landowning classes, the collective exploitation of the state through taxation and conscription doubled the burden on the peasants in the region. Therefore, a series of peasant revolts arose in the *Toskland* in the years 1856 and 1865 against heavy taxation and dispossession.³¹³



Figure 3. Landowner, lesser landowner, peasant, left to right, 1873, Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/OttomCostumes/index.html>

Having different class structure and geo-political realities than its Northern counterpart, the class character and the regime-building strategies of the *Tanzimat* regime conformed with the interests of the Muslim *Tosk* landed classes. In Janina province, Muslim landowners were rivaled by the strong European presence and influence of Greece through the network of Orthodox Greek *millet* since the region had critical importance for the control over the Adriatic Sea and included a

³¹² Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 24.

³¹³ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 168–206.

significant Orthodox Christian population that formed a majority in some sub-districts. The situation in Monastir was far more complicated due to the complex ethno-religious population, including a large Slavic and Orthodox population, ranging from Bulgarians, Serbs, and Macedonians to Greeks. The *Tosk* landed classes tended to involve in the *Tanzimat* power bloc through cooperation since the consensus was critical in keeping the non-Muslim peasantry under control and resisting irredentist attacks on the region. Consequently, the landed classes adopted different strategies of surplus appropriation by sharing and gradually giving up their political means of accumulation with the central state, which indicated the successful infiltration of the *Tanzimat* regime in the region.

However, the application of the *Tanzimat* reforms, particularly tax reforms, did not proceed without conflict. For instance, a revolt was organized by the Vlora family, whose leader was killed in the Monastir massacre, and their administrative positions were given to the rival Vironi family in 1847. After the suppression of the revolt, many of its leaders were either deported to Asia Minor or imprisoned in Istanbul.³¹⁴ In this sense, the intra-ruling class conflict predominated the strategic orientations of provincial landed classes against each other and the regime. In other words, the strategical orientations of the local dominant classes towards the regime were determined mainly by the intra-ruling class conflict and competition, which both shaped and were shaped by the regime-building strategies of the *Tanzimat* government. While some factions of the local ruling classes were involved in the new hierarchy of the *Tanzimat* power bloc, the others were positioned in opposition; meanwhile, the *Tanzimat* government played off rivalries among powerful landed families in case of any resistance. The new hierarchy among the *Tanzimat* power bloc was founded upon the consensus in which the local dominant classes gave up their means of political accumulation (i.e., irregular forces, local administrative positions, political titles) to the state officers (*muhasils*) in return for preserving their surplus appropriation through their economic means or land ownership in the region.³¹⁵ Moreover, the members of great landed families were integrated into local administration with subordinate positions (i.e., council membership) or central administrative-political network, but on the conditions of being appointed to distant provinces.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Story Sommerville, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1918), 8–9.

³¹⁵ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 82–83.

³¹⁶ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 279.

In this respect, having prominent economic means of exploitation, the long-term socio-economic interests of the *Tosk* landed classes resulted in developing pro-regime strategies and investments for the reform processes as means of regional stability and order.³¹⁷ Moreover, thanks to the developed educational infrastructure in the region, the members of landed families flourished as part of the central administrative apparatus and furnished Ottoman elites and intellectuals in the top positions of central bureaucracy and the military and became the carrier of the reforms; thus the *Tanzimat* regime gained a firmer foothold in Southern Albania.³¹⁸ It turned the region not only a consistent place integrated into the *Tanzimat* regime where regular taxation, military conscription, and central courts functioned but also a center where local elements of the ruling classes, which were integrated into the new hierarchy power bloc, translated the *Tanzimat* reforms into new opportunities through their interests and promoted the expansion of the reforms to other regions.³¹⁹ To illustrate, this reality was manifested in the attitude of the *Tosk* elite towards the tribal groups in the *Gheg* mountains, whose savagery and ignorance were considered a threat to the development of the empire.³²⁰ Moreover, some segments of these landed classes evolved into nascent intellectuals through their strong political and intellectual link with the imperial center and the rest of the world. These groups also founded the basis of the emergence of Albanian autonomist-nationalist programs in the following political conflicts.³²¹

2.2.3. *The Central Albania: Different Patterns of Integration*

The traditional *Gheg-Tosk* dichotomy in the literature tended to create the illusion of categorizing the dynamics of political conflicts in the Albanian provinces either as conservative reactions as opposed to modernity in the former or nationalist awakenings against the “Ottoman yoke” or successful integration in the latter within a regional dichotomy. The interpretations of contemporaries strengthened this attitude, as in the case of Ahmed Cevdet, who put the difference between the two regions as follows *Tosks* were considered to be able to perform every kind of service in the regime, whereas *Ghegs* were considered savage groups whose ability is nothing but

³¹⁷ Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 23, 61.

³¹⁸ For example, Avlonyalı Süreyya Bey, served as an economic advisor to Sultan Abdülhamid, similarly, the Vrioni family, whose roots apparently went back to only the eighteenth century, possessed a similar record of service and influence. Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 23.

³¹⁹ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 66–68.

³²⁰ Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 79.

³²¹ Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 50.

fight.³²² However, Central Albania was an excellent example to account for the regional variations even within a single area regarding the impact of class structure and geopolitics on different strategies and positioning that appeared in different dynamics of political conflicts. The complex class structure and the geography of the region brought about the uneven entrance of the *Tanzimat* regime throughout the different parts of the Central Albanian provinces. The region consisted of the coastal areas around Drac located in the south of Shkoder, the interior zones such as the cities Tiran, Elbasan, Pekin, and Kroya. While the coastal regions were similar to the *Tosk* class structure in which a few powerful landed families, such as Toptani, Vironi, Verlaci, Bicaku, Zogolli, and Hoxholli, possessed extended lands around the fertile plain called Zadrima.³²³ These families concentrated on the provincial capital and experienced competition among each other and with the tribal groups in the interior zones.³²⁴ The interior zones, which formed part of the province of Manastir, consisted mainly of mountainous areas similar to the *Ghegland*, on the other hand, dominated by the Muslim tribal families of Mat.³²⁵

Since the intra-ruling class competition concentrated between the landed families and the tribal groups, the strategical orientations of the former toward the *Tanzimat* regime emerged as cooperation, while the latter resisted the reform process to preserve their relative autonomy and privileges. However, suffering from the intensified exploitation by the local dominant classes and the central state, the peasants became the main actors of the anti-regime uprisings in the region. For instance, a series of peasant uprisings directed against the landed classes and provincial tax-farmers arose in the districts of Berat and Delvina, which were put down by the Ottoman troops with reinforcements from Monastir and Janina.³²⁶ The non-coincidence of property relations and religious discrimination prevented foreign interventions in these rebellions, as in the case of *Toskland*.

Consequently, the landed families in the coastal areas were successfully integrated into the new hierarchy of the *Tanzimat* power bloc since the reform policies supported their competition against the tribal groups and their control over the peasant resistance. Therefore, these families

³²² BOA YEE, No: 79/8, 4/7/1909.

³²³ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 108.

³²⁴ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 72.

³²⁵ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 34.

³²⁶ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 110–12.

reproduced themselves within the new regime by depending on their land ownership and performing legal and administrative functions such as resolving local conflicts or providing public order.³²⁷ On the other hand, the tribal groups in the mountainous areas remained under control of tribal groups. Nevertheless, the strategical orientations of these groups towards the regime were not stable but assumed complex and ambivalent characteristics depending on the different levels of class conflicts.³²⁸ Therefore, the application and success of the *Tanzimat* policies varied even in a single administrative unit within the Albanian provinces.



Figure 4. A landowner from Tiran . A landowner from Tiran (by Alexandre T. Degrand 1890s) Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/degrand/index.html>

2.2.4. *The Balance Sheet: Reformization of the Albanian Provinces*

Overall, despite its uneven and gradual development in some regions, even remaining as nominal changes in the mountainous-boundary regions, the *Tanzimat* reforms caused considerable

³²⁷ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 73.

³²⁸ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 279.

changes in the social-property relations in the Albanian provinces, which brought about divergent dynamics of political conflicts in which local actors took different positionings crystallized in pro-regime or anti-regime strategies. The most prevalent dynamic of political conflict was the intensification of the peasant rebellions. To the extent that the class character and selective strategy of the *Tanzimat* regime did not allow for substantial improvements in the conditions of peasants, the peasants picked up the cost of the *Tanzimat* reforms by suffering from both the individual exploitation of the local dominant classes, such as landed families and tribal groups (i.e., increasing dispossession, raids, rents, etc.) and the collective exploitation of the state (in the forms of high taxation, compulsory military service). However, the peasant rebellions developed spontaneously and remained local in the absence of any political program and foreign support. Still, the level of the coincidence of class conflict with the ethno-religious distinctions, especially in the *Toskland*, invoked foreign interventions in the political conflicts. The second prominent dynamic of political conflict was the resistance of tribal groups against the state efforts to monopolize the means of political accumulation to preserve their traditional autonomy, privileges, and exemptions. Concentrating on the *Ghegland* and the mountainous interior of the Central regions, the tribal groups attempted to keep their means of violence against the state since their reproduction depended on political strategies of accumulation.

Despite varied in their positions, the majority of the landed families in the Albanian provinces concentrated on the *Toskland* and the coastal areas of Central regions approved the reforms as their long-term class interests were linked to the capacity of the central government to control the peasants and to defend the empire against irredentist attacks. Still, the greater landed classes possessed a significant socio-economic power depending on their extensive land ownerships, which enabled them to compete with the state authority on the local scale at any opportunity to further increase their means of exploitation and domination, while the lesser landowners also looked for opportunities to join the competition. Moreover, the intra-ruling class competition and the opportunities or limitations provided by the new regime led some of these lesser landowners to evolve into bureaucrats or nascent individuals. This group became the defenders of the Albanian cultural and educational movements as means of challenging the existing status-quo dominated by the greater landed families and the tribal groups. For instance, some Albanian intellectuals such as Naum Veqilharxhi, Pasko Vasa, Vincenzo Dorsa, Kostandin Kristoforidhi, Jani Vreto, Prenk Doci, and Abdyl Frahseri developed the Albanian cultural

movement either in exile or in Istanbul around the 1850s.³²⁹ Thus, the strategic positioning of the landed classes towards the regime varied and changed depending on the regional class structure and their levels of integration into the power bloc. Moreover, different factions of the ruling classes attempted to consolidate their local positions by controlling and directing the peasant unrest and tribal resistances into their programs, as well as establishing links with the neighboring powers. To illustrate, Tafil Buzi, coming from a lesser landowning class in *Toskland*, made contacts with the Greece and Mehmed Ali Pasha of Egypt; while the Catholic Mirdite leader Bib Doda used his links with Serbia and Montenegro.³³⁰

In the last instance, the *Tanzimat* regime successfully accommodated itself in the Albanian provinces by creating a balance in the region through selective applications of the reform program depending on the regional and geo-political variations without causing further fragmentation of the provincial ruling classes and without a general crisis. The uneven development of the reforms in different regions depended on the support or resistance of the local dominant classes. While the regime accommodated itself in the *Toskland* and coastal areas of Central provinces with the support of the landed classes in the region, it gave concessions to the tribal groups in *Ghegland* in the face of the threat posed by the peasant unrests and international geo-political pressure. However, the changing balance of the international geo-political competition and the emergent crisis in the Balkans materialized in the “Eastern Question” had direct consequences in the Albanian provinces, which brought about the new dynamics of political conflicts and relations as well as predestinated the strategical orientations of the Hamidian regime towards the region.

2.3. Hamidian Regime: The Politics of Unity

The *Tanzimat* regime prevented the emergence of a general crisis in the empire by drawing the line between the resistance of tribal groups to the mechanisms of indirect-collective exploitation, peasant reactions to the new-property relations in agriculture, and opposition of provincial landed classes to the centralization of the administrative system. However, the strategic group leading the *Tanzimat* regime, which solidified in Ali and Fuad Pashas, caused oppositions among conservatives and pro-reformist young intellectual-bureaucratic elements within the central Ottoman polity. This opposition found its expression in two different, or more correctly opposite,

³²⁹ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 111–15.

³³⁰ Pollo and Puto, 112.

programs formulated by different strategic groups. The first group consisted of intellectuals and low-ranking young bureaucrats, known as Young Ottomans, coming together around common attitudes toward the opposition against the maladministration of the regime.³³¹ Against the concentration of political power around the *Tanzimat* group dominating the bureaucracy of Sublim Porte, the Young Ottomans demanded the involvement of wider segments of society in the decision-making process through representative mechanisms. Their proposal for an alternative was a constitutional government as means of checking on political-administrative authority.³³² This group also supported by the majority of the propertied classes since the constitutional program attempted to deepen the *Tanzimat* program by reorganizing the hierarchy of power bloc to increase the collective participation of the Ottoman dominant classes in political decision-making, in other words, increasing their ruling capacity as a class to surpass the crisis dynamics inherent in the *Tanzimat* regime. Moreover, the Young Ottomans also challenged the privileges of the *millet system* by offering an alternative Ottoman citizenship based on equality provided by the constitution to ensure the expansion of political society through the representative assembly as an antidote to increasing peasant rebellions colored by a nationalist discourse, which invoked foreign influence and intervention.³³³ Nevertheless, the legitimacy of the constitution and parliament was framed by the Islamic concept of *usûl-i meşveret* (consultation system).³³⁴

Although the Islamic reference served as a functional tool for the constitutionalist group, it emerged as a fundamental tool for the formulation of an autocratic regime in the hands of the conservative opposition. After the death of Ali Pasha, a myriad of issues and problems erupted in a power struggle between two strategic groups, i.e., the conservatives around Mahmud Nedim Pasha and constitutionalists around Midhat Pasha, over the government and bureaucratic positions. When the former group, labeled as the “Old Turkey Party” by foreign diplomats, came to power, the center of gravity shifted from the Sublime Porte to the Palace with the reassertion of sultanic power by Abdulaziz.³³⁵ The government of Mahmud Nedim initiated an operation of shifting bureaucratic offices by sending constitutional threats to exile and reducing the sections of the

³³¹ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 14.

³³² Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 112.

³³³ Behlül Özkan, *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan: The Making of a National Homeland in Turkey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 34–35.

³³⁴ Findley, “The Tanzimat,” 104–6.

³³⁵ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 109.

Council of State.³³⁶ While the power struggle among these two groups intensified with the resignation of Midhat Pasa from his governorship, the economic crisis and peasant rebellions in the Balkans caught the Ottoman power bloc politically fragmented.

Together with the changing balance of power among the Great Powers and their strategic orientations in Near Eastern politics, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 as well as the rising power of Germany around 1871, Russia renewed its threat over the Balkans. Meanwhile, the empire suffered from an agricultural crisis and famine after a drought, and bad crops in central Anatolia caused a growing scarcity of products like grain and an increase in the prices around 1873 and 1874, which were followed by a collapse in the imperial treasury which tried to deal with the repay the external loans in 1875. As the chief source of revenue, the government put the burden of the crisis on the agricultural producers by raising the tithe rates by fifteen to eighteen percent and pressing new taxes.³³⁷ Although the crisis concentrated in Anatolia, the resistance against the tax burden turned into social turmoil in the Balkan provinces. Due to the coincidence of the social-property relations with ethno-religious differences, the agrarian dispute between the non-Muslim peasants and Muslim landowners in Herzegovina turned into a peasant rebellion in July 1875. The rebellion spread into Bosnia and later Bulgaria and attracted foreign support from Montenegro, Serbia, Austria-Hungary, and Russia in the following year.³³⁸

The political effect of this chaotic period was a complex set of discontent, especially among the Muslim ruling classes against the government of Mahmud Nedim, who proved unable to deal effectively with the crisis deepening with the interventions of the Great Powers and peasant rebellions.³³⁹ The fact that the existing system could not resolve the crisis brought together different segments of society under the wing of the constitutionalist movement led by Midhat and Huseyin Avni Pasha, who were fall out of government. Despite having different strategical interests and programs, these groups blamed the autocratic system for the crisis. Hence, they made a common cause for the constitutional monarchy and consultative assembly as a remedy to the crisis. As a result, having failed to develop a consistent policy to overcome the crisis and disorder in central

³³⁶ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 281–191.

³³⁷ Davison, 301–5.

³³⁸ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 72–73.

³³⁹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 301–10.

politics, Mahmud Nedim Pasha government was dismissed from power, and Sultan Abdulaziz was deposed with a coup d'état by an alliance of constitutionalist and conservative groups.³⁴⁰

The fragmentation of the Ottoman power bloc with the power struggle in central politics prevented the assertion of a political will to overcome the crisis and international pressures. Although the constitutional program emerged as the fundamental mechanism to reaggregate the Ottoman ruling classes, the opposition group began to split immediately after the coup.³⁴¹ Despite the efforts of conservative groups to counterbalance the constitutional movements with attempts to either prevent or delay the declaration of the constitution or to ensure the authority of the sultan within the constitutional regime, the constitutionalist group ascended Abdulhamid II to the throne in return for his promise to promulgate a constitution and reappoint constitutionalist bureaucrats to the government.³⁴² Nevertheless, the struggle over drafting the constitution proceeded with a major showdown between pro-reformist/constitutionalist and conservative/autocratic groups.³⁴³

Meanwhile, Serbia and Montenegro embarked on rebellion against the Ottoman empire. Although the Ottoman troops crushed the movement, the threat of Russian intervention resulted in an international conference in Istanbul (*Constantinople or Tersane Conference*) to solve the Balkan crisis. The emergency of international pressure compelled the constitutionalist groups to make significant concessions on their draft of the constitution, i.e., Abdulhamid II held the right to appoint the grand vizier and exile those who endangered the public security without trial with article 113 of the constitution.³⁴⁴ In this respect, Abdulhamid II retained the legislative authority regarding the power of appointment and the right to veto any bills of law. These concessions and the rejection of the terms proposed by the conference adumbrated the course of the new crisis and wars in the Balkans crystallized in the “Eastern Question” and the foundations of the autocratic (*istibdad*) regime of Abdulhamid II.

³⁴⁰ Bülent Tanör, *Osmanlı - Türk Anayasal Gelişmeleri: 1789-1980* (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2004), 123–26.

³⁴¹ Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, 328–40.

³⁴² Tanör, *Osmanlı - Türk anayasal gelişmeleri*, 133–34.

³⁴³ See Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament* (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University, 1963).

³⁴⁴ For the full text of the article 113, see Kili and Gözübüyük, *Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüze Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, 43.

2.3.1. Consolidation of the Power Bloc: Loyalty as a Mechanism of Accumulation

Although the Fundamental Law (*Kanun-i Esasi*) recognized Islam as the state religion and guaranteed the privileges of *millets*, it expanded the political society beyond communal lines with the concept of universal Ottoman citizenship represented by the assembly.³⁴⁵ The elections to the chamber of deputies (*Heyet-i Mebusan*) embarked on a two-level system in which the elected members of the existing provincial councils decided the nominees eligible to become deputies, and those who had won the most votes were sent to the State Council for approval.³⁴⁶ For lairdship became the precondition of deputyship, it was restricted suffrage rather than universal suffrage. Moreover, since the provincial governors and propertied classes held sway over the councils, they manipulated the elections in favor of local ruling classes. Therefore, the Chamber of Deputies threaded a fine line between provincial ruling classes and central bureaucracy within the power bloc.³⁴⁷ In other words, the constitutionalist program extended the limits of the *Tanzimat* power bloc, since the constitution and the assembly provided provincial dominant classes with further participation and representation in central politics and gave them considerable leverage concerning matters on property and taxation.

While the deputies concentrated mainly on the local issues in the parliamentary discussions, they also advocated their class interests by attempting to participate in the executive processes, such as demanding a change in the taxation system, a new legal system securing their property rights from any intrusion, professionalization of bureaucracy as means of applying the required laws, and educational reform.³⁴⁸ In other words, the ruling classes wanted to guarantee their private-individual exploitation and increase their capacity of surplus extraction within the constitutional and legal framework. Moreover, they displayed efficient activities to supervise legislative processes unsettlingly for the sultan and his loyal officers. However, the friction between the sultan and Midhat Pasha group over administrative appointments and government positions ended up with the dismissal of Midhat as grand vizier and his exile. As a result, the ongoing power struggle from 1871 onwards ended with the victory of the conservative group, which embarked on a counter-revolutionary process crystallized in the Hamidian autocratic regime

³⁴⁵ Kanun-ı Esasî madde 17, Gözübüyük ve Kili, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, s 106

³⁴⁶ Tanör, *Osmanlı - Türk anayasal gelişmeleri*, 152–55.

³⁴⁷ See Kayali, “Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1919.”

³⁴⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, “The Ottoman Parliament of 1877 and Its Social Significance,” in *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 75–89.

when the 1877-78 Russo-Ottoman War gave the sultan to use his constitutional right to dissolve the Chamber of Deputies in February 1878.³⁴⁹ Therefore, the autocratic (*istibdad*) regime re-personalized the political domination around sultan Abdulhamid II with a counter-revolutionary strategic program based on the politics of Islamic Unity.

Alongside the power struggle in the government, the definite defeat in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78 and the following decisions in the Berlin Congress conditioned the Hamidian regime-building strategies and the corresponding dynamics of political conflicts. In the wake of the Berlin Treaty, which revised the heavy terms of the San Stefano Treaty dictated upon the Ottoman Empire by Russia, the empire lost 230.000 square-kilometer lands and 5 or 6 million of population.³⁵⁰ The pre-war autonomous subject states of Montenegro, Romania, and Serbia gained formal independence from the empire and grabbed further territories hitherto under direct imperial control. A new Bulgarian principality was founded on lands stretching from the Danube to Balkan Mountains, while other parts remained under the Ottoman rule with the establishment of autonomous provinces of the Eastern Rumelia, which decided to be governed by a Christian government appointed by Great powers.³⁵¹ The Berlin Treaty and the bilateral agreements with belligerent states included provisions of loss of land and a heavy war indemnity along with promises of reforms in the Balkans and Eastern Anatolia, which would have significant consequences on the regional dynamics of political conflicts. The adjourned contents of reforms brought about the most burdensome problems in the decades to come, namely Macedonia and Armenian problems, which turned into a battleground for autonomist-nationalist armed groups and foreign interventions. As a result, the selective strategies of the Hamidian regime were founded on the efforts to overcome the legitimacy crisis and the political conflicts created by the Berlin Treaty.

Following the effective dissolution of the parliamentary order, Abdulhamid II began to fashion an autocratic regime by personalizing the sovereignty, which became a major dispute among historians, particularly regarding its (dis)continuity with the stages of modern state-formation in the empire.³⁵² The Islamic character of the Hamidian regime was generally explained

³⁴⁹ François Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, trans. Ali Berkay (İstanbul: Homer, 2006), 99–102.

³⁵⁰ Benjamin C. Fortna, “The Reign of Abdulhamid II,” in *The Cambridge History of Modern Turkey, IV: Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 47.

³⁵¹ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 12–123.

³⁵² For a detailed discussion, see Nadir Özbek, “Modernite, Tarih ve İdeoloji: II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Tarihçiliği Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme,” *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2004): 71–90.

as a natural outcome of the popular balance along religious lines through the loss of territory heavily populated by non-Muslims and the increase in the Muslim population through the influx of refugees from the lost lands after Berlin Treaty. However, focusing on the agency of the sultan as an extension of the state-centered approach, this attitude overlooks the class character of the Hamidian regime, which played a decisive role in the regime-building strategies and emergent dynamics of political conflicts. Came to power after a central power struggle and crisis fragmented the ruling classes, the Hamidian regime implemented a program towards reorganizing the extent and hierarchy of the power bloc by consolidating the unity and consensus of the ruling classes around the loyalty to the sultan along with the redefinition of political society into distinctively Islamic line. In this respect, the Hamidian regime reversed the attempts of founding impersonal relations of power by re-personalizing the political power and connecting it with local privileges and competencies granted to some segments of the provincial ruling classes, while attempting the keep peasantry under pressure through coercion.

After suspending the parliament, Abdulhamid II exiled the constitutionalist group by appointing them as governors of distant provinces and punishing the leaders of the coup d'état of May 1876 in the *Yildiz* trials, thereby the conservative group around himself and its political program became unrivaled.³⁵³ Subsequently, the Hamidian regime introduced the “politics of unity,” particularly relying on Islamic solidarity and emphasizing personal loyalty to the Sultan-Caliph. While the political power shifted from Sublime Porte to the *Yildiz* Palace, a new strategic group loyal to the sultan seized the state apparatus and established control over the civil, military, and religious bureaucracy.³⁵⁴ In other words, the bureaucratic and representative mechanisms built during the *Tanzimat* regime were monopolized by the *Yildiz* Palace and the sultan Abdulhamid himself, which turned the Sublime Porte from an independent branch of government to a subservient administrative arm of the state. Abdulhamid II created a new bureaucratic mechanism in the *Yildiz* Palace hierarchy, with the sultan at the top, assuming the government's executive and

³⁵³ Amongst exiles were Küçük Said Pasha, Mehmed Sadık Pasha, Mehmed Akif Pasha, ‘English’ Said Pasha, Mehmed Nafiz Pasha, Damad Mahmud Celaledin Pasha who were appointed as governors in different provinces; amongst the trials Midhat Pasha, Rüşdi Pasha, and Hayrullah Efendi were punished. The conservative bureaucrats of Hamid consisted of Ahmet Cevdet Pasha, Tunuslu Hayreddin Pasha, Mahmut Nedim Pasha, Uryanizade Ahmed Esad Efendi, Rauf Pasha, Safvet Pasha, Arifi Pasha, Küçük Said Pasha, Derviş Pasha, Nusret Pasha and Yusuf Rıza Pasha. Gökhan Çetinsaya, “Abdulhamid II’s Domestic Policy: An Attempt at Periodization,” *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, no. 47 (2016): 41–50.

³⁵⁴ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 227–31.

legislative functions without checks and balances.³⁵⁵ The office of Grand Chancery (*mabeyn*), connecting the sultan with Sublime Porte in the previous regimes, lay at the center of this bureaucratic mechanism and became the “political nerve center” for carrying out all essential affairs of the state.³⁵⁶ Moreover, direct petitioning and correspondence with the Palace, which was previously the exclusive right of the grand vizier and the *seyhülislam*, were expanded to the offices of the *Serasker*, the Marshal of *Tophane*, the Minister for the Navy, and the Ministry overseeing the sultan’s private treasury (*Hazine-i Hassa*), and series of commissions such as those overseeing the military (*Teftiş-i Askeri*), the treasury, and purchasing (*Mübayaat Komisyonu*).³⁵⁷

In addition to the Grand Chancery, some commissions and a group of advisors, called by opposition groups as “*Yıldız faction*,” whose opinions the sultan valued, worked as an alternative government, indicating the exclusive political power of the Palace in the Hamidian regime.³⁵⁸ The bureaucracy also immensely enlarged and took a household-like form based on the personal relations of patronage for office-giving as one of the primary sources of loyalty and integration into the power bloc. Moreover, the Hamidian regime established bureaucratic schools such as the Royal Academy of Administration and School of Civil Administration (*Mülkiye Mektebi*) to grow loyal bureaucrats at different levels for his regime.³⁵⁹ As a result, loyalty to the sultan substituted the merit system in the appointment and promotion processes in all civil and military cadres. Along with granting government positions, special titles, extra ranks, medals, decorations, and other personal rewards became the main tools of nepotism in the Hamidian regime.³⁶⁰

These incentive factors of creating loyalty to the sultan and his regime were accompanied by harsh discipline, pressure, and punishment system for which the sultan developed a ubiquitous network of police and spy or informers’ system (*casusluk*) as means of controlling the state elites.³⁶¹ As loyalty to the sultan emerged as indispensable for the autocratic regime, the sultan relied on spies and internal espionage networks to identify the non-loyal elements among them and provincial notables to the sultan and the regime, whose main punishment was the policy of

³⁵⁵ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit: Yıldız Hatıraları* (İstanbul: İstanbul Muallim Ahmet Halit Kitaphanesi, 1931), 18–25.

³⁵⁶ Findley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity*, 148.

³⁵⁷ Çetinsaya, “Abdulhamid II’s Domestic Policy: An Attempt at Periodization,” 54.

³⁵⁸ Georjeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 172–74.

³⁵⁹ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908: Islamization, Autocracy, and Discipline* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001), 173–87.

³⁶⁰ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 92.

³⁶¹ Findley, *Bureaucratic Reform*, 158–59.

exile. Therefore, as officers from all ranks among the bureaucracy reported on the activities of each other, the Yildiz Palace archive was flooded with tens of thousands of *jurnals* (reports).³⁶² In this respect, the support to the Hamidian regime resulted from not only the consent of the Ottoman ruling class looking for a way out of the crisis but also the “carrot and stick” tactics applied wisely by the regime.

Along the same pattern as the central bureaucracy, the Hamidian regime attempted to integrate the provincial ruling classes into the hierarchy of power bloc at the center of the sultan through the relations of personal patronage and loyalty. Having eliminated the parliament and representative councils, the Hamidian regime faced the problem of substituting the representative mechanisms as means of provincial ruling class participation in the power bloc hierarchy and the decision-making processes as means of their reproduction. The crisis of the *Tanzimat* regime demonstrated the delicacy of the balance between the individual-political and collective mechanisms of exploitation. In this respect, the Hamidian regime developed a two-pronged strategy of “centralism” and “politics of notables,” whose employment in tandem was seemingly contradictory but, actually, complementary policies to settle the regime into the provinces. Throughout the policy of centralism, the regime attempted to increase the control of the Palace in the provincial administration within the framework of the new hierarchy of power bloc. In this context, the measures such as reducing the terms in provincial offices, increasing the number of officers in the provincial councils who were directly appointed from the palace, establishing of gendarmerie corps and civil inspectorships were executed for reordering the hierarchy and control of the provincial administration.³⁶³ Moreover, the improved means of technology and communication, such as the spread of networks and railway construction, enabled the Hamidian regime to reach and intervene in distant provinces and increased its ability to control the collective mechanisms of exploitation through more efficient taxation and conscription.³⁶⁴

The policy of centralism was accompanied by the politics of notables through which the “loyal” provincial ruling classes were integrated into the regime with personal relations of patronage and privileges. In this respect, the main tools of the politics of notables were similar to

³⁶² See Süleyman Kâni İrtəm and Osman S. Kocahanoğlu, *Abdülhamid Devrinde Hafiyelik ve Sansür: Abdülhamid’e Verilen Jurnaller* (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları, 1999).

³⁶³ Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 197–206.

³⁶⁴ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 77–78.

those applied to central bureaucracy for accepting the hegemony of the palace, particularly the Muslim ruling classes such as landed families and tribal groups in the provinces were granted special privileges and various government positions as well as medals, decorations, and other personal rewards.³⁶⁵ In other words, the administrative centralization was ensured by the decentralized networks of patronage, clientelism, and privileges which blurred the lines between private and state control over the means of political accumulation. Particularly in the regions possessing ethno-religious rivalries and the autonomist-nationalist movements after the Berlin Treaty, such as Eastern Balkans, Eastern Anatolia, and Arabian Peninsula, the Hamidian regime assigned a more significant role and importance to the Muslim Albanian, Kurdish, and Arab strategic groups. Therefore, the powerful strategic elements of Muslim provincial classes in such reasons were subjected to special relations with the regime and bestowed with higher governmental positions and privileges. To illustrate, as discussed in the following chapter, the members of the Albanian tribal groups and landed families dominated important positions in the civil and military cadres of the Hamidian regime.³⁶⁶

The center of gravity among this two-pronged policy varied concerning the class structure, ethno-religious characteristics of the population, geo-strategic locations of the regions, and the reactions of the local ruling classes (i.e., the level of conflict, competition, consensus, or cooperation). In the regions like *Toskland*, where the incorporation of the elements of the ruling class into the imperial administrative structure was substantially ensured and the financial and military power of tribal groups was weak, the Hamidian regime retained the centralization strategies inherited from the *Tanzimat* regime within the new relations of patronage and loyalty. While the younger members of the provincial ruling classes were integrated into bureaucratic and administrative mechanisms through expanding education opportunities, the existing social-property relations and private accumulation strategies provided the ruling classes with control over the peasants, which increased their capacity for surplus extraction. To illustrate, the government gave up its attempts to replace the tithe with the land tax, which means taxing the propertied classes, to compensate for the loss of tax resources given to the Public Debt Administration after the resistance of the provincial ruling classes.³⁶⁷ In this way, while the Hamidian regime assured

³⁶⁵ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 80; Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 237.

³⁶⁶ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit*, 25, 30–31.

³⁶⁷ Özbek, *İmparatorluğun Bedeli*, 85–87.

the private exploitation of the ruling classes vis-à-vis surrendering their political means of accumulation to the state monopoly, almost all financial burden of the Hamidian regime continued to be laid on the peasants, mainly consisting of the non-Muslim population.

In the boundary regions such as *Ghegland*, *Kurdistan*, and Syria, where tribal groups preserved their means of political accumulation and violence, the Hamidian regime gave weight to the politics of notables. As borderline territories consisting of the ethno-religiously mixed population with neighboring kin-states, the geo-strategical importance of these regions further increased with the promises of reforms in the Berlin Treaty. Moreover, since the relations of exploitation coincided with religious divisions, the revolts of non-Muslim peasants in these regions also overlapped with the reform demands articulated in the nationalist-revolutionary movements. In this sense, instead of attempting to control the means of violence in the hands of tribal groups, the Hamidian regime mobilized them against the nationalist-revolutionary movements as a strategic priority. Therefore, the regime embarked on a tribal policy of consolidating the traditional power relations by granting administrative ranks, duties, and a series of privileges and exemptions to the tribal chiefs on a *de facto* and legal basis.³⁶⁸ Moreover, the traditional rights and violence asserted by the tribal groups over the peasants were either tacitly or explicitly supported by the regime as a mechanism of their incorporation and diminishing the revolutionary activities of non-Muslim peasants. For instance, the tribal groups or irregular local militias forced Albanian peasants who suffered from tribal violence to pay a protection fee (*muhafiz ücreti*) through the protection-racket system (*deruhdecilik*).³⁶⁹ As another example, the foundation of Hamidian Light Cavalry (*Hamidiye Alayları*) from Kurdish tribal groups provided a legal framework for the tribal violence against Armenian peasants ranging from raids to land-grabbing.³⁷⁰ In Syrian provinces, the Hamidian regime reconciled with Druze and Bedouin tribal groups, who were subjected to military operations to control the monopoly over violence by the previous regime, especially against

³⁶⁸ Georgeon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, 215–20; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 14.

³⁶⁹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 134–38.

³⁷⁰ See Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Janet Klein, "Conflict and Collaboration: Rethinking Kurdish-Armenian Relations in the Hamidian Period (1876-1909)," *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 1, no. 2 (July 2007): 153-166.; Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J: Zed Books, 1992); Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurds, States, and Tribes," 'Abd al-Jabbar and Dawod (London: Saqi, 2001), 165–83.

Syrian-centered Christian oppositions.³⁷¹ Consequently, the Hamidian regime made loyalty more rewarding for the tribal groups while effectively mobilizing their means of violence as a counter-revolutionary power.

Moreover, the Hamidian regime also benefited from the ideas of the “Islamic Reformism” or “*Salafi* modernism” movement but overshadowed their liberal aspects.³⁷² In addition to geo-strategical priorities, the religious identity of the tribal groups in parallel with the Hamidian definition of political society in Sunni Islamic terms and around the loyalty to the Caliph-Sultan was another decisive factor for their incorporation into the power bloc. The regime founded the Imperial Tribal School (*Mekteb-i Aşiret-i Hümayun*) in Istanbul in 1892 as an institutional way of integrating Arab, Kurdish, and Albanian tribes into the imperial system.³⁷³ In this respect, the school served to foster Muslim brotherhood under the authority of the Caliph-Sultan by educating loyal bureaucrats to the sultan and strengthening the links between the tribal groups and the regime to spread the control and ideology of the regime towards frontier regions.³⁷⁴ Within this framework, the relations of personal patronage and loyalty as means of the “politics of unity” were fortified with the political-ideologic emphasis on the Caliphate institution as an Islamic principle of justice on the legal autocracy of the Hamidian regime. The regime created a personality cult around the Caliph-Sultan as the main base of loyalty and attachment to the state by re-inventing Islamic tradition. This policy of Pan-Islamism appealed to Muslim solidarity to establish a cohesive socio-political unity between the state and the Muslim population with new cultural or moral codes and perceptions while externalizing those out of them, particularly the non-Muslim population, from political society. Moreover, the regime hoped to gain foreign influence by appealing to Islam with the claim of moral and spiritual leadership of the Caliph-Sultan over the entire Muslim world, which served as a wild card against the colonialism and imperialism of the Great Powers by ruling over the Muslim population.³⁷⁵

³⁷¹ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*; Rogan, *Frontiers of the State in the Late Ottoman Empire*.

³⁷² Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 36–41.

³⁷³ Eugene L. Rogan, “Aşiret Mektebi: Abdülhamid II’s School for Tribes (1892–1907),” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 28, no. 1 (February 1996): 83.

³⁷⁴ Some historians regard this process as domestic orientalism, or Ottoman neo-imperialism Makdisi, “Ottoman Orientalism”; Deringil, “They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery.”

³⁷⁵ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 130; Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 79.

While mythologized and ritualized history were used to impose the new perception, the public rituals and symbolism acquired a new meaning for legitimizing the regime and competing with foreign states.³⁷⁶ For instance, Abdulhamid II, accompanied by the Imperial Guards, went from Yıldız Palace to the mosque to join the Friday prayer (*Cuma Selamlığı*) to show his personal piety and splendor.³⁷⁷ As another example, in the public and official documents, the sultan used the titles like the “Shelter of the Caliphate” (*Hilafetpenah*).³⁷⁸ The symbolic representation of the Caliph-Sultan spread in the provinces through the buildings of mosques, bridges, schools, fountains, dams, and clock towers as visual confirmation of the sultan’s sovereignty, taking the form of his monogram (*tugra*).³⁷⁹ In this respect, the policy of Pan-Islamism was not only an effort to legitimize the regime but also a formation of a new political society relying on the Islamization of the public and political fields. It implies that, rather than a passive reaction to the *de facto* territorial and popular conditions of the Muslim majority, this policy was an active regime-building strategy structuring the hierarchy of a new power bloc and its participants in the political society into religious lines.

2.3.2. Reactions to Hamidian Regime: The Balkan Crisis

In the Balkan provinces, the *Tanzimat* strategy of institutionalizing the *millet system* to meet the equality demands of the non-Muslim population without challenging the existing social-property and power relations caused peasant rebellions in the regions where the relations of exploitation coincided with religious differences. This crisis concentrated on the peasant unrest inherited by the Hamidian regime and further intensified when the strategic orientation of the regime tended to fortify the power of Muslim ruling classes to the detriment of non-Muslims. Moreover, the *millet system* paved the way for neighboring Balkan states and Great Powers to intervene in political conflicts by politicizing the religious differences in Macedonia and mobilizing the peasant rebellions into the nationalist ideology against the pan-Islamist and despotic Hamidian regime. To illustrate, in 1870, supported by Russia, Bulgarians pressured the Hamidian

³⁷⁶ Hakan T. Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa! Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüzyılında Merasimler*, Kitap Yayınevi (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004); Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876 - 1909* (London: Tauris, 2011).

³⁷⁷ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 16–44.

³⁷⁸ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 79.

³⁷⁹ Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains*, 29–31.

government to grant a *millet* status under the leadership of Bulgarian Exarch, different from the Greek Patriarchate.

After the Berlin treaty, the opportunity structures provided by the new regional power relations or/and struggle and international geo-political competition transformed the political conflicts into an armed struggle in which the Balkan states and secret-nationalist organizations attempted to mobilize their kin-groups into their irredentist and nationalist causes. As the new and contested boundary of the empire, Macedonia (which coincided with the Ottoman provinces of Salonica, Kosovo, and Monastir) became the center of more problems than anywhere else due to the complex ethno-religious composition, including Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Vlachs, and Albanians.³⁸⁰ In this respect, the region witnessed the efforts of neighboring kin-states, the national Church, and autonomist-nationalist committees to politicize the ethno-religious differentiations to mobilize their kin-groups which took the form of violence, terrorism, and guerilla tactics against the state, government, and rival groups as well as provoking the foreign intervention.³⁸¹ In a similar vein, a series of incidents between the Armenian revolutionary organizations, peasants, and the Hamidian Light Cavalries mounted in the widespread violence and massacres from 1894 to 1896, which vault into Istanbul, where Armenian revolutionaries occupied the headquarters of the Ottoman Bank.³⁸² Within this framework, the Prizren League of Albanian provinces constituted an excellent example both identifying the different regime-building strategies of the Hamidian regime and the divergent local responses predicated on the interplay between the social-property relations, geo-political competition, and nationalization.

2.4. Hamidian Regime in Albanian Provinces: Regionalism, Factionalism, and Frontier Dynamics

The disaster of the War of '93' became a watershed for the dynamics of socio-political conflict in the Albanian provinces, which significantly impacted the course of the Hamidian

³⁸⁰ Hannes Grandits, Nathalie Clayer, and Robert Pichler, eds., *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans: The Great Powers, the Ottoman Empire and Nation-Building* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

³⁸¹ Most important among these organizations were autonomist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) and the competing External Macedonian Revolutionary Committee (EMRO) demanding separation and annexation by Bulgaria. Fikret Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu: Oluşumu ve 1908'e Kadar Gelişimi* (İstanbul: Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı, 2001).

³⁸² Among Armenian organizations were nationalist Henschak (the Bell 1887) and a more moderate and larger social-democrat Dashnakzoutiun (Armenian Revolutionary Federation 1890) Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 83.

regime-building strategies and the divergent local reactions to those strategies. After the war, the provisions of the San Stefano Treaty (*Yeşilköy*) forced the Ottoman Empire to cede a large portion of territory within the Albanian provinces, populated by Muslim Albanians, to the neighboring states of Serbia, Montenegro, Greece, and newly founded Bulgaria. According to the Treaty, a newly-founded Bulgarian principality included the towns of Skopje (*Uskup*), Bitola (*Manastir*), Gorice (*Korçe*), Debar (*Debre*), Tetovo (*Kalkandelen*), and Lake Ohrid within its borders; Montenegro spread into Plava, Podgorica, Shpuz (*Tuz*), Dulcigno (*Ulgun*), Gusinje (*Gusinye*), which were inhabited by the Albanian tribes of Plava, Grude, Hoti and Klement; Serbia received Kosovar towns of *Mitrovice* and *Vuçitrin* and a small area in Novi Pazar (*Yenipazar*), and Greece attempted to demand some territories in Janina.³⁸³ In this sense, the borderline dynamics transformed the socio-political and power relations amongst different factions of local ruling classes, strategic groups, peasants, and the Hamidian regime into new strategies, conflicts, or/and cooperation.

As their fate depended on the post-war regulations of the Treaty, the population of Albanian provinces, Eastern Rumelia, and Macedonia began to protest the treaty and organized resistance against the loss of territory.³⁸⁴ The initial reactions were organized spontaneously by different tribal leaders and landowners in the contested territories of *Ghegland*, including Shkoder, Gjakova, Pej, Gusinje, and Debar, who sent telegrams to foreign embassies protesting the seizure of their lands, and Kosovar tribes mobilized their irregular forces to resist any foreign occupation.³⁸⁵ Meanwhile, some Albanian ruling classes and intellectual groups produced different programs and methods, ranging from cooperation with the regime to the autonomist-nationalist struggle under the Ottoman suzerainty or joint rebel movement with other movements or/and neighboring states. For instance, Catholic leaders in Shkoder, Zef Jubane, and Prenk Doci supported the idea of cooperation with Montenegro to create a Catholic principality.³⁸⁶ However, the most powerful and prominent among the intellectual movement was the secret committee in Istanbul, including Abdul and Sami Fraseri, Pasko Vasa, Yani Vreto, Ziya Pristine, and Konstandin Kristofordhi, “The Central Committee for the Defense of Albanian Nationality,” through which they organized memorandums, published articles in journals and sent petitions and telegrams to the delegates of

³⁸³ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 43–44.

³⁸⁴ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 97–100.

³⁸⁵ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 44.

³⁸⁶ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 116–17.

the Great powers in Berlin for securing the historical territorial rights of the Albanians.³⁸⁷ Abdul Fraseri, the deputy of Janina in the First Assembly and the leader of the committee, believed that the fate of the regions depended not only on diplomatic initiatives or armed resistance but also on extensive reforms in the Albanian provinces.³⁸⁸ The Hamidian regime also attempted to control and direct the Albanian resistance movements to maintain the territorial integrity of the empire, particularly in Kosovo and Shkoder. For instance, the provincial governors traveled around the region to encourage tribal leaders while military troops aided the resistance movements.³⁸⁹

2.4.1. *The Albanian League of Prizren and the Myth of National Awakening*

The Berlin conference created an immediate interest for cooperation amongst the Hamidian government and different factions of Albanian ruling classes in order to ensure the territorial integrity of the region. Therefore, the loosely organized cluster of local Albanian resistance movements came together in a general conference to create a unified resistance movement in the Prizren city of Kosovo with the support of the regime and the Istanbul committee, which was known as the League of Prizren (*Lidhja e Prizrenit*).³⁹⁰ The League established a central committee, consisting mainly of landowners and tribal chiefs, to control and mobilize the local resistance movements throughout the provinces. The League has long been seen as the quintessential Albanian “national awakening” (*Rilindja or Rilindja Kombëtare*); however, it consisted of a loose coalition among various class and strategic groups with alternative programs which coalesced under the common ground of urgency against territorial losses.³⁹¹ In other words, instead of a unified “national-ideological” agenda, a set of complex and conflicting interests and strategic orientations have navigated the changing levels of group solidarity within the League.

The delegates of the League could not build a consensus on their demands and the course of action, thereby two distinct factions emerged: while the group of tribal leaders and the local landowners-notables, mainly from the *Ghegland*, whose lands were under the direct threat of occupation focused more on local issues and keeping the empire intact by emphasizing their

³⁸⁷ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 34–36.

³⁸⁸ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 192.

³⁸⁹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 44–45.

³⁹⁰ BOA. HR. SYS., 115/57, 6/17/1889; Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 249–51.

³⁹¹ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 72–108; Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 189–200.

loyalty to the regime; the radical Fraseri group consisting primarily of *Tosk* intellectuals drew up a program consisting of the following points, (1) the unification of the four provinces into a single unit, (2) appointment of Albanians in the local administration, (3) the use of Albanian language in education and courts, (4) military service of the recruits in their own provinces, and (5) spending some of the provincial incomes in educational and infrastructural developments.³⁹² However, the two groups also had a conflicting set of local interests among themselves and developed different strategies depending on the rationality of the “factionalism” (*taraf*), which gave color to the competitions and divisions within the Albanian ruling classes.³⁹³ Consequently, dissenting the program of the radical faction, the conservative group supporting the regime dominated the League, which formulated its demands as (1) resisting any foreign annexation into Albanian territory, (2) re-taking the annexed lands, (3) sending a delegation to Berlin congress, (4) a degree of autonomy under the sovereignty of the Sultan.³⁹⁴

In this respect, the discussions on the demands reflected the intra-ruling class competition and conflict solidified in different factions within the League. Moreover, the fact that these demands were focused on immediate regional problems rather than holistic or “national” issues reflected the will of the Albanian ruling classes to turn back to the status-quo before the ‘93’ War. For the Hamidian regime, the League was an essential resource for safeguarding the territorial integrity of the empire in the Balkans and as a counter-attack against the Great Powers and neighboring states who supported nationalist movements within the empire with irredentist claims.³⁹⁵ Therefore, the conditional recognition of the Prizren League by the Hamidian government was derived from an opportunistic political line that rejected the demands of autonomy but used it as rhetoric against foreign irredentism. However, the initial movements failed to produce results in the conference since it refused to recognize the existence of the Albanian problem, which is clearly defined in Bismarck’s remark, “there is no Albanian nationality!”³⁹⁶ The main target of the Congress was to diminish Russian influence in the Balkans as much as possible;

³⁹² BOA. Y. A. HUS., No: 165/65, 7/30/1880 and Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 117.

³⁹³ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 224.

³⁹⁴ BOA. Y. PRK. ASK., No: 3/17, 9/15/1879; BOA. Y. A. HUS., No: 165/49, 7/29/1880; and Bartl, *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, 197–203.

³⁹⁵ Nuray Bozbora, “The Policy of Abdulhamid II Regarding the Prizren League,” *Turkish Review of Balkan Studies*, no. 11 (2006): 45–47.

³⁹⁶ Jacques, *The Albanians*, 257.

thus, the problem of border modifications and the reform program dictated by the Berlin Treaty intensified the dynamics of conflicts and cooperation in the region.



Figure 5. League of Prizren, Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/>

Despite reducing the territorial losses stipulated with the San Stefano,³⁹⁷ the Berlin Treaty of 1878 did not respect the demands of the League. It compelled the empire to cede territories from Albanian provinces to Montenegro (Gusinye, Plava, Antivari, and Podrogić) and Greece (some regions of Epirus), which kept the problem of border modifications on the agenda. Moreover, the Austrian occupation of the city of Novi Pazar further exacerbated the tensions in the region. Although the Hamidian regime appealed to use dilatory tactics and implicitly supported the local resistance, the border commission of the Treaty pushed the Hamidian government to settle the process of territory transfer after the *Ghegland* and Montenegrin border became a field of crisis and armed conflicts. The government sent Marshal Mehmed Ali Pasha, who represented the empire in the Congress and had a close relationship with many Kosovar landowners and chiefs, to convince the insurgent leaders to realize the border modifications.³⁹⁸ However, when the Pasha arrived at Gjakova, he was met with strong protests, which ended with the death of the pasha with

³⁹⁷ The provinces of Manastir, Korce, Debar, Uskup, Tetovo and Dulcigno inhabited by the Albanian tribal groups remained in the sovereignty of the Ottoman empire

³⁹⁸ BOA, Y. PRK. A., No: 2/19, 8/26/1878.

his associations and the Albanian host, local landholder Abdullah Gjakova, by a mob attack.³⁹⁹ The murder of Pasha pointed out that the local groups would not accept the territorial loss and were bent on resisting the Hamidian government and the foreign powers.⁴⁰⁰ Still, the fact that Mehmed Ali Pasha was accommodated and supported by prominent local landowners indicated that some of the local ruling classes were eager to work with the government to restore order depending on their strategical interests. To illustrate, the pro-regime group of Debar and Mat, headed by Sadik Pasha Dibra and Djemal Pasha Mati, opposed both the sending of forces to Dulcigno and the declaration of autonomy against the resistance group led by Ali Pasha Gusinje, Esad Pasha Tetova and Ilyas Pasha Debar.⁴⁰¹ Another ignored dynamic of conflict promoting the local ruling classes to cooperate with the government was the problem of refugees, which constituted a serious threat to order in the region and their long-term interests.⁴⁰²

Caught in the middle of the risks of internal revolt by the Albanian League and foreign intervention by the members of Congress, the Hamidian regime took smooth steps for the border problem by evacuating the territories under question while leaving the door open for the resistance.⁴⁰³ After the evacuation of the Ottoman troops, Montenegro captured Podgorica and Shpuz, but the forces of the League, consisting of about 20.000 Muslim and Catholic tribe members, under the command of Ali Pasha of Gusinje, occupied the region. After a series of armed clashes, the League forces repulsed the Montenegrin army, which marked the victory of the League.⁴⁰⁴ The successful resistance of the League forced the parties to make a new compromise, which offered the district of Tuz, containing the Catholic tribes of Hoti and Grude, rather than Muslim populated Plava and Gusinje. When the League declared to continue defending Tuz, with the Italian initiation, Corti Compromise offered to cede the port of Dulcigno to Montenegro.⁴⁰⁵ Although the League tended to give no territory, the Congress's threat of Anatolia's occupation led the Hamidian government to send Marshall Dervis Pasha with an army of 30,000 soldiers. The military troops broke the resistance after a series of armed conflicts and ended the border problem

³⁹⁹ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 256–59.

⁴⁰⁰ BOA. Y. PRK. HR., No: 3/41, 9/9/1878.

⁴⁰¹ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 94.

⁴⁰² Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 102.

⁴⁰³ BOA. Y. PRK. ASK., No: 4/36, 9/20/1880.

⁴⁰⁴ BOA. Y. EE., No: 101/82, 4/16/1881 and Bartl, *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, 204.

⁴⁰⁵ Bartl, 150.

in the Northern Albanian provinces by delivering Ducigno to Montenegro.⁴⁰⁶ Subsequently, the Pasha arrested several resistance leaders and sent them into exile as a punishment for disobedience to the government.⁴⁰⁷

On the Southern border, a similar scenario occurred when Greece demanded Epirus, but the different class structures of the region determined the strategies of *Tosk* ruling classes and the flow of events. The threat of Greek annexation caused the radical group of Abdul Bey Frasheri to organize a conference in the Fraser, where he and his family had great landholdings, to remobilize the autonomist agenda among the landed classes of the *Toskland*. The group established other clubs in the province of Elbasan in Central Albania and called another conference in Debar to extend their support and the sphere of influence over the *Ghegland* for the Fraser program.⁴⁰⁸ As Isa Blumi emphasized, the majority of the Fraser group consisted of Albanian intelligentsia, urban middle-classes, and lesser landowners who supported the constitutionalist regime.⁴⁰⁹ Since the Hamidian regime caused them to lose their political powers of representation and limited their means of exploitation and domination by excluding them from the power bloc, these groups were no longer the ruling class in the strict sense of the term. Therefore, the strategies of the Fraser program were not necessarily nationalist but anti-regime strategies to return to the constitutionalist regime as means of increasing their local power and capacity of reproduction.

Since the Hamidian regime established strategic cooperation and loyalty predominantly among the *Gheg* ruling classes, the Fraser Program failed to spread into the *Ghegland*. Still, the strategic orientations of these factions and the regime were subjected to rapid changes due to the conflicting local interests in the face of a complex course of events and relations providing different dynamics of opportunity or crisis. Although the negotiations went under the pressure of the Great Powers on the Greek-*Toskeri* border, the initial reactions were organized chiefly by landed families who lacked the means of violence the *Gheg* tribal groups possessed. As already seen in the discussions in the League, the regional class structure and relations, such as the composition, power balance, and hierarchy among ruling classes, greatly impacted the strategical orientations. Since the *Tosk* ruling classes were deprived of their means of violence in favor of the

⁴⁰⁶ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 96–98; Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 53–55.

⁴⁰⁷ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 63.

⁴⁰⁸ BOA. Y..PRK.ASK., No: 6/51, 3/23/1881 and Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 127–28.

⁴⁰⁹ Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 79, 106–9.

state, cooperation with the regime emerged as the only viable strategy for them in the face of the immediate threat of territorial loss as well as the need for regional stability.⁴¹⁰ The Hamidian regime rewarded the “loyal” *Tosk* ruling classes by fortifying their means of private exploitation and integrating them into central politics, such as the appointment of Abidin Bey Dino, an Albanian from a landed family, as Foreign Minister.⁴¹¹ Therefore, different from the Northern borders, the boundary dispute in Greek-*Tosk* borders ended without an armed conflict; thus, Greece took the small territory of Narda in 1881.⁴¹²

Since the Hamidian regime mediated the Montenegrin occupations and dissolved the League through coercion, conservative factions who prevented the spread of autonomist ideas within the League started to lose their power against the radical factions who opted to act more independently.⁴¹³ Therefore, the number and influence of the pro-autonomist elements in the League increased with the lack of faith in the government ability to defend the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces. In addition to the vulnerability of the Hamidian regime against foreign pressures, the autonomist factions were uncomfortable with losing their local power and influence against the Hamidian status-quo. Therefore, the turmoil of the crisis enabled them to increase their power within autonomist demands. The prominent manifesto of the radical group was published by Sami Fraseri, “Albania: What She Has Been, What She is, What She Shall Be? (*Arnavudluk ne idi, nedir ve ne olacak?*)”,⁴¹⁴ where he criticized the empire’s inability against the partition of Albanian provinces by the neighboring Balkan states. The text supported an autonomous government of a united Albania as the “special homeland,” under the Ottoman suzerainty as the “general homeland” of Albanians.⁴¹⁵

Moreover, some of the local committees that departed from the League started to use the name “Committee of Union” by coming closer to the Fraser program of autonomy.⁴¹⁶ However, rather than a political-ideological program of nationalism, the “Albanianism” of these groups was directly linked to the Macedonia problem and Orthodox-Slav irredentism since their long-term

⁴¹⁰ Blumi, 108–108.

⁴¹¹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 64–66.

⁴¹² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 82–87.

⁴¹³ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 198.

⁴¹⁴ Bülent Bilmez, “Şemsettin Sami Mi Yazdı Bu ‘Sakıncalı’ Kitabı?” *Yazarı Tartışmalı Bir Kitap: Arnavutluk Neydi, Nedir ve Ne Olacak?*, *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 1 (2005): 142–45.

⁴¹⁵ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 167–68.

⁴¹⁶ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 51.

class interests depended on the extent of the strength and survival of the Ottoman empire to which they had heavily invested.⁴¹⁷ Motivated by different strategical interests, the approaches of the Albanian ruling classes to the autonomist movement varied because their priorities remained on a local scale, which was marked by the competition of different class and tribal groups against each other or the central government to increase their sphere of power, influence, and share over the surplus.⁴¹⁸ Meanwhile, dissented with the loss of territory and coercive military expedition, some *Gheg* tribal groups, and landowners previously loyal to the regime aligned themselves with the Unionist group. The changing balance of power and the possibility of the military expedition against the League spreading towards the region caused a rebellion against the regime under the leadership of Suleyman Voksi and Hacı Omer, who mobilized the remaining forces of the League. They attempted to establish a provisional government by forcing the provincial governments to take over their position and spread their influence over Kosova and Shkoder districts of Pristine, Mitrovice, Vülçitrn, Gilan, Skopje, Tetovo, and Gostivar, where they started to collect the taxes.⁴¹⁹ However, since they refrained from jeopardizing their ties with the regime, many Kosovar tribal groups and the landowners in Shkoder and Drac pulled back from the League by declaring their loyalty to the regime and the Sultan.⁴²⁰ Having solved the problem on the Greek border, Dervis Pasha continued its operations to dismantle the League by marching towards Shkoder, where after small resistances, he took control of the provinces of Skopje, Prizren, and Gjakova. Subsequently, he arrested many leaders of the League, such as Abdul Fraseri, who acted autonomously against the government, which brought the League of Prizren to a definitive end in April 1881.⁴²¹

Conversely, the landowners and tribal chiefs who avoided the autonomous movement and remained loyal to the regime were granted government positions and various rewards. To illustrate, Ali Pasha of Gusinje was blessed with land and appointed as the governor of the Pec, while Hasan Pasha of Tetovo became the governor of Prizren.⁴²² After consolidating central control over the region, Dervis Pasha embarked on collecting outstanding taxes in the region. In this respect, the Hamidian regime followed the strategy of “carrot and stick,” which emerged as the pattern in any

⁴¹⁷ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 221–45.

⁴¹⁸ Many council reports indicated the rivalries and competition among different factions of landed classes and tribal groups Clayer, 196.

⁴¹⁹ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 97–99.

⁴²⁰ Skendi, 99–101.

⁴²¹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 65–69.

⁴²² Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 137.

conflict between the regime and opposition groups: the oppositions or/and revolts against the regime were first pressured by force and then, the loyal or strategic groups were rewarded with favors and privileges as means of integration into the power bloc. That being said, the complex and changing interests of the Albanian ruling classes and the geo-political realities determined the Hamidian regime-building strategies in the region.

2.4.2. *A Delicate Balance of “carrot and stick”: Integration of Albanian provinces into the regime*

Having crushed the powerful center of opposition, the Prizren League, with coercion, the Hamidian regime encountered the need for a consent-formation to ensure the unity of the power bloc for guaranteeing the loyalty and unity of Albanian ruling classes and tribal groups to keep them away from autonomist-nationalist programs. More importantly, the regime relied more on the means of violence possessed by the tribal groups to provide stability and territorial unity in Rumelia. Therefore, the regime strategies focused more on the “politics of notables” and Islamic brotherhood rather than centralism in the Albanian provinces. This orientation was formulated with the recommendations of the two prominent advisors of the sultan, Saffet Pasha, and Dervis Pasha. In his memorandum on the Albanian provinces, Saffet Pasha argued that Muslim Albanians were fundamental for the survival and integrity of the empire in the Balkans against the enemies of the empire since Islam and the common threat of irredentism linked them to the empire. To this end, he recommended that tribal groups in the *Ghegland*, especially in the Montenegrin boundary, should be granted privileges such as tax exemptions and employment in the reserve army and local militias exclusively in the Albanian provinces. Moreover, he offered to invest in the region's financial, public, and educational developments to spread the regime's cultural codes as well as propaganda about the irredentist threats of the neighboring states.⁴²³

Despite sharing the same observations with Saffet Pasha regarding the positions of Muslim Albanians as a critical defensive line to ensure border safety, Dervis Pasha kept a wary eye on the potential oppositions and autonomist-nationalist movements, which required keeping a strong armed presence in the region as a lever both for controlling and spreading of the ideology and reforms of the regime.⁴²⁴ The reports of the two Pashas revealed the complementary aspects of

⁴²³ BOA, YEE, No: 44/134, 4/12/1880.

⁴²⁴ BOA, YEE, No: 12/17, 11/22/1881.

two-pronged strategies of the Hamidian regime and its domestic pan-Islamist policy: consolidating the loyalty of the Muslim ruling classes of the Albanian provinces within the politics of notables while balancing and controlling their power within the politics of centralism. The levels of these strategies demonstrated regional variations depending on the class structure, the balance of power, and the geo-strategical positions of the regions.

As the *Ghegand* was the direct target of the geo-political competition of the Slavic irredentism and Great Power's imperialism increasing with the Macedonia crisis, the Hamidian regime relied on the power of the Muslim Albanian tribal groups.⁴²⁵ To this end, the primary strategy was the politics of notables to regenerate the relationship of loyalty between the tribal groups and the regime through granting a series of privileges such as exemption from conscription and taxation to prevent the spread of autonomist programs among the Albanian tribal groups. Therefore, instead of pacifying the military power of the tribal groups, the regime tended to mobilize their means of violence as its irregular counter-revolutionary forces. The regime also employed the children of powerful landed families and tribal groups in the Imperial Tribal Schools and Imperial Lycées to further integrate them into the power bloc. Moreover, it dispatched "Blood Feud Reconciliation Commissions" (*musalaha-ı dem komisyonları*) to control and settle disputes or/and vendetta among the tribal groups as means of imposing pan-Islamist "high culture" on the region.⁴²⁶ Sultan Abdulhamid II even linked himself with the powerful Bushati family of Shkoder by marrying his sister with Celal Pasha Bushati. Among other mechanisms, the prominent channel for integrating the tribal groups into the Hamidian power bloc was the military institution. The Hamidian regime utilized the members of tribal groups for his personal or military services, such as the offices of Palace Guards (*silahsor*) and Personal Bodyguards (*tufenkciler*) as well as the Second Imperial Division (*İkinci Fırka-i Humayun*) in the general army included large numbers of Albanians. Along with putting them on the payroll as bureaucratic-military officers, the sultan also granted them extra gifts and favors and took care of their families and relatives in the provinces.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ İsa Blumi, "The Great Powers' Fixation on Ottoman Albania in the Administration of the Post-Ottoman-Russian War, 1878-1908," in *The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878* (Ankara: METU Press, 2006), 187–202.

⁴²⁶ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 118–19.

⁴²⁷ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit*, 25, 30–31.

Since the *Tosk* ruling classes, which predominantly consisted of landowners, were fragmented regarding the intra-ruling class conflict and their positioning against the regime, the regime-building strategies were more complex in these regions. While the regime attempted to crush the opposition by coercion, the loyal *Tosk* ruling classes were integrated into the Hamidian power bloc mainly through political and economic means through bureaucratic-administrative mechanisms. To illustrate, the influential *Tosk* landowners such as İsmail Kemal Bey, Mehmet Ferit Pasha, and Sureyya Bey Vlore into the Yildiz Palace hierarchy with higher ranks in the bureaucracy, ranging from grand vizierate to provincial governance.⁴²⁸ Moreover, many officials in the lower-level bureaucracy came from *Tosk* Albanian backgrounds. This reality was also indicated in the memories of Tahsin Pasha, who asserted that the Albanians occupied the top bureaucratic positions in the empire and constituted the foundation of his policies because the sultan Abdulhamid was confident of their loyalty.⁴²⁹ Therefore, the Hamidian regime further integrated a sizable segment of the *Tosk* ruling classes by redistributing their political means of accumulation and local influence dissolving during the *Tanzimat* regime. This strategy also caused the Fraser program of reform and autonomy to lose its favor among its main base of landed classes and notables. Therefore, these groups were inclined to support the regime against any threat of disorder as their vested interests depended on the stability of the region. To illustrate, while the *Gheg* regions of Shkoder, Kosovo, and mountainous regions of Central Albania enjoyed privileges such as exemptions from taxation and conscription, *Tosks* were conscripted to send to Yemen.⁴³⁰

That being said, the Macedonia crisis epitomized all of these aspects of the regime-building strategies and divergent provincial responses with the mediation of the geopolitical competition. The governmental efforts of military mobilization for the Ottoman-Greek War, particularly taxation and conscription, resulted in small-scale rebellions in Kosovo under the leadership of tribal chiefs Riza Gjakova and Bayram Curi and Hacı Mullah Zeka, a landowner from Peja. Subsequently, these leaders attempted to revive the Prizren experience by establishing a new League, called Pec or Bese League, to deal with the rising Macedonia problem, including applications of reforms and the possible attacks of Serbian and Montenegrin attacks.⁴³¹ However,

⁴²⁸ Mehmed Ferit Pasha served as Grand Vizier in 1903-1908, Sureyya Bey Vlore became the financial advisor of Abdulhamid II, and İsmail Kemal Bey appointed as governor to Tripoli

⁴²⁹ Tahsin Paşa, *Abdülhamit*, 25–31.

⁴³⁰ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa'da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 204.

⁴³¹ Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 289; Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 134–35.

as much as a defensive measure against irredentist attacks, the other impetus behind the League was to dispose of cumulative tax delinquency and conscription attempts in the region.⁴³² The movement remained local and failed to find either a foothold among the peasant population or support among the Albanian ruling classes. The Hamidian regime dealt with the problem by resorting to the tactic of “carrot and stick.” After crushing the rebellion by force, the government granted the leaders Rıza Gjakova and Bayram Curi the positions in the irregular troops in Shkoder and Phristine.⁴³³ As a result, the new organization Peja League dispatched an agreement signed by numerous landed notables of the Kosova *vilayet*, swearing loyalty to the Sultan and focusing on the defense of *vatan* (homeland) against the banditry sponsored by foreign governments.⁴³⁴

However, since the Hamidian regime-building strategies reunited the political and the economic, the persistence of political property precluded the stability of the power bloc since the political strategies of accumulation always tended to produce intra-ruling class conflict and competition. Moreover, the Macedonia crisis materialized in the violent climate through armed conflicts among the irregular forces of nationalist-revolutionary organizations and brigandage groups (*chete*). Albanian groups also founded such groups, mainly organized by the tribal chiefs in the *Ghegland* and Bektashi groups in the *Toskland*, either for self-protection or to make a profit by attacking villages or rival groups.⁴³⁵ Similar to its politics on the tribal groups, the Hamidian regime attempted to mobilize the brigandage groups to its defensive causes in the region by ensuring their loyalty by granting a series of privileges ranging from tax and military exemptions to gift-giving, such as cash subsidies. To illustrate, Isa Boletín, an influential brigandage leader in Kosovo, who even killed two Russian consulates in Mitrovice at four months intervals, became one of the most important regional actors in the region. He created a local power base by organizing opposition to the Ottoman tax-collectors, provincial governors, and the Serbian nationalist groups.⁴³⁶ Instead of getting into conflict with Boletín, the regime gained his loyalty by granting him land and a salaried position in the local militia to appeal to his regional influence and military power. Therefore, Boletín further increased his power in the region in his competition against the

⁴³² Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri: Avrupa’da Çoğunluğu Müslüman Bir Ulusun Doğuşu*, 467; Skendi attributed national tendency to the group Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 94.

⁴³³ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 278–86.

⁴³⁴ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 126.

⁴³⁵ Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 116–17.

⁴³⁶ Blumi, 145–56.

other brigandage and tribal leaders as well as the provincial governors. He even received the privilege of direct connection to the *Yildiz* Palace.⁴³⁷ Nevertheless, as the example of the Pec League indicated, the relations between the Albanian dominant classes and the Hamidian regime persisted in being fragile, which required a delicate balance predicated upon the changing internal and external opportunity structures.

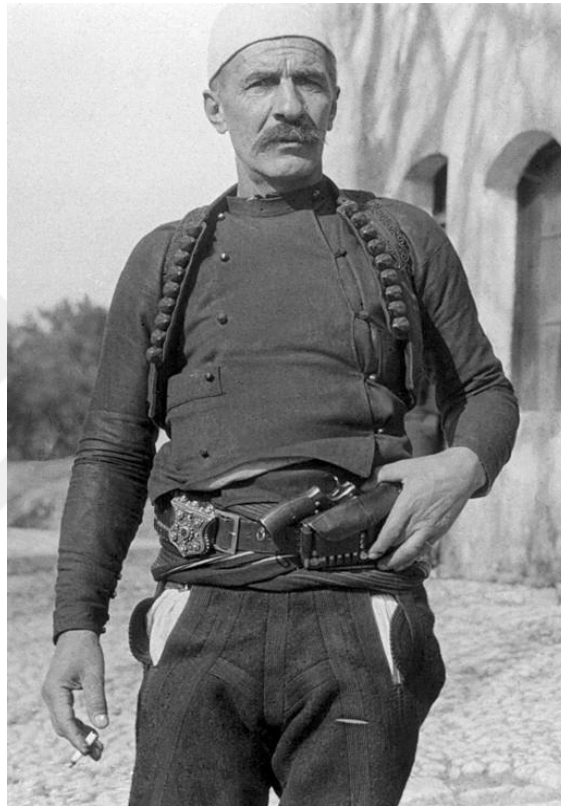


Figure 6. Isa Bolatin nd. Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/DMM/>

The increasing turbulence in the region with the Macedonia crisis gradually upset the balance of the power relations in the Albanian provinces. Since the support of the regime consolidated the power of the tribal and brigandage groups as well as some factions of the landed classes, this situation upset the artificial balance of power among the Albanian ruling classes, while the climate of violence deteriorated the conditions of the peasants and the stability in the region. These changes paved the way for class conflict on different levels, especially among the landed families against each other and the state or/and provincial governors, between them and urban

⁴³⁷ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 285–88.

notables and intellectuals, and peasants against all. Remarkably, thanks to the *realpolitik* of the borderlines, which made the Hamidian regime more dependent on the power of the tribal and brigandage groups to secure the borders against the irredentist pressures, the concentrated means of violence in the hands of these groups resulted in the discontent of the landowners and peasants. To illustrate, the tribal and brigandage groups raided surrounding settlements with the demands of protection money, foods, cattle, goods, and alike within the protection-racket system (*deruhdecilik*), which put pressure both on peasants to leave their lands and landowners to sell their lands. Moreover, the lesser landowners, urban middle-classes, and intellectuals wanted to participate in the competition against the existing status-quo in the region. Consequently, the persistence of the strategies of political accumulation with the Hamidian regime-building strategies paved the way for the emergence of all levels of class conflict, which was intensified by the Macedonia crisis and brought about the rise of different oppositions against the regime.

3. Chapter Three: The Pendulum of Strategies: Albanian Provinces and the CUP Regime

3.1. Reform, Crisis, and the Emergence of the Young Turk Revolution

Although the Hamidian regime's Islamic politics of unity provided a relatively stable hierarchy of the power bloc, the persistence of the strategies of political accumulation limited the regime to prevent the emergence of new crises and opposition. In the period of immense territorial losses and financial hardships through wars, domestic strife, and international debts, the selective strategies of the Hamidian regime laid the financial burden on the peasant producers to ensure the unity of the Muslim ruling classes in the provinces. In the regions where the exploitation of the peasantry coincided with religious affiliation, the exploitation process further intensified with the privileges of some factions among Muslim ruling classes provided by the regime. Having been deprived of the political channels to express their demands thanks to the autocratic orientation of the regime, the non-Muslim groups formed revolutionary-nationalist organizations and mobilized the peasant unrest into rebel movements to bring reform processes forward before the Great Powers throughout the 1900s. Clustered mainly in Macedonia (including the Ottoman provinces of Salonica, Kosovo, and Monastir) and Eastern Anatolia (the provinces of Erzurum, Sivas, Mamûratü'l-Aziz, Bitlis, Van, and Diyarbakır), the crisis and the violence intensified all levels of class conflict which debilitated the stability of the Hamidian power bloc and crystallized in different oppositions against the regime.

Consisting of a complex ethno-religious population including Orthodox Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks; Catholic Romanians and Vlachs; Jews alongside a large number of Muslim Albanian and Turkish; the Macedonia region witnessed the increasing struggle between different groups organizing into secret communities and revolutionary-nationalist brigandage groups supported by the neighboring kin-states who resorted to violence and guerilla tactics either to extend their position against rival groups or to provoke foreign intervention.⁴³⁸ The most prominent and active organizations in the region were the autonomist Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) and the competing External Macedonian Revolutionary Committee (EMRO), demanding separation and annexation by Bulgaria.⁴³⁹ When IMRO launched the Ilinden Uprising in 1903, the

⁴³⁸ Grandits, Clayer, and Pichler, *Conflicting Loyalties in the Balkans*.

⁴³⁹ Adanır, *Makedonya Sorunu*; Gül Tokay, *Makedonya Sorunu: Jön Türk İhtilalinin Kökenleri, 1903-1908* (İstanbul: AFA Yayınları, 1995).

struggle in the region turned into a civil war along the religious line by attacking the Muslim villages.⁴⁴⁰ Since the Ottoman troops were dealing with quelling the revolt of the Pec League in Kosovo, the Muslim Albanian groups in the Monastir region took up arms against the non-Muslim brigandage groups. Meanwhile, Austria-Hungary and Russia joined the struggle by forcing the Ottoman Empire to accept the Murszteg Reform Program offering a foreign government and security forces in the three provinces of Macedonia. Although the Ottoman troops ended the Ilinden revolt with the help of the Albanian tribal and brigandage groups, the climate of violence and insecurity that persisted in the region planted the seeds of mistrust towards the Hamidian regime.

Since the Hamidian regime relied on the power of Muslim tribal and brigandage groups to deal with the revolutionary-nationalist organizations, the intensification of their means of political accumulation through decentralized networks of patronage, clientelism, and privileges both further increased this climate of violence and upset the balance of class forces both in the provinces and central politics. These changes fragmented the power bloc with the increasing class conflict at different levels, especially among different factions of the ruling classes among themselves and against the regime, as well as peasant producers against all. Therefore, the new dynamics of political conflict crystallized in the opposition against the Hamidian regime consisting of an unstable coalition of ruling classes with different strategies, particularly from the provincial landed classes, urban merchants, intellectuals, and central bureaucrats who were deprived of their power within the power bloc. Moreover, the increasing financial crisis and the inability of the regime against international pressures of reform strengthened the opposition. While the harsh economic conditions were felt all over the empire with the war expenses, decreasing tax-incomes, and labor power, the rumors that the Ottoman government was on the verge of bankruptcy circulated. Hence, the Hamidian power bloc started to crumble due to the regime's inability to ensure the internal order and external security of the empire and balance the forces of different factions within the ruling classes.

Consequently, while some of the dominant classes and strategic groups favored by the Hamidian regime, mainly the tribal groups, attempted to consolidate their means of political

⁴⁴⁰ Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman-Muslims 1821-1922* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, 1995).

accumulation within the regime, the others who were deprived of their political means of accumulation and reproduction aligned themselves with the constitutionalist opposition as means of regenerating their control over political domination and exploitation. Furthermore, it was the Hamidian regime itself that created a generation of revolutionaries and reformists among middle-rank central bureaucrats and educated groups with its Islamic-oriented autocratic regime and modern schools –such as War Academy (*Askeriye*), Royal Medical Academy (*Tibbiye*), Royal Academy of Administration (*Idariye*) and School of Civil Administration (*Mülkiye*) – which were founded to raise military-bureaucratic cadres and intelligentsia loyal to the regime. This new generation was attracted by the liberal, constitutional, and patriotic ideas of the Young Ottomans, which culminated in the Young Turk movement.⁴⁴¹ As a result, the Young Turk movement functioned as a loose umbrella organization under which different strategic groups ranging from provincial landowners, urban middle-classes, intellectuals, revolutionary-nationalist groups, the young generations of bureaucrats, to some segments of the ulama came together with their common discontent and opposition against the Hamidian regime.

The genesis of the Young Turk movement gets back to the year 1889 when a group of students, İbrahim Temo, İshak Sükuti, Abdullah Cevdet, and Mehmed Reşit, founded a clandestine organization, the Ottoman Union Committee (*İttihad-ı Osmani Cemiyeti*) in the Medical Academy, with a program to restore the constitution and parliament.⁴⁴² As seen in the profile of the founding members, Albanian, Kurdish and Circassian, the organization included individuals from diverse ethno-religious backgrounds. Meanwhile, several exiles in opposition gathering around the journal *Le Jeune Turquie* in Paris, such as Ahmed Rıza, Ali Şefkati, and Mizancı Murad, came into contact with this group. They joined their forces into a more coherent opposition movement, the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (*Osmanlı İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), under the influence of Ahmed Rıza in 1894-95.⁴⁴³ Therefore, the Committee attempted to assemble the loosely affiliated and disunited collection of the opposition groups and factions at a congress to decide the future course of their opposition against the Hamidian Regime in Paris in 1902. The Congress, known as the Congress of Ottoman Opposition Parties, was chaired by the relative of Abdulhamid II, Prince

⁴⁴¹ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*; Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*.

⁴⁴² M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, "Genesis of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 3, no. 3 (1982): 279–81.

⁴⁴³ M. Şükrü Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 74.

Sabahaddin, and included forty-seven delegates from different ethno-religious backgrounds, including Turks, Albanians, Arabs, Kurds, Greeks, Armenians, Circassians, and Jews.⁴⁴⁴ The main discussions centered on the strategies of eliminating the Hamidian regime and the characteristics of the new regime in which a schism emerged. While the liberal faction of Prince Sabahaddin defended a decentralized administration and offered foreign intervention for overthrowing the regime and applying the reforms, the statist faction around Ahmed Rıza supported a centralized program and toppled the regime from within.

While the liberal-decentralist faction constituted a new organization, the Society of Private Initiative and Decentralization (*Teşebbüs-i Şahsi ve Ademi Merkeziyet Cemiyeti*), the statist-centralist faction reorganized itself from a political-intellectual movement to an organized-activist organization with the initiatives of activists such as Dr. Bahaeddin Sakir and Dr. Nazim and changed its name as the Committee of Ottoman Progress and Union (*Osmanlı Terakki ve İttihat Cemiyeti*, CPU).⁴⁴⁵ Thanks to its new organizational structure and activism, the CPU assumed the leadership of the Young Turk movement and gathered much support from the domestic opposition groups within the empire by founding many branches in the imperial provinces. Meanwhile, several young army officers and low-ranking government officials in Salonica founded another secret organization, the Committee of Ottoman Freedom Lovers (*Osmanlı Hürriyetperveran Cemiyeti*), in 1906, which recruited members from the military to overthrow the Hamidian regime against the immediate necessity of resisting the foreign intervention increasing with the reform program in Macedonia and Eastern Anatolia.⁴⁴⁶ In 1907, this committee joined its forces with the CPU, and the new united organization called itself the Committee of Union and Progress. This amalgamation increased the power of the organization while it relatively brought the domination of the military cadres in the Young Turk leadership. The fact that the Hamidian regime fell short of dealing with the Macedonia problem led many independent local organizations to affiliate with the CUP opposition. For instance, Albanian brigandage leaders Bajo and Cercis Topulli, who

⁴⁴⁴ Hanioglu, 173–88; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 144–45.

⁴⁴⁵ M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 88–89.

⁴⁴⁶ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 143–47.

conducted resistance movements against foreign intervention in Monastir and Kosovo, joined the opposition ranks.⁴⁴⁷

In parallel with the opposition movements, the growing economic crisis and the rising prices with high inflation rates caused a wave of strikes and small-scale rebellions in different parts of the empire. In 1907, Anatolia dealt with a bad harvest, and the situation further deteriorated in the following year, which intensified the peasant resistance.⁴⁴⁸ This process coincided with the increasing climate of violence centered on the Balkan provinces with the Macedonia problem, which further escalated the socio-political unrest and the opposition against the Hamidian regime. While the regime faced these growing setbacks, the British King and Russian Tsar decided to meet at Reval to discuss the reform process. The possibility of more aggressive foreign intervention and the initiation of large-scale reform in Macedonia further alleviated the turmoil in the region.⁴⁴⁹ After the Reval meeting, a rumor circulated throughout the empire for European intervention to appoint a Christian governor to the Macedonian provinces. Together with the intensified investigations and pressure of the Hamidian regime to discover the revolutionary activity within the empire, the Reval meeting created a situation of urgency for the CUP to act immediately. Nevertheless, instead of the planned activities of the Committee, a series of contingent movements crystallized into the revolutionary moment.

The first spontaneous reaction triggered the events was sparked by Ahmed Niyazi of Resne, an Albanian military officer, who took the mountains with his two-hundred men by raiding the military depot in Resne on 3 July 1908. He attempted to enroll the brigandage group led by the Topolli brothers in his forces.⁴⁵⁰ Simultaneously Enver Bey, a CUP-member military officer, organized a revolt by calling for the restoration of the constitution and tried to mobilize the local people into the movement. Meanwhile, about 6.000 armed Albanians gathered at Firzovik with the rumor that the Austrian army was coming to occupy Kosovo province.⁴⁵¹ On 7 July, Mahmut Sevket Pasha, the governor-commander of Kosovo, sent the regimental commander Galip Bey to control the situation by ensuring the loyalty of Albanians to the regime. However, as a CUP

⁴⁴⁷ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 147.

⁴⁴⁸ For the detailed information about the economic crisis and tax-resistances Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, 31–73.

⁴⁴⁹ Feroz Ahmad, "The Young Turk Revolution," *Journal of Contemporary History* 3, no. 3 (July 1968): 19.

⁴⁵⁰ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 226–30.

⁴⁵¹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 150–52.

member, Galip Bey mobilized the crowd against the regime and tried to convince the crowd around the idea that restoration of the constitution was necessary to cut the base of foreign intervention into the internal affairs of the empire on behalf of non-Muslims. Despite the resistance of some groups favored by the Hamidian regime, consisting primarily of tribal leaders, the majority of Albanian ruling classes and the peasants supported the constitutional movement.⁴⁵² Moreover, many of the traditional elements were persuaded by the promise of keeping the sultan Hamid on his throne, and the Albanian crowd in Firzovik took an oath to restore the constitution.⁴⁵³ As a result, the CUP succeeded in mobilizing the spontaneous movements into a constitutionalist rebellion. When different groups bombarded the palace with telegrams demanding the immediate redeclaration of the constitution, it was re-declared on July 24, 1908, with the will of the sultan Abdulhamid II.

The 1908 Revolution was celebrated all over the empire through a series of demonstrations, festivities, and speeches as the victory of the Ottoman citizens against the autocratic regime of the sultan Abdulhamid II. As promised by the CUP to all imperial population, the revolution harbingered justice, equality, and fraternity among all Ottoman subjects regardless of their ethno-religious background within a constitutional regime operated by the parliamentary democracy and a responsible government. All segments of society welcomed the redeclaration of the constitution, and the slogans of freedom and fraternity rose everywhere. The early months of the revolution witnessed a boom in publishing and public and political discussions.⁴⁵⁴ However, this initial positive and enthusiastic atmosphere disappeared in a short period by giving its place to different levels of class conflicts and competition over the composition of the power bloc and the definition of the political society. Therefore, the Second Constitutional Period constituted a new moment of revolution involving the crisis dynamics culminated in divergent socio-political conflicts crystallized in domestic struggles in central politics, resistance, and rebel movements in the provinces as well as two external wars.

⁴⁵² Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 144–50.

⁴⁵³ Feroz Aḥmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908 - 1914* (Oxford: Calderon, 1969), 6–11.

⁴⁵⁴ Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, 115–57.

3.1.1. *An Effort Under Pressure: Divergent Regime-Building Strategies of the CUP*

The nature of the 1908 Revolution and the Second Constitutional Period is one of the most controversial subjects in Ottoman-Turkish historiography coinciding with the debates over the bourgeois revolution. Some scholars assert that it was the efforts of a military-bureaucratic group to save the state “from above” without a revolutionary transformation,⁴⁵⁵ and some argue that it was an “incomplete revolution”,⁴⁵⁶ while some claimed it was a revolution “from above” with a popular movement which disrupted the state apparatus.⁴⁵⁷ As it is discussed, rather than this dichotomic categorization, reformulating the bourgeois revolution as a process involving the moments of crises, revolution, and restoration provided a better understanding of the 1908 Revolution and the Second Constitutional period, and its connection with previous stages of state-formation.⁴⁵⁸ The period as a revolutionary moment included a series of revolutionary situations in which different strategic groups competed for the composition of the power bloc and the definition of political society, i.e., grabbing the central political power or creating an alternative power base in different regions, which coincided with international competition crystallized in two great wars brought the empire to a dissolution.⁴⁵⁹ In other words, the period was marked by the ongoing competition in which cooperation and conflicts of different classes and strategic groups for domination and exploitation.

During the Second Constitutional Period, the Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter CUP) as a strategic group held power either as a coalition partner or alone and became the motor of the state-formation process with its program of a new regime-building. Despite its immense efforts, the Committee could never create a consistent regime to put its program into practice all over the empire. The CUP’s strategies to construct a new regime were restricted both by the

⁴⁵⁵ Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*; Hanioglu, *A Brief History*; Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought*; Keyder, *State and Class in Turkey*.

⁴⁵⁶ Feroz Ahmad, *İttihat ve Terakki 1908-1914* (İstanbul: Kaynak, 2004); Sungur Savran, “Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e: Türkiye’de Burjuva Devrimi Sorunu,” *11. Tez*, no. 1 (1985): 173–214.

⁴⁵⁷ Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*; Aykut Kansu, *Politics in Post-Revolutionary Turkey, 1908-1913* (Boston: Brill, 2000).

⁴⁵⁸ Aytekin emphasized the emergence of a new ruling class including merchants, landed classes, and central bureaucracy from the Tanzimat regime onwards and their role in the emergence of 1908 Revolution. E. Attila Aytekin, “Son Dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, 1703-1908: Kapitalistleşme ve Merkezileşme Kavşağında,” in *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Siyasal Hayat*, ed. Gökhan Atılğan, Cenk Saracoglu, and Ates Uslu (İstanbul: Yordam, 2015), 39–87; Also see, Aytekin, “Burjuva Devrimi Tartışmaları Işığında 1908 ve 1923’e Bakmak.”

⁴⁵⁹ Ugur Uçar, “Türkiye’de Tarih yazımı ve Burjuva Devrimleri: Bazı Gereksiz Kıstaslar,” *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, no. 16 (178 144AD): 2013.

different and conflicting strategic agendas of the coalition that brought them to power and the international geo-political pressures of the external powers bearing a more imperialist and irredentist character as well as the balances of class forces and the dynamics of political conflicts inherited from the previous regimes. In this respect, when the CUP came to power with the July Revolution, its strategic agenda was very complex. On the one hand, they attempted to eliminate the status-quo of the Hamidian regime and control the crisis dynamics which brought them into power, particularly Macedonia and Eastern Anatolian problems. On the other hand, they tried to meet the conflicting demands of the different classes and strategic groups they were allied with or/and represented. Moreover, the new regime-building strategies also created new dynamics of socio-political conflicts both in the central and provincial levels.

The CUP introduced various regime-building strategies ranging from centralization, assimilation, and integration to violence and nationalization.⁴⁶⁰ While many of the historical studies in the successor-states prioritized the violent aspects of these complex policies within the concept of “Turkification,” many historians still discuss whether the CUP subscribed to a kind of Turkish-Muslim nationalism as its prior political strategy, which gave the dominant position for the Turks within the concept of a dominant nation (*millet-i hakime*).⁴⁶¹ Even before the Young Turk revolution, European orientalists, Crimean immigrants, and contemporary historians concentrated on the cultural and linguistic studies of the Turkish identity.⁴⁶² However, a considerable number of recent studies agreed that the intellectual-cultural discussions about Turkism did not turn into *de facto* political strategies, especially until the end of the Balkan Wars. After the traumatic experiences of the Balkan Wars, the CUP regime considered the existence of the non-Muslim population as a fifth column for the irredentist attacks and foreign interventions, which caused the dissemination of peculiar Turkish-Muslim nationalism through the “ethnicizing

⁴⁶⁰ Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.

⁴⁶¹ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*; Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*.

⁴⁶² The prominent examples are Guignes’ *Histoire générale des Huns, des Turcs, des Mogols, et des autres Tartares occidentaux*, Lumley David’s *A Grammar of the Turkish Language*, Leon Cahun’s *Introduction a l’histoire de l’Asie: Turcs et Mongols des origines a 1405*, Mustafa Celaleddin Pasha’s *Les Turcs anciens et modernes*, Ismail Gasprinsky who supported linguistic, spiritual unity and common thought and action amongst Turks David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977).

of religion.”⁴⁶³ After the Balkan Wars, Yusuf Akcura⁴⁶⁴ and Ziya Gökalp⁴⁶⁵ produced different conceptions of Turkish-Muslim nationalism, but they reached a consensus for the recognition of the Turkish people of Anatolia as the dominant core of the Ottoman state. Therefore, many associations and journals were founded to disseminate the Turkish identity in Anatolia.⁴⁶⁶

In this framework, the CUP used the discourse of the “defense of the fatherland” (*vatan savunması*) with reference to the Islamic concept of “holy war” (*gaza*) as opposed to irredentist attacks of Balkan nations and imperialist Europeans during the Balkan Wars and World War I.⁴⁶⁷ Moreover, the CUP implemented the politics of “the national economy” in which the regime attempted to create a national bourgeoisie by relying on bourgeoization of the landowning classes through state initiatives giving out capital, supporting individual enterprises, banking, and credits, industrial activities with investment and exemption from taxes to investors.⁴⁶⁸ These policies resulted in the boycott against the Greeks on the Aegean coast and Thrace, followed by the forced deportation or cleansing of more than 100.000 people in 1914⁴⁶⁹ and about 800.000 Armenian people in 1915.⁴⁷⁰ However, many recent studies argued that despite nation-building or demographic engineering becoming an important political agenda after the Balkan Wars, it still coexisted with other Ottomanist policies and was restricted geographically with Anatolia and the

⁴⁶³ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 200.

⁴⁶⁴ Akcura criticized the Ottomanism and Islamism by considering the unification of various elements as an impossible task because of the enmity among the nations. Instead, he propagated the unity of Turks through revealing their common origin and increasing the Turkish consciousness in order to save the state by relying on the concept of Pan-Turkism. Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976).

⁴⁶⁵ The three-pronged ideology of Ziya Gökalp synthesized ethnic Turkishness, Islamic faith and Modernization with the slogan of “to be of the Turkish nation, of the Islamic religion and of European civilization” by focusing on the Turkish-Muslim elements of the Anatolia. Ziya Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp*, ed. Niyazi Berkes (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), 279; Taha Parla, Füsun Üstel, and Sabir Yücesoy, *Ziya Gökalp, Kemalizm Ve Türkiye’de Korporatizm* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989).

⁴⁶⁶ *Türk Derneği* (Turkish Association), *Türk Ocakları* (Turkish Hearths), *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Home) as well as Turkish organs such as *Türk Derneği Mecmuası* (Journal of Turkish Association), *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland), *Genç Kalemler* (Young Pens), *Halka Doğru* (Towards the People).

⁴⁶⁷ Durgun (2011): 98

⁴⁶⁸ Feroz Ahmad, “Vanguard of a Nascent Bourgeoisie: The Social and Economic Policies of the Young Turks 1908-1918,” in *Social and Economic History of Turkey 1071-1920* (Ankara: Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 1980), 329–50; Korkut Boratav, *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi: 1908-2002*, 12. baskı (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 2008); Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de “Millî İktisat” 1908-1918* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınları, 1982).

⁴⁶⁹ Gingeras, *Sorrowful Shores*, 37–41; Hirschon, *Crossing the Aegean*; Bjørnlund, “The 1914 Cleansing.”

⁴⁷⁰ Dündar, *Modern Türkiye’nin Şifresi*, 41–84; Hilmar Kaiser, “1915-1916 Ermeni Soykırımı Sırasında Ermeni Mülkleri, Osmanlı Hukuku ve Milliyet Politikaları,” in *Türkiye’de Etnik Çatışma: İmparatorluktan Cumhuriyete* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 128–54; Akçam, *A Shameful Act*; Göçek, *Denial of Violence*.

non-Muslim populations of the empire.⁴⁷¹ To illustrate, until the end of World War I, the CUP regime persisted in its Ottomanist policies towards the Arab periphery, where the tensions among them stemmed from the centralization-decentralization demands rather than national-based Turkism versus Arabism.⁴⁷²

That said, the CUP explored all possible options and strategies of modern state-formation. These policies displayed geographical and demographic unevenness depending on the varieties of regional class structures and international geopolitical-boundary contexts. More importantly, these policies also had to be compatible with the class character of the power bloc the new regime relied on. Furthermore, the Committee was obliged to implement these policies under the restrictive conditions of sharing the power with the military and civil bureaucracy and international-geopolitical pressure, as well as strong opposition by different social groups inside or outside the Committee who offered alternative projects to define the composition of the power bloc, imperial policies, and boundaries of political society. Despite successfully realizing the Revolution, the Committee leadership lacked the training, experience, and power to take full control over the state apparatus and administration officially. Instead, they preserved the traditional institutional structure of the old regime and consolidated its power as a secret organization by declaring itself as the sacred society (*cemiyet-i mukaddes*), guarding the constitution. Therefore, it attempted to influence government policies behind the scenes within a parliamentary system.⁴⁷³ Meanwhile, the restoration of the constitution paved the way for the return of many political exiles, and the parliamentary system gave rise to the foundation of different opposition parties as opponents of the CUP, among which the religious-conservative Mohammedan Union Party (*İttihad-ı Muhammedi Cemiyeti*) and liberal-decentralist Ottoman Liberal Party (*Ahrar Fırkası*) and, later, Liberal Entente (*Hürriyet ve Itilaf Fırkası*) posed a significant challenge.⁴⁷⁴

In the elections of 1908, the only successful opponent of the CUP was Prince Sabahaddin's Ottoman Liberal Party (*Osmanlı Ahrar Fırkası*), including many of the Arab, Albanian, Greek,

⁴⁷¹ Ülker, "Contextualising 'Turkification.'"

⁴⁷² Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks*.9-19

⁴⁷³ Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 279.

⁴⁷⁴ The other political parties of the period as follows: Democratic Party (*Demokratik Fırkası*), the Moderate Freedom-Lovers' Party (*Mütedil Hürriyetperveran Fırkası*), Party of Fundamental Ottoman Reforms (*Islahat-ı Esasiye-i Osmaniye Fırkası*), People's Party (*Ahali Fırkası*), New Party (*Hizb-i Cedit*). See, Kansu, *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey*, 157–93.

and Armenian deputies, mostly coming back from exile. The CUP succeeded in dominating the first parliamentary elections against its liberal-decentralist opponents, which could gain only one seat in the parliament.⁴⁷⁵ Although the Committee did not participate in the elections as a political party, it held power by relying upon their impact and alliance over the deputies entering the parliament as Unionists, through which it controlled or/and manipulated the Cabinet. To illustrate, when Mehmed Said Pasha supported sultan Abdulhamid's insistence on preserving the right to appoint the ministers of war and the navy directly by himself within Article 10 of the constitution, the CUP deputies forced the resignation of Mehmed Said's government, which lasted less than two weeks, and replaced him with Mehmed Kamil Pasha cabinet.⁴⁷⁶ Therefore, the CUP weakened the power of the sultan and bureaucracy by increasing the restraining power of the legislation, for they dominated the chamber of deputies.

Having provided control in the government, the CUP explained its political program based on reforms: ensuring individual equality based on the constitution regardless of ethno-religious background, including the universal military conscription, the representative government with reformed ministries, reform and cleaning for a meritocratic bureaucracy, reorganization of the army and navy, encouraging scientific progress and education, and most importantly, reforming the economy through financial laws and centralized system of taxation as well as developing commerce, industry, and agriculture to create the budget to meet the reforms.⁴⁷⁷ That being said, the socio-political conflicts and reform demands in Macedonia and Eastern Anatolia were the primary agenda of the CUP since they became grounds for both violence among the Ottoman subjects and foreign intervention in the empire. As promised before the Revolution, the CUP government implemented integration and citizenship policies through the politics of unity of elements (*ittihad-ı anasır*) as a renewed form of *Ottomanism*.

⁴⁷⁵ Albanian representatives including İbrahim Temo, Hoca Kadri, Cafer Erebar, İsmail Kemal and Mufid Libohove supported the fiction and supported Ottoman Liberal Party (*Ahrar Fırkası*) in following elections Bilgin Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar: II. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Arnavut Ulusçuluğu ve Arnavutluk Sorunu* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: Büke Kitapları, 2004), 94.

⁴⁷⁶ Along with taking over the rights of the Sultan for the appointment of the ministers, the president, and vice-presidents of the chamber of deputies with the change in the Article 10, the Article 113 which had given the Sultan the right to banish anyone considered as a threat to the state was also modified. Kili and Gözübüyük, *Sened-i İttifak'tan Günümüze Türk Anayasa Metinleri*, 33 and 73.

⁴⁷⁷ Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi* (İstanbul: Hürriyet Vakfı Yayınları, 1988), 80–82.

The new-Ottomanism extended the political society and the means of representation to resolve the categorical inequalities between the Muslim and non-Muslim population of the empire under the notion of imperial citizenship for controlling the dynamics of political conflicts and alleviating the political opposition. Therefore, the constitutional regime created mechanisms for including non-Muslims in the political processes through the parliament and incorporating the strategic revolutionary groups that cooperated with the Committee into the power bloc.⁴⁷⁸ In this respect, the new-Ottomanism of the CUP constituted not only a break from the Islamism of the Hamidian regime but also went beyond the sectarian Ottomanism of the Tanzimat regime. In other words, the new-Ottomanism depended not upon the equality of different *millets* but the equality of the individual within the universal or/and constitutional citizenship dividing the sovereignty between the sultan and its imperial citizens with the predominance of the national will.⁴⁷⁹ Therefore, the concepts of the fatherland (*vatan*), citizen (*vatandaş*), or nation (*millet*) were used in public and political discussions in their modern-political context, while the new concepts like people (*halk*), public opinion (*kamuoyu*), and national will (*milli irade*) were also introduced to the political spectrum.⁴⁸⁰

However, the notions of *vatan* and *millet* possessed ambiguity, flux, and fluidity in terms of their boundaries and remained as hybrid forms since the main aim was the ‘union of elements’ in the heterogeneous empire composed of populations from various religions, languages, and ethnic origins. As a legitimating tool in the hand of the Committee, the notion of people (*halk*) evolved from the sum of individuals to a unit of sovereignty by gaining a distinctive collective-political meaning within populism.⁴⁸¹ Nevertheless, contrary to the expectations of the regime from the liberal and democratic new-Ottomanism for increasing the prestige and support of the empire among the non-Muslim population and in international diplomacy, Bulgaria declared its independence on 5 October 1908, and a day later, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and

⁴⁷⁸ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 214.

⁴⁷⁹ Article 9 of the Constitution declared “every citizen will enjoy complete liberty and equality, regardless of nationality or religion, and be submitted to the same obligations. All Ottomans, being equal before the law as regards rights and duties relative to the State, are eligible for government posts, according to their individual capacity and their education. Non-Muslims will be equally liable to the military law.” Tanör, *Osmanlı - Türk anayasal gelişmeleri*, 180–85, 216.

⁴⁸⁰ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye’de Popülizm, 1908-1923* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2013), 150–66; Durgun, *Memalik-i Şahane*, 82–85; Özkan, *From the Abode of Islam to the Turkish Vatan*.

⁴⁸¹ The CUP populism derived from the Russian Narodnik and the German Romantic nationalism. See, Toprak, *Türkiye’de Popülizm*, 163–68.

Herzegovina, meanwhile, Crete declared union with Greece.⁴⁸² Lacking domestic power and any international support to physically intervene in the situation, the CUP regime published violent articles in the press and organized a successful boycott of Austrian goods by means of financial compensation. The Crete problem also led the CUP government to organize an economic boycott against Greece and Greek citizens in the empire. Consequently, the organization of boycotts as an important aspect of public mobilization emerged as an essential tool for the political practices of the CUP regime, which later used in other domestic and international-political frictions.⁴⁸³

The other prominent problem behind the CUP regime was the persistence of the independent political centers of power within the empire. As it appeared in the Macedonian provinces, the regime had deficiencies in guaranteeing internal law and order and external defense to the extent that different strategic groups privately owned the means of violence. Therefore, state monopolization of the means of violence was not only crucial for increasing the state capacity for surplus extraction but also for preventing the dissolution of the empire in the face of increasing geo-political pressure and domestic turmoil. To this end, the CUP regime executed a strict centralization and reform program in order to consolidate the indirect-collective means of accumulation. For instance, the government conducted a general census, standardized taxation, regular military conscription, and disarmament. Moreover, the government attempted to further increase the revenue by reforming the system of taxation as well as raising specific tariffs on imports which indeed produced both encouraging results for the state revenue and dynamics of conflicts in the provinces. Indeed, the CUP government revealed its economic understanding as economic liberalism in line with the regime's class character and international balance politics, which resulted in the emergence of some Ottoman joint-stock companies with foreign capital.⁴⁸⁴ Concomitant with the centralization program, the socio-political and economic policies of the CUP regime transformed the existing social-property regime, which formed the nucleus of capitalist development by relative separation of the economic and the political.

⁴⁸² Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 24.

⁴⁸³ Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, *Osmanlı'yı Müslümanlaştırmak: Kitle Siyaseti, Toplumsal Sınıflar, Boykotlar ve Milli İktisat (1909 - 1914)* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2015); Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 24.

⁴⁸⁴ Zafer Toprak, *Türkiye'de Ekonomi ve Toplum, 1908-1950: Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), 86.

The CUP regime provided the politico-legal framework of the individual-private mechanisms of accumulation, such as property rights, wage-labour, commercial rents, and political liberties, while attempting to monopolize the indirect-collective mechanisms of exploitation, namely the means of violence by conscription and the centralized surplus extraction by taxation. Therefore, the provincial ruling classes were transformed relatively into a capitalist class by being deprived of the direct extra-economic powers of extraction and violence, which provided the basis of the system of constitutional monarchy. In other words, the constitutional system paved the way for the gradual establishment of impersonal relations of power, domination, share, and distribution, that is, the separation of the political and the economic, or the public and private. Hence, despite the ideological rhetoric of the new-Ottomanist equality and liberty on the ideological field, the reform program of the CUP government reflected the class character of the regime based on the dominant-propertied classes. To illustrate, the CUP government enacted labor legislation banning trade unions in the public sector, introducing compulsory arbitration to cut off the base of the worker's movements and strikes.⁴⁸⁵ The CUP regime protected the property rights of the landowners and encouraged modernization, technology, and investments in agriculture through infrastructural projects and credits. In the following years, the CUP regime further codified private ownership and property transaction through the Law of Land in 1911 and the Law of Inheritance in 1913.⁴⁸⁶

Although the CUP had never formally attempted to abolish the opponent parties, it did not intend to maintain the Hamidian status-quo, especially in the military and civil bureaucracy. As expected from each power group, the CUP had a sweep clean of the cadres of the old regime, particularly in the army and bureaucracy, and reorganized the hierarchy of the power bloc. Therefore, thousands of civil servants of all ranks in the central and provincial administration were either replaced or retired, while in the military, most of the officers from the ranks (*alaylı*) who were loyal to the old regime were replaced by the officials from the professional educational background (*mektepli*).⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, the CUP took some measures to restrict the power and privileges of the lower-ranked ulama, including the law that prescribed madrasa students who

⁴⁸⁵ Mete Tunçay and Erik Jan Zürcher, eds., *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1923* (London: British Academic Press, 1994), 66.

⁴⁸⁶ Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 123–24.

⁴⁸⁷ Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, 79–80.

failed their exams in time would no longer be exempted from military services. As a result, after the introduction of the reform program, the initial positive and enthusiastic atmosphere of the 1908 revolution turned into a struggle between different class strategic groups, first in central politics, then in different provinces of the empire.

The first crisis started when the CUP forced Kamil Pasha's cabinet to resign with a vote of no confidence from the chamber of deputies on 14 February 1909 to prevent his attempt to replace the Minister of War.⁴⁸⁸ The pressure of the CUP on the chamber led different groups to raise their opposition to the new government of Huseyin Hilmi Pasha cabinet. The opposition in Istanbul, consisting of the combination of the old-regime supporters among the military and ulama, Islamists, liberals as well as some revolutionary groups, culminated in the armed-rebellion, 31 March Incident (*31 Mart Vakası*), which tried a coup against the CUP government. When the CUP government failed to bring the rebellion under control, a military force under Mahmud Sevket Pasha, Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*), marched from Macedonia to Istanbul. Meanwhile, remaining members of the chamber formed a National Assembly around the Yeşilköy. Having quelled the rebellion, the government regarded Abdulhamid II as responsible for the rebellion, which constituted an ideal pretext to depose the sultan on 27 April. Therefore, his brother Mehmed Resad, who displayed little inclination to intervene in politics, ascended to the throne.⁴⁸⁹ Consolidating their power after quelling the counter-revolution, the CUP attempted to arrest several prominent liberals and reactionaries known by their opposition as means of becoming the sole political authority of the empire. The Committee began to increase its control over the cabinet by ensuring the appointment of its essential members to the critical posts, Talat Bey as minister of interior and Cavid Bey as minister of finance.⁴⁹⁰ However, due to its essential role in suppressing the counter-revolution, the army under the leadership of Mahmud Sevket Pasha emerged as an independent competitor and partner of the political power. Sevket Pasha created a new post, inspector-generalship of the first three armies of Istanbul, Edirne, and Salonika, on 18 May 1909 and became the war minister in the cabinet later on 12 January 1910.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 33–36.

⁴⁸⁹ Hanioglu, *A Brief History*, 162.

⁴⁹⁰ Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 52–53.

⁴⁹¹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 171.

Still, Sevketh Pasha and the CUP agreed upon following the reform program, particularly on centralization as the only way of ensuring the internal and external order and security of the empire. Moreover, the experiences of the counter-revolution attempt and the support of the army led the CUP government to resort to coercion and violence to impose its political program all over the empire. Nevertheless, this violence not only targeted the counter-revolutionary dynamics, but also the revolutionary dynamics as well. The government implemented harsh measures by proclaiming a martial law through which a series of statutory decrees limited constitutional liberties, such as laws on Public Meetings, Strikes, Vagabondage and Suspected Persons, the Press and Printing Establishments, the Conscription of non-Muslims, the Associations, for the Prevention of Brigandage and Sedition.⁴⁹² The aggressive centralization of this new foci of power combining the CUP and the military provoked very strong reactions in the provinces, which brought the empire into another crisis and a wave of violence, especially in the frontier territories of the empire, such as the Western Balkans, Eastern Anatolia, and Syria where the population involved large segments of tribal groups resisting to hold their privileges and means of violence. At the same time, non-Muslim peasants were overwhelmed with harsh exploitation and violence.

These crises also provided the opposition groups with an opportunity to increase their popular base against the CUP government in central politics by coming together around the new umbrella party, the Liberal Entente (*Hürriyet ve İtilaf Partisi*). The Liberal Entente included diverse class and strategic groups ranging from the liberals and conservative ulema to different factions of the local ruling classes as well as non-Muslim revolutionaries. Therefore, the regime-building strategies of the CUP regime were challenged both in central politics and the provinces by causing cleavages and competition among the Ottoman ruling classes as it threatened the existing power relations. Consequently, the crises dragged the empire into the Balkan Wars with a fragmented power bloc and unstable political authority in the midst of elections, cabinet changes, and local rebellions until the CUP became the sole political power in the empire with the coup d'état of 1913.

3.1.2. *Holding to the Privileges: Provincial Challenges to the CUP Regime*

As discussed, the reestablishment of the constitutional regime transformed the existing social-property regime by providing an opportunity for the Ottoman dominant classes to defend

⁴⁹² Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 61.

their collective interests in the parliamentary mechanism within the politico-legal framework of the individual mechanisms of accumulation or reproduction. This process went hand in hand with a centralization process in which the government attempted to monopolize the indirect-collective means of accumulation. However, the Ottoman ruling classes did not give an inch to tax themselves, while some segments of the provincial ruling classes grabbed on their political means of accumulation. In other words, the demands of a decentralized authority constituted intransigent contradiction with the centralization program of the CUP, which attempted to monopolize the means of violence (in the form of public armed forces with universal-compulsory conscription) and the rights of collective surplus appropriation (in the form of taxation). Therefore, the imperfect or uneven separation of the political and the economic, or collective and individual means of accumulation, produced different dynamics of political conflicts in different provinces, especially in the frontiers. In this sense, the main axis of the class conflict was over the control of the extra-economic or political means of exploitation between the central and provincial segments of the Ottoman ruling classes.

Together with the constitution, parliamentary mechanisms and the centralization policies, provincial propertied classes, who gained the opportunity to increase their control over the social surplus and have a voice in the central politics, grouped around two main lines in their relation to the CUP regime. On the one hand, some part of the local dominant classes, who were already deprived of their extra-economic powers, supported the centralist policies of the regime since their reproduction and income depended on private accumulation, which required security and order. These groups participated in the political web of the Committee to consolidate their local powers. Indeed, the local branches of the Committee boasted all over the empire with about 360 centers in different provinces reaching about 850.000 members.⁴⁹³ These local branches were formed either with the demands of the local dominant classes or/and officers to benefit from the power of the Committee or through official delegations by the Committee itself to disseminate their control all over the empire. In some provinces, the local CUP branches even substituted for the functions of the traditional institutions by gaining control over the local government, and some even replaced unpopular governors and officials. Therefore, the local actors competed with each other to open branches without the approval of the Central Committee to extend their power, and some even

⁴⁹³ Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 288.

attempted to levy arbitrary taxes.⁴⁹⁴ On the other hand, some segments of the provincial dominant classes positioned in the liberal opposition and offered an alternative decentralist program by struggling within the regime through establishing political parties, such as Ottoman Liberal (*Ahrar Partisi*) and the Liberal Entente (*Hürriyet and Itilaf*) Parties. These groups constituted the driving force of the localist or/and autonomist-nationalist organizations.⁴⁹⁵

This socio-political polarization among the ruling classes was the reflection of the intra-ruling class conflict resulting from their positioning against the attempts of central government for increasing its control and share over the social surplus and local competition between different factions of dominant classes over local sources of power and income. Therefore, the class relations between the local landowning classes, urban notables and middle-classes, and the other strategic groups were not fundamentally antagonistic since they shared the same proprietary relation to the means of political accumulation. Rather, these relations included different forms of conflict and cooperation over the composition and hierarchy of the power bloc. That being said, the forms, patterns and course of these relations depended on the regional balance and constellations of class forces and the impacts of the international geopolitical context, which depended on the other levels of class conflicts.

More often than not, the tribal and brigandage groups, whose power depended on a series of privileges and private means of violence, became the center of local resistance against the political program of the CUP regime. As it is discussed in the previous chapter, the Hamidian regime established decentralized and personalized networks of patronage, clientelism, and privileges towards the tribal groups in the frontier regions that suffered from ethno-religious rivalries to mobilize their means of violence as a way of policing such regions against the rebellions of non-Muslim peasants or/and autonomist-nationalist movements. As an impediment before the state monopoly over the means of violence, these groups became one of the main targets of the reform program. Moreover, the activities of tribal groups promoted the climate of violence in the region, which increased the international geo-political pressure on the empire. At the same time, their local power also upset the balance of class forces to the detriment of landowning classes, notables, and peasant producers. Therefore, the centralization program of the CUP regime,

⁴⁹⁴ Hanioglu, 279–83.

⁴⁹⁵ While Necip Draga and Refik Bey Toptani were a good example for the former, Ismail Kemal and Müfid Libohove to the latter in the Albanian provinces. Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 142–52.

particularly regular taxation, military conscription, disarmament, and local administration, threatened the long-existed privileges of the tribal groups. Lying in the heart of Macedonia and Eastern Anatolian crises, Albanian and Kurdish tribal groups became the centers of the reform program of the government and the resistance against it.

For instance, many disaffected Kurdish chieftains from Hamidian Light Cavalry, whose position was threatened by the CUP regime, considered the Committee ready to work with Armenian organizations to restore Armenian properties that they had taken over. Therefore, they organized a series of armed resistances against the regime with the demands of decentralization and to regain their privileges in Bitlis, Barzan, and Soran, where they resorted to the vocabulary of Kurdism and “return to the Sharia” symbolically against the new regime as an expression for the demand of returning to the old status-quo.⁴⁹⁶ Moreover, the political conflicts sparked by the Bedouin tribes during the Hamidian regime in highland Yemen made themselves apparent again during the CUP regime.⁴⁹⁷ As discussed in the following sub-chapter, the most prominent and endemic resistance against the comprehensive reform attempts of the CUP emerged in Albanian provinces with a series of rebellions from 1909 to 1912.

Although the policy of new-Ottomanism extended the political society and the means of representation as means of resolving the categorical inequalities between the Muslim and non-Muslim population of the empire under the notion of imperial citizenship, the class character of the regime prevented them from developing a holistic or radical program for the problems of peasant producers. For the CUP regime relied on the political support of local ruling classes within the power bloc and needed to increase the flow of agricultural surplus to strengthen the empire; the solutions to the problems of the peasants remained at *de jure* and ideological levels. Therefore, the level of the coincidence between the class conflict-exploitation and religious affiliation was reflected in the form of inter-ethnic tensions. In other words, the increasing violence and exploitation along the ethno-religious line led to the resistance of the Ottoman peasants, especially non-Muslims, articulated in the autonomist-nationalist movements. To illustrate, Armenian

⁴⁹⁶ Klein, “Kurdish Nationalists and Non-Nationalist Kurds”; Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Bruinessen, “Kurds, States, and Tribes.”

⁴⁹⁷ Thomas Kuehn, *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849-1919* (Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2011); Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*.

peasants sparked a rebellion in Van and Adana during 1908-1909 against the high taxation and land disputes. Moreover, the CUP regime also considered the non-Muslim population dangerous by questioning their loyalty to the empire, especially in borderline territories open to irredentist attacks. This disbelief turned into an active policy against the non-Muslim population of the empire after the traumatic experiences of the Balkan Wars. Furthermore, the influx of the Rumelian refugees into Anatolia from lost lands in the Balkans resulted in demographic pressures, which at the same time, led to religious hostilities amongst Anatolian peasants.⁴⁹⁸

In this respect, the Second Constitutional Period witnessed the co-constitutive levels of class conflict predicated upon the persistence of the logic of geo-political accumulation, which brought about different dynamics of political conflicts in the provinces. The intra-ruling class conflict produced competition among the landowners, urban notables, tribal groups, and the government over controlling the means of political accumulation, which destabilized the power bloc hierarchy of the CUP regime. While the class conflict between the Ottoman ruling classes and the direct producers caused peasant rebellions, especially among non-Muslim peasantry, against the intensified exploitation, these movements intertwined with the intra-producing class conflict, which appeared in the tensions and violence between peasants along ethno-religious lines. The inter-ruling class conflict, which appeared in the form of two Balkan Wars and the World War I, provided crisis and opportunity structures that directed the courses of internal class conflicts. In the last instance, while the forms and patterns of these conflicts developed unevenly depending upon the regional variations, such as balances of class forces, the characteristics of the population, and the geopolitical context, they both shaped and were shaped by different regime-building policies of the CUP government. From this point of view, the following chapter explores how the regionally specific resolution of class conflicts brought about different dynamics of political conflicts and directed the divergent strategies and positions of the Albanian rebels to reveal the socio-historical preconditions of the nationalization process.

⁴⁹⁸ Alexandros A. Pallis, "Racial Migrations in the Balkans during the Years 1912-1924," *The Geographical Journal* 66, no. 4 (1925): 315–31; The number of Muslim refugees from Balkans reached to 800,000 from the 1877–1878 onwards. Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830–1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Adanır, "Bulgaristan, Yunanistan ve Türkiye."

3.2. Historicizing Nationalism: Geo-politics, Class Conflict, State-Formation, and Albanian Nationalization

3.2.1. *The Young Turk Opposition and Albanian Provinces: Frontier Dynamics and Regional Varieties*

The fact that the Hamidian regime relied more on the “politics of notables” and “Islamic unity” as the constitutive strategy in the Albanian provinces as means of defending the Western Balkan frontiers against the increasing turbulent culminated in the Macedonia crisis upset the balance of class forces and power relations in the region. The persistence of the political strategies of accumulation and the private means of violence resulted in fragmentation among the Hamidian power bloc and the rise of different oppositions against the regime. In this sense, it is important to recall the regional varieties in the Albanian provinces, particularly regarding the frontier dynamics of the international geopolitics and internal class structure and balance of class forces, in order to pinpoint the different dynamics of political conflicts reflected themselves in the divergent strategies towards the Young Turk opposition and against the new regime-building strategies of the CUP government in the following years. In the Albanian provinces, the frontier dynamics produced distinct patterns of regional development by providing different opportunity structures for the regime-building strategies of the government and the local strategies of different provincial classes or power groups in their immediate environment.⁴⁹⁹

As the strategic territories bordering Montenegro, Serbia, Austria-Hungary, and Bulgaria had their conflicting interests and irredentist claims, the *Ghegland* provinces of Kosovo and Shkoder had strategic priorities for the Hamidian regime. The ongoing border disputes and armed conflicts among different groups as part of the Macedonia crisis led the Hamidian regime to rely more on the power and loyalty of Muslim tribal and brigandage groups for the integrity and security of the region. These groups were granted further privileges which fortified their control over violence and local power. For instance, the Hamidian government distributed weapons to Muslim peasants and tribal groups in the region and encouraged the creation of irregular forces to deal with the revolutionary-nationalist activities in the region.⁵⁰⁰ Therefore, the tribal and brigandage groups became the dominant power in the region vis-a-vis the urban dominant classes

⁴⁹⁹ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 125; Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*, 28–29.

⁵⁰⁰ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 201–3.

by gaining relative autonomy, which also challenged the central authority.⁵⁰¹ For instance, Isa Bolatin objected to the appointment of a Russian consul in the region with the excuse that it would provoke non-Muslim peasants and prepare a ground for foreign intervention.⁵⁰² Although the Hamidian regime integrated some factions of the landed classes and urban notables into the power bloc through different mechanisms like government positions in the remote parts of the empire, the intensified local powers of the tribal groups upset the balance of class forces to the detriment of the former.⁵⁰³ Moreover, thanks to their private means of violence, the tribal and brigandage groups attempted to seize lands and tributes from the peasant producers and landowning classes through the protection racket system, which created further unrest in the region.⁵⁰⁴ Consequently, the dominant power of the tribal groups determined the axes of class conflicts and competitions in the region.

According to the 1910 census, the majority of the population (61.2 percent) consisted of Muslims in the Kosovo province.⁵⁰⁵ As a boundary region including powerful tribal and brigandage groups in the mountainous zones, peasant producers, and the landowners and urban notables, the balance of power was marked by the intra-ruling class competition between tribal groups, landowners, and the government; and the inter-ruling class competition between the Muslim ruling classes against international geo-political pressure, because the power of the peasant producers was minimal. During the Hamidian regime, the Muslim tribal chiefs such as Bayram Cur, Riza Gjakove, Idris Sefer, Ali Gusinje and the brigandage leaders such as Isa Bolatin, Ramazan Zaskon, and Hacı Zeka were bestowed with privileges and power as the main pillars of the regime to police and control the frontiers.⁵⁰⁶ For instance, Isa Bolatin was granted a salary and the right to run the quarries around the Mitrovice district.⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, he emerged as the defender of local rights and established a military force in the region, which entrenched him very well in the regional political authority.⁵⁰⁸ Similarly, Bayram Cur was appointed as the captain of the gendarmerie troops in

⁵⁰¹ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 285–86; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 132–33.

⁵⁰² BOA, DH. SFR, No:292/88, 9/20/1902.

⁵⁰³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 190.

⁵⁰⁴ BOA, DH. SFR, No:268/58, 10/28/1901; BOA, BEO, No: 216439, 12/3/1906 and BOA, BEO, No: 241516 1/2/1908

⁵⁰⁵ Bartl, *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, 97–99.

⁵⁰⁶ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 59–61; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 134–39.

⁵⁰⁷ BOA, BEO, No: 204248, 12/21/1905.

⁵⁰⁸ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 145–46.

Pristine, while Riza Gjakove became the major in the Shkoder gendarmerie troops.⁵⁰⁹ Despite sometimes competing among themselves and challenging the attempts of the central government to take census or taxation, these groups invested in the continuity of the regime to maintain their privileged position as means of reproduction. For example, between 1905 and 1907, Muslim tribal groups in Gjakove, Pec, Prizren, Mitrovice, and Pristine in Kosovo province and Malisor tribes in Shkoder resisted the reforms attempts to increase tax collection; thereby, small-scale conflicts took place between these groups and Ottoman troops.⁵¹⁰ These resistances forced the Hamidian government to retreat from implementing the measures.⁵¹¹

However, as their local power and interests were threatened by the increasing dominance of the tribal/brigandage groups because of the unwillingness of the Hamidian regime to control and discipline these groups, the influential Kosovar landowners such as Necip Draga and Hasan Pristine aligned themselves with the Young Turk opposition to break the patronage relationships favoring the tribal groups. Moreover, the fact that the plunders of the tribal groups to the peasants for short-term profits brought about unrest among non-Muslim peasants and directed the attention of irredentist neighboring states and the great powers to intervene in the region created another problem. Thus, since stability and order were crucial for their long-assumed class interests, the landed classes and urban notables expected the constitutional regime to reshape the power relations in the region and to bring order and security as means of preserving their conditions of reproduction. As a result, the increasing intra-ruling and inter-ruling class conflicts led many of the landed classes to consider the new regime as an opportunity to increase their regional political and economic influence by participating in the political web of the Committee. Therefore, the landowners took the initiative to establish CUP branches in the region, including Skopje, Firzovik, Mitrovice, and Prizren.⁵¹²

The Shkoder province, consisting mainly of the mountainous region, was populated by the Malisor tribes of the great mountain, Hot, Grude, Kastrat, Skrel, and Seltz; and of little mountain, Shale, Shosh, and Toplane, among whom the majority was Catholic (62 percent) with a minority

⁵⁰⁹ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 134.

⁵¹⁰ BOA, BEO, No: 204155, 12/19/1905; 214229, 6/25/1906; and 237603 10/17/1907.

⁵¹¹ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 474.

⁵¹² Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, 271–73.

of Muslims (36 percent).⁵¹³ These tribes preserved their relative regional autonomy as a privileged region, which was governed by the tribal chiefs given formal titles and salaries, with a series of exemptions in return for ensuring security and order in the region and their service as irregular troops.⁵¹⁴ These tribal groups combined their forces as a single military unit under the two leaders (*bayraktar*) from the Hot tribe.⁵¹⁵ In addition to these tribes, Catholic Mirditas constituted another autonomous tribal power with its own district and troops. In addition to bordering Montenegro, a large portion of the Catholic population amongst the tribal groups made the region open to the Austria-Hungarian and Italian influence and competition. Therefore, the Hamidian regime acted responsively to the privileged positions and local traditions of the Malisor tribes in the Shkoder. For instance, apart from the exemptions from certain taxes and regular military service, even from the head tax (*cizye*) collected from non-Muslims in some cases, the Malisor tribes settled their own internal affairs through their traditional law of Lek Dukagjin.⁵¹⁶ In this sense, the balance of power in the region was marked by the intra-ruling class competition between the tribal groups and the central government and the inter-ruling class competition between them and the neighboring states.

Unlike its *Gheg* counterparts, the *Toskland* provinces of Janina and Monastir were well integrated into the Ottoman state-formation process. The provincial dominant classes, mainly consisting of landowning families and urban notables, were deprived of their means of violence to a great extent since the central government succeeded in monopolizing the means of violence and the rights of surplus appropriation by settling the tax-collection and conscription in the region. In turn, the dominant classes ensured their reproduction through their land ownership and business activities within private accumulation or/and their political-administrative positions, enabling them to possess more substantial socio-economic power. While a limited number of landed families controlled large estates which ensured their regional domination, such as Vlore and Vroni families in Janina and Delvine; and Libhove and Zavalani families in Monastir, the majority of the dominant classes consisted of smaller landowners lacking the means to challenge the power of the former.⁵¹⁷ Indeed, some lesser landed families were also linked to the more prominent families as

⁵¹³ Bartl, *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, 79–81.

⁵¹⁴ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 76.

⁵¹⁵ BOA, YEE, 79/8 4/27/1909, 8.

⁵¹⁶ BOA, BEO, No: 262780, 3/6/1909; BOA, YEE, 79/8 4/27/1909 and Durham, *Some Tribal Origins Laws and Customs of the Balkans*, 163.

⁵¹⁷ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 82.

small partners through a network resembling the previous pasha households.⁵¹⁸ However, the powerful landowning classes continue to rely on the means of political accumulation in their proprietary relations, such as land acquisition and land tenure. Therefore, the landed classes themselves developed conflicting interests and competition, which affected their relations with the regime.⁵¹⁹ While the greater landed families tended to further increase their share and control over the means of economic and political accumulation in the region, such as the competition between the Vroni and Vlore families as well as among different branches of these families, the lesser landowners looked for an opportunity to participate in the competition.⁵²⁰

However, the main axis of conflict was marked by the class conflict between the landowners and the peasant producers and the inter-ruling class competition between the *Tosk* ruling classes and the neighboring states. According to the 1910 census, Muslims, mostly of Albanian origin, constituted 43.6 percent of the population, while the rest of the population consisted of non-Muslims, mostly Orthodox Greeks in Janina, while Monastir had Muslims of 50.2 percent with a large body of Orthodox Slav population including Serbs and Bulgarians.⁵²¹ In this respect, the main challenge to *Tosk* dominant classes came from the peasant producers working as share-croppers or wage-earners in the estates as they were overwhelmed by intense exploitation.⁵²² Moreover, the peasant resistance was more robust in the region due to the geopolitical pressure in the region, especially that of Greece and Bulgaria, whose *kin-groups*, the Ottoman Greeks and Slavs, formed an important body of the population. Mustafa Suphi, a journalist in the region, described the two aspects of the class conflicts in the region. He emphasized that while the double exploitation of the peasant producers both by the state in the form of *tithe-collection* and the individual exploitation of the landed classes in the form of surplus appropriation from peasants working in the *ciftliks*, which reached about sixty percent of the peasant revenues, the class conflict further intensified with the problem of security and order because of the irredentist threats of Greece.⁵²³ As a result, while the general poverty and resistance

⁵¹⁸ Story Sommerville, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1918), 14–15; Ekrem Vlora, *Osmanlı Arnavutluk’undan Anılar (1885-1912): Ekrem Bey Vlora*, trans. Atilla Dirim (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006), 30–38.

⁵¹⁹ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 74.

⁵²⁰ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 82–83 and 95–97.

⁵²¹ Bartl, *Milli Bağımsızlık Hareketleri Esnasında Arnavutluk Müslümanları (1878-1912)*, 118–22.

⁵²² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 187.

⁵²³ Mustafa Suphi, “Yanya Vilayetinin Ahval-i Umumiyesi”, *Tanin*, 7/29/1909, No: 325.

of the peasants consisting mainly of the non-Muslim population, caused the class conflict between the peasant producers and the *Tosk* ruling classes; the coincidence between the exploitation and ethno-religious differences paved the way for the intensification of inter-ruling class conflict by invoking the irredentist claims of the neighboring kin-states, particularly Greece and Bulgaria. Hence, the Macedonia Problem brought about political turmoil in the *Toskland* by turning the area into a combat zone between different nationalist-irredentist brigandage groups provoking the peasant population considered as their *kin-groups*.⁵²⁴ Therefore, the relationship of the *Tosk* ruling classes with the central government relied more on a mutual dependency because their long-term class interests depended on the capacity of the state to secure the region against irredentist attacks.⁵²⁵

The *Tosk* ruling classes developed different means of opposition to the extent that the Hamidian regime proved unable to deal with the Macedonia problem. In this respect, there was a concurrence, similarities, contacts, and joint or opposite developmental processes among the emergence of political opposition and ideologic movements and their variances within the Macedonia problem. Indeed, it is not a coincidence that the emergence of the Young Turk opposition and Albanian autonomist-nationalist ideas coincided temporarily and spatially to a great extent.⁵²⁶ Initially, Albanian nationalism was formulated to prevent irredentist attacks on the region by using the rhetoric of nationalist rights as means of ensuring the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces. Even the autonomist demands of the Fraseri program did not necessarily contradict with the loyalty to the empire. Instead, as it appeared in the works of Sami Fraseri, the concept of Albanianism was articulated within Ottomanism against Balkan irredentism.⁵²⁷ Similarly, some urban *Tosk* groups, including landowners like Fehim Zavalani and Bajo Topulli, organized a committee, namely the “Committee for the Liberation of Albania,” to ensure the territorial integrity against the irredentist attacks.⁵²⁸ While the followers of the autonomist program questioned the capacity of the Hamidian regime to ensure the integrity of the Albanian provinces, many of them supported the constitutionalist factions in the central political struggles.⁵²⁹ Moreover,

⁵²⁴ BOA, BEO, No: 257180, 11/10/1908.

⁵²⁵ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 60–78 and 136.

⁵²⁶ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 293.

⁵²⁷ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 2–4; Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 86–88.

⁵²⁸ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 207–10.

⁵²⁹ Skendi, 165–68; Blumi also correctly emphasize the constitutionalist demands of the Fraser program. See, Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 106.

the support for the autonomist-nationalist program also emerged as an important discursive framework or a source of socio-political power for the provincial ruling classes in their power struggle against each other, the central government, and the neighboring powers.

In this sense, the intra-ruling class conflict and competition brought about divergent strategies and approaches toward the autonomist-nationalist programs. To illustrate, while some of the powerful *Tosk* landowners such as Faik Konica, Ismail Kemal Vlore, Said Toptani, and Mufid Libovhe supported the autonomist discourse; their local rivals such as Sureyya and Ekrem Vlore, and Esad Toptani rejected the autonomist programs.⁵³⁰ Since the autonomist program predicted the possession of the local political-administrative positions and powers by the Albanian ruling classes with demands such as the unification of provinces, the appointment of provincial governors, and the right to use tax revenues, it provided an opportunity to consolidate their means of political accumulation. Not surprisingly, the different strategic orientations of the *Tosk* ruling classes were also reflected in the early divisions within the Young Turk opposition. While the supporters of the autonomist programs like Ismail Kemal Vlore tended to increase their regional power by joining the ranks of the liberal faction of Prince Sabahaddin's group, which supported a decentralized administrative program, the status-quoist landowners like Ekrem Vlore supported the centralist faction of the CUP.⁵³¹ Nevertheless, the independence remained far from their political thinking to the extent that the regime's capacity was able to provide the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces.⁵³² However, the intellectual groups and lesser landowners, such as Sami and Midhat Fraseri, George Kyrias, and Sahin Kolonja, considered the autonomist-nationalist movement as a source of socio-political power both against the greater landowning families and the central government. Different from the former group, they used nationalist discourse in their struggle to change the social order, which reflected their dissatisfaction with the existing social-property relations.⁵³³

Although coming from a landed family himself, Sahin Kolonya outrightly analyzed the effect of intra-ruling class competition over the positioning along the autonomist-nationalist program as follows:

⁵³⁰ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 333–46 and 455–56.

⁵³¹ Sommerville, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, 306.

⁵³² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878–1912*, 465.

⁵³³ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 334.

“...[beys] became friends of the Turkish government in order to acquire power and grab more easily, thus bringing Albania to her present lamentable condition... Oh! you, who consider yourselves as aristocrats, beys, effendis and agas, in reality you are bandits and robbers, servants of the Turks and Greeks! For the sake of profit, you turn today into Turks and tomorrow into Greeks, and when you have no use of this, you become Albanians, you go to London and Paris, begin to write pamphlets, proclaiming that you are fiery patriots.”⁵³⁴

However, Faik Konica, who gave voice to the landed classes, argued that the main reason for Kolonya's attack on landed families was the fact that these groups prevented the lesser landowners, middle-classes and intellectuals from using the movement for their personal interests in the region.⁵³⁵ Still, most of the lesser landowners and urban notables participated in the CUP network rather than the autonomist-nationalist organizations since it promised more opportunities for increasing their local powers and revenues. On the other hand, the diasporic Albanian groups, mainly consisting of non-Muslims, propagated the nationalist-separatist program. Backed by their kin-states, these groups brought the idea of unification with one of the neighboring powers. For the peasants, especially non-Muslims, supporting the nationalist programs provided opportunities for social mobility or economic returns through brigandage activities or networking with internal or external nationalist organizations.⁵³⁶ Nevertheless, the activities of the Albanian autonomist-nationalist program, in general, remained within the intellectual debates and media organs rather than turning into a political mass movement. Despite the emergence of some national organizations like *Baskim* clubs, their sphere of influence over the Albanian population remained limited with a small reader network.⁵³⁷ More importantly, the fact that regionalism and tribal particularism prevailed among the Albanian tribal groups prevented the autonomist-nationalist ideas from taking root among the *Gheg* population.⁵³⁸

In the central Albanian districts of Drac, Tiran, and Elbasan, which were relatively more immune to foreign influence, the power relations exemplified the impact of the intra-ruling class conflict. The landed classes in the region, limited in their number, concentrated on the provincial capital and possessed extensive lands secured with lesser competition with the tribal groups and

⁵³⁴ The article was published in Drita, 2/11/1905, quoted in Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 188.

⁵³⁵ The article was reported in HHStA PA XIV/18, quoted in Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 334.

⁵³⁶ Clayer, 448.

⁵³⁷ Clayer, 197–98; Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 102.

⁵³⁸ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 174.

lack of international pressure. The most influential landed family of the region was the Toptani family, with large farms in the surrounding villages and plains of the city of Tiran, which dominated the political and economic life in the region.⁵³⁹ The most important rival of the Toptani family was the families from the Mat tribe, including Ahmed Zog, the future king of Albania, who contained landholdings in the plains near the Monastir province bordering the city of Tiran. Moreover, the lesser landholders, such as Verlaci and Bicaku families, also participated in the competition.⁵⁴⁰ Therefore, the power relations in the region bared the traces of both the *Gheg* and *Tosk* regions as the intra-ruling class conflict and competition among the landowners, tribal groups, and the central government prevailed over the region. For instance, Esad Toptani included in the Hamidian power bloc by holding the position of the commander of Janina and granted the title of pasha, while the growing dissatisfaction with the Hamidian regime and the new opportunities provided by the constitutionalism caused Refik and Fuad Toptani to involve into the CUP networks.⁵⁴¹

Despite reflecting competing class interests and divergent power relations, most of these divergent strategic orientations met on the common ground of discontent and opposition against the Hamidian regime. Along with alienating many of the landed classes, urban notables, middle-classes and intellectuals as well as peasant producers by favoring the tribal groups, the inability of the Hamidian regime to deal with the growing economic hardships and the Macedonia problem caused a further disintegration of the power bloc by undermining the allegiance of Albanian ruling classes to the regime. In fact, the Albanian provinces became the battlefield of ethno-national bands, which increased the turmoil, violence, instability, and foreign influence in the region from 1900 to 1908.⁵⁴² The Murszteg agreement between Austria-Hungary and Russia and the reform program in Macedonia on October 22, 1903, crystallized the opposition against the regime by further increasing the mistrust and suspicion among the Albanian ruling classes against the Hamidian regime. After the declaration of the reform program, even some of the Muslim tribal groups that enjoyed a variety of privileges were estranged from the Hamidian regime as they

⁵³⁹ The total land holdings of the family are given about sixty thousand hectares. See, Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 72.

⁵⁴⁰ Clayer, 67–73.

⁵⁴¹ Duru who had belonged to the CUP Tiran cell gave the name of Refik Toptani as a member. See, Kazım Nami Duru, *İttihat ve Terakki Hatıralarım* (Istanbul, 1957), 12.

⁵⁴² Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 136–50.

questioned its capacity to prevent foreign intervention and ensure the continuity of the imperial existence in Albanian provinces. Therefore, the CUP extended its popular base in the region, cooperating with some of the Albanian tribal, brigandage, and nationalist-autonomist groups.⁵⁴³

When British King Edward and Russian Tsar Nicholas II met in the Reval, the further threat of foreign intervention provided an opportunity for the opposition to galvanize the Albanian population against the regime. Notably, the rumor that a Christian governor would be appointed as the governor of the region circulated throughout the Macedonian provinces. At the beginning of July 1908, thousands of Albanians from different regions assembled at Firzovik to protest the Reval Meeting. Meanwhile, the insurgent Unionist soldiers under the leadership of Niyazi Resne and Major Enver called the Albanian banded leaders like Cerciz Topulli to join their ranks in the mountains. Abdulhamid dispatched Major General Semsi Pasha, the division commander coming from the ranks, to stop the opposition movement. While Semsi Pasha attempted to mobilize the Albanian tribal and banded leaders loyal to the regime to counter the revolt of Unionist soldiers, he was killed by a young officer.⁵⁴⁴ Being unaware of his Unionist connection, the Hamidian government sent Galip Bey, the chief of the military troops of Skopje, to placate the protests, but he encouraged the expansion of the demonstrations and its direction toward a Constitutional protest as the only solution against the foreign intervention.⁵⁴⁵ Consequently, the CUP successfully mobilized most of the people in Firzovik, forcing Sultan Abdulhamid II to re-establish the 1876 Constitution on July 22, 1908.

Despite the CUP directing the Albanian population's dissent at Firzovik into a constitutionalist demand, their attitudes towards the opposition were more complex. While many *Tosk* groups explicitly supported the CUP opposition under the urgency of the international geopolitical pressure, some *Gheg* tribal groups tended to be neutral or in opposition within a conservative position to preserve the existing status-quo in the region.⁵⁴⁶ For instance, Suleyman Kulce, a contemporary Ottoman military officer in the region, argued that Sultan Abdulhamid delayed his response to the Firzovik meeting two days with the hope that Isa Bolatin and Semsi

⁵⁴³ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 261–96.

⁵⁴⁴ Süleyman Külçe, *Firzovik Toplantısı ve Meşrutiyet* (İstanbul: Kitabevi, 2013), 89–96.

⁵⁴⁵ Külçe, 52; Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 342–44.

⁵⁴⁶ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 348–60; Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 475.

Pasha would placate the meeting and the revolted soldiers.⁵⁴⁷ In this sense, it is not a coincidence that Isa Bolatini found himself leading a rebellion against the new regime within the following months. Similar to their positioning along the constitutional opposition, the attitudes of Albanian ruling classes to the CUP regime were much more complex depending on the regional class constellations and balances of forces, as well as the international-geopolitical conjuncture. Therefore, the regime-building strategies of the CUP brought about divergent dynamics of political conflicts in distinct parts of the Albanian provinces, which brought about divergent forms of reactions ranging from political alliance to opposition and armed resistances in the following years, whose outcomes depended on the regionally-specific resolutions of class conflict.

3.2.2. 1908 Revolution and Albanian Provinces: Regime-building Strategies and Divergent Responses

As the center of the Macedonia crisis and the July revolution, the Albanian provinces were one of the primary targets of the regime-building program of the CUP. When they came to power, the CUP inherited the dynamics of political conflicts created by the Hamidian regime in the region while it created new ones with its regime-building strategies. The experiences of the Hamidian regime proved that the existing social-property relations, depending on the political strategies of accumulation, produced both internal and external crisis dynamics. Therefore, the CUP regime attempted to monopolize the means of political accumulation and violence to increase the state capacity for surplus extraction, internal security and order, and external defense in the face of the increasing geo-political pressure and domestic turmoil. To this end, the reform program of the CUP attempted to transform the existing social-property relations and reorganize the composition and hierarchy of the power bloc in the Albanian provinces. However, the developmental pattern of these policies displayed regional unevenness as they both shaped and were shaped by the local reactions depending on the regionally-specific class structures, geographical features, and geo-political factors.

Since different strategic groups privately owned the means of violence and benefitted from a privileged status, the *Gheg* provinces of Kosovo and Shkoder constituted the primary challenge against the state monopoly over the indirect-collective mechanisms of exploitation. Moreover, since the activities of the tribal groups promoted the climate of violence in the region, the region

⁵⁴⁷ Külçe, *Firzovik Toplantısı ve Meşrutiyet*, 85–89.

became the main target of the centralization and reform policies of the CUP regime. For the local dominance of the tribal groups curbed the local power of the urban *Gheg* landowners and notables; many of them cooperated with the new regime to regenerate their regional power to the detriment of tribal and brigandage groups within the hierarchy of the new power bloc. Particularly, Kosovar landowners were integrated into the hierarchy of the new power bloc and attempted to use the new opportunity structures by encouraging the CUP regime to crack down on the privileged positions of the tribal and brigandage groups. For instance, Necip Draga used the opportunity of being a Unionist by calling for government assistance to send troops against Kosovar brigandage leader Isa Bolatin to arrest him and destroy his fortress to eliminate his most important rival in Mitrovice, where he possessed extensive landholdings.⁵⁴⁸ In this sense, as long as the means of violence in the hands of the tribal and brigandage groups threatened the urban ruling classes and the new regime, *Gheg* landowners and notables supported the centralization and reform policies of the government.

The centralization and reform policies, such as the introduction of regular and standardized taxation, compulsory military conscription, disarmament, censuses, land registers, and the appointment of local administrators, were met with strong resistance in the region by threatening the long-existing privileges of the tribal groups.⁵⁴⁹ Moreover, many of the Albanian tribal members who were utilized in the military offices of Palace Guards, Hamid's Personal Bodyguards, and the Second Imperial Division were discharged from their offices. Falling outside the new power bloc, the majority of the tribal and brigandage groups in Kosovo and Shkoder became the center of opposition against the CUP regime, which later turned into rebellions sparked in different parts of the region. Nevertheless, some tribal groups tried to accommodate themselves to the new opportunities by collaborating with the new regime. To set an example of the benefits of the collaboration, Catholic Mirdites, under the leadership of Prenk Bib Doda, received an opportunity to control more territory in return for their support for the constitutional opposition and the new regime.⁵⁵⁰ Similarly, various tribal groups such as the Hot, Shale, Shosh, and Kastrat gave a *besa*

⁵⁴⁸ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 356–61.

⁵⁴⁹ BOA, BEO, No: 255780, 10/10/1908.

⁵⁵⁰ BOA, BEO, No: 284467, 8/17/1910 and Mary Edith Durham, *High Albania* (London: Edward Arnold, 1909), 333–34.

to support the constitution and the new regime and gained a general amnesty for their members in jail.⁵⁵¹

Since the main challenge to their power stemmed mainly from peasant resistance and external pressures, the *Tosk* population had different expectations from the new regime than their *Gheg* counterparts. Although the constitutional regime extended the political society by resolving the categorical inequalities of the non-Muslim peasants within the neo-Ottomanism, the resistance of the non-Muslim peasants remained an important aspect of the dynamics of political conflicts to the extent that the class character of the CUP regime restrained the development of a radical program for the problems of peasant producers like intensive exploitation. While the repercussions of the Macedonia problem persisted in the region with the major irredentist claims of Greece in some parts of the Janina and Monastir provinces within the *Megali Idea*, the Austria-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the subsequent independence of Bulgaria in the following days of the revolution further increased the turmoil in the region. Since the private accumulation of the *Tosk* ruling classes depended on security and order as means of repressing the peasant resistance and securing the territories, they supported the reform policies of the new regime due to the exigency of external defense.

The violent climate in the region emerging with the clashes between different nationalist-brigandage groups had already provoked the *Tosk* population to organize their own bands of resistance. Therefore, together with the liberal atmosphere following the July revolution, many Albanian *Bashkim* (Union) clubs were formed in *Tosk* provinces of Monastir, Salonica, Janina, Korce, Elbasan, Gjirokaster, Berat, Vlore, Filat, Starove as well as Istanbul. The *Bashkim* clubs involved in cultural activities and developed an autonomist-nationalist program centered on the acceptance and development of Albanian educational and linguistic works, the unity of Albanian provinces into a single administrative unit, the appointment of Albanians for the local administration, infrastructural investments in the region to counter the irredentist claims of the neighboring states.⁵⁵² The *Bashkim* clubs mainly headed by urban middle-classes and intellectuals and also included in the *Bektashi* network in the region, with a particular influence of Naim and Midhat Frasheri.⁵⁵³ However, these clubs were far from unanimity and, particularly the three

⁵⁵¹ Durham, 223–30; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 159.

⁵⁵² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 348–53.

⁵⁵³ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 252–56.

centers of the clubs, Monastir, Salonica, and Istanbul, contained political factionalisms, conflicting interests, and diversity in their views and strategies.⁵⁵⁴ When the *Bashkim* clubs convened an Albanian congress in Monastir between November 14-22, 1908, to discuss the Albanian language and alphabet, which centered around whether to use Latin or Arabic, the congress reflected the strategical splits, factionalism, and regionalism among the Albanian ruling classes in the following years.⁵⁵⁵

More importantly, the constitutional regime provided both *Tosk* and *Gheg* propertied classes with the opportunity to represent their class interests in central politics through representative mechanisms. Furthermore, the new regime further codified the politico-legal frameworks for private accumulation depending mainly on land ownership, which ensured the reproduction of the landowning classes and notables of the Albanian provinces. Nevertheless, the persistence of the political strategies of accumulation led the Albanian landed classes either to participate in the political web of the CUP or to position in the liberal-decentralist opposition to increase and consolidate their local domination and exploitation. In this respect, the parliamentary elections and central politics became the field where the intra-ruling class conflict and competition among Albanian ruling classes materialized. To illustrate, as the regional allies of the CUP, the Kosovar landowners such as Necip Draga and Hasan Pristine were elected as the deputies of Skopje and Pristine. In Shkoder, Esad Toptani won the election by cooperating with the CUP, which made him the sole representative of Drac province. The collaboration with the CUP regime also provided Esad Toptani to further consolidate his local power with the commandship of the reserve forces in Tiran. On the contrary, the entrance of important liberal landowners such as Ismail Kemal, Aziz Vrioni, and Mufid Libovhe into the parliament as independent deputies cut their links from the autonomist-nationalist movements, and they eventually joined the opposition of the Ottoman Liberal Party.⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, Sahin Kolonya, known for his relationship with *Bashkim* clubs and opposition to the CUP, became a deputy from Korce as an independent nominee.

⁵⁵⁴ Clayer, 472.

⁵⁵⁵ Bülent Bilmez, "Arnavut Dil Ulusçuluğu ve Alfabe Tartışmalarında İlk Zirve: 100. Yılında Manastır Kongresi," *Toplumsal Tarih*, no. 179 (November 2008): 22–31.

⁵⁵⁶ Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 239–46.

In addition to the intra-ruling class conflict, the suspicions about the capacity of the new regime to ensure the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces determined the strategic orientations of the Albanian ruling classes. For instance, in the parliament debates, Unionist Albanian deputies Hasan Pristine, Necip Draga, and Said Efendi emphasized that the brigandage activities disturbed the peace and security of the Albanian provinces and warned the government to take precautions against the irredentist activities in the region.⁵⁵⁷ While Albanian deputies, mainly coming from landed classes in *Gheghland*, called government to ensure security, order, and reform in the Albanian provinces, particularly Kosovo and Shkoder, by emphasizing the activities of tribal groups, their *Tosk* counterparts also criticized the Hamidian regime for encouraging nationalist brigandage activities in the region. Consequently, Albanian ruling classes pointed out the importance of the regions as a key to Ottoman existence in Europe.⁵⁵⁸

In this respect, while the different levels of class conflicts (the inter-ruling class conflict among tribal groups, landowners, and the CUP government; the inter-ruling class conflict materialized in the international geo-political pressures of Balkan states; the class struggle between Albanian ruling classes and peasant producers; and among the peasant producers from different ethno-confessional origin) produced the dynamics of political conflicts in the Albanian provinces; the regional variances of class constellations and the specific resolutions of class conflicts brought about divergent strategies for the Albanians against the regime. Therefore, the strategical orientations of the Albanian ruling classes were neither constant nor substantive, but they were renegotiated and reshaped in response to the regime-building strategies of the CUP and the opportunity structures provided by the international context. That being said, the idea of Albanian autonomy-nationalism emerged as one of the contested anti-regime strategies predicated upon the resolution of class conflicts at the political level which produced a revolutionary situation in the following years.

3.2.3. 1909 Rebellion in Kosovo: Tribal Resistances to the state-formation

The divergent strategical orientations of the Albanian ruling classes toward the CUP regime became apparent during the 31 March Incident 1909 (*31 Mart Vakası*). After the Incident, the liberals among the Albanian landed classes, such as Ismail Kemal and Mufid Libovhe,

⁵⁵⁷ MMZC, İ.15, C.1, 1/1/1909, 270; İ.19, C. 1, 1/27/1909, 357; İ.20, C. 1, 1/30/1909, 369-374 and İ.21, C.1, 2/1/1909, 405-430.

⁵⁵⁸ MMZC, İ.22, C.2, 2/3/1909, 436-37.

recognized the Tevfik Pasa cabinet, while Ismail Kemal was charged with the implicit support for the counter-revolutionaries.⁵⁵⁹ Having been discharged from the army offices within the competition among the officers from the ranks (*alaylı*) and from the professional educational background (*mektepli*), many tribal members, such as Isa Bolatin, who was formerly recruited by the palace guards, also supported the counter-revolution as means of regenerating the Hamidian regime.⁵⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the majority of the Albanian ruling classes and some tribal groups, such as Catholic Mirdites who benefitted from the CUP regime, disapproved the counter-revolution. For instance, many telegrams were sent by landowners and urban notables to the government, which opposed the counter-revolution and declared their support for the constitutional regime by reminding their *bese* on Firzovik.⁵⁶¹ However, after the suppression of the counter-revolution, the deposition of Abdulhamid II caused strong objections from the Albanian population, particularly Muslim tribal groups in *Geghland*, whose loyalty had been cultivated personally by the Sultan.⁵⁶²

In addition to eliminating its main rival in the central politics with the dethronement of Abdulhamid II, the new foci of power combining the CUP and the military attempted to fortify the central control over the provinces through more aggressive centralization and reform policies to ensure the state monopolization of means of violence and the rights of collective surplus appropriation. Therefore, the Northern and mountainous regions of the central Albanian provinces dominated by the tribal groups became the main target of these processes. Since the CUP regime attempted to deprive the tribal groups of their long-existed privileges and private means of violence, the reform process increased the discontent among the tribal groups and provoked strong reactions against the regime. For instance, the governor of Shkoder, Bedri Pasha, reported that thanks to their privileged positions providing *de facto* autonomy, many tribal groups in the region were subjected to taxation and conscription for the first time.⁵⁶³ While the regime's determination to impose reform and centralization policies increased the tension in the region, the fact that tribal resistance turned into armed clashes brought about a wave of violence and crisis in Kosovo and Shkoder provinces. To illustrate, the tribal groups and peasants in the regions of Vuçitrn, Peja,

⁵⁵⁹ Although Ismail Kemal and Mufid Libovhe was charged by participating in the counter-revolution, the charges were thrown out the case for lack of evidence. See, MMZC, İ.67, C.3, 5/5/1909, 257-59 and İ.80, C.2, 5/26/1909, 702-705.

⁵⁶⁰ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 168.

⁵⁶¹ MMZC, İ.57, C.3, 4/17/1909, 43-44 and İ.58, C.2, 4/18/1909, 79.

⁵⁶² Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 117.

⁵⁶³ BOA, BEO, No: 262780, 3/6/1909.

Pristina, and Lumë rejected paying new taxes, the rise of *aşar*, drawing lots, and disarmament.⁵⁶⁴ However, the main event that escalated the crisis in the region was the attempts to remove the power of Isa Boletini and his irregular forces, as one of the most potent challenges to the authority of the government as the remnant of the Hamidian regime in the region who was known with the criminal activities in Kosovo. The CUP government advanced on Isa Boletini when the intelligence reports indicated that he supplied arms and prepared for a rebellion. Mahmut Sevket Pasha dispatched three military troops under the command of Cavit Pasha to capture Boletini and ensure control in the region to prevent further rebellions and enforce the regime's reform policies.⁵⁶⁵

Although the military operation was successful in defeating his forces, Isa Boletini succeeded in escaping while the military troops arrested those who helped him. Subsequently, the local governors embarked on census-taking, collection of cattle-tax, military conscription, and confiscation of weapons in the districts of Pec and Gjakove in Kosovo with the assistance of military troops.⁵⁶⁶ When the application of the reforms made it apparent that the CUP government was not only content with moving against Boletini, other tribal and brigandage leaders such as Bayram Cur, Suleyman Batos, and Idris Sefer staged another rebellion in Kosovo, which spread to different districts in the provinces of Shkoder and Monastir.⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, the government was obliged to send additional troops from Janina to Kosovo and Shkoder to quell the rebellion.⁵⁶⁸ After crushing the resistance, the government further extended the reform process to other districts of Kosovo as well as the provinces of Shkoder and Monastir.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, the CUP government promulgated a “Law of Bands” (*Ceteler Kanunu*) ordering harsh punishments for those who carried and kept weapons, condemned to six months of imprisonment, who participated in the brigandage activities sentenced to ten years in jail which also subjected their families as well as the local community to punishments.⁵⁷⁰

Fortified with additional military troops and a new legal framework, Cavit Pasha launched a more aggressive military campaign throughout the region by destroying about one hundred

⁵⁶⁴ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 391.

⁵⁶⁵ BOA, BEO, No: 262395, 2/27/1909.

⁵⁶⁶ BOA, BEO, No: 263747, 3/22/1909.

⁵⁶⁷ Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 354–57; Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 297–98.

⁵⁶⁸ BOA, BEO, No: 262780, 3/6/1909; 264637, 4/5/1909 and 265726, 5/9/1909.

⁵⁶⁹ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 119/4, 7/12/1909 and BEO, No: 272082, 10/1/1909.

⁵⁷⁰ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 395.

fortresses and immediately started to collect two-year delinquent taxes, confiscating weapons, and conscripting soldiers.⁵⁷¹ Meanwhile, Mazhar Bey, the governor of Kosovo, submitted a detailed program of reform and centralization for the region consisting of taking a proper census and a land survey; assessing immovable properties such as households (*hane*) and fortresses (*kule*), collection of current and back taxes; establishment of new taxes; collection of weapons and disarmament; implementation of military conscription; settlement of some mountaineers in villages except those located in borders; exile of rebel leaders and their families; imposition of material law and establishment of military courts; and assignment of additional military forces to execute this program.⁵⁷² The program was also adopted by Bedri Bey, governor of Shkoder, who eventually introduced the program in his administrative unit.⁵⁷³ Moreover, the CUP regime attempted to regenerate the Commissions for the Reconciliation of Blood Feuds (*Musalaha-i Dem Komisyonlari*) to reform the penal codes in the region as an alternative to the traditional Law of Mountains (*Lek Dukagjin*).⁵⁷⁴

The aggressive campaign of Cavit Pasha and the extension of the content and the application reforms started to challenge the socio-economic interests, and local political powers of the other segments of the Albanian ruling classes since the growing central control in the region limited their political means of accumulation. Still, as the tribal groups constituted a primary challenge to their regional interests, the landed classes and notables in the *Ghegland* avoided conflicting with the CUP regime; thus, they generally tended to remain impartial. Since the *Toskland* were already integrated into the imperial system and lacked privileged groups, the reform process did not produce significant crisis and resistance in the region. However, when the military operations further increased the instability in the region, some decentralist and autonomist-nationalist voices became more visible. Many local reports from provincial governors informed the government about the autonomist-nationalist propaganda activities of *Bashkim* clubs for Albanian autonomy with foreign support. For example, Ismail Kemal was accused of collecting guns from Greece to distribute to the Albanian and Greek banded groups.⁵⁷⁵ The governor of

⁵⁷¹ BOA, BEO, No: 267894, 6/11/1909.

⁵⁷² BOA, BEO, No: 273825, 10/23/1909.

⁵⁷³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 393; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 174.

⁵⁷⁴ BOA, BEO, No:261002, 1/27/1909.

⁵⁷⁵ BOA, BEO, No: 265693, 5/7/1908 and 265964, 5/7/1909. However, it later appeared that the charges against Ismail Kemal was groundless. See, BOA, BEO, No: 266247, 5/18/1909.

Janina, Ali Riza Bey, informed the government about the activities of local nationalist organizations like brigandage groups and demanded the improvement of the gendarmerie troops in the region.⁵⁷⁶

Nevertheless, the activities of the Albanianist *Bashkim* clubs centered on the cultural sphere, such as gathering congresses for the language and education of the Albanians. In fact, the intra-ruling class conflict appeared in the different strategic orientations, regionalism, and factionalism among Albanians reflected in the discussions about the Albanian alphabet and education at such congresses. During the rebellions in the northern provinces, the *Bashkim* clubs held another congress in Debar to promote the usage of Latin Albanian alphabets in education in July 1909, which concluded that the manner of education depends on the choice.⁵⁷⁷ The CUP government tacitly interfered in the following congress, held in Elbasan in September 1909, by sending Arif Hikmet, a Kosovar landholder, to promote the Arabic alphabet for the Albanian language. Despite the efforts of the CUP government, in the second congress in Elbasan, chaired by a local landowner Dervis Bey, the members remained committed to the Latin Alphabet.⁵⁷⁸ Under the pressure of the turmoil in the region, the government accepted to teach of Latin Alphabet in schools. Interestingly, however, many of the Muslim tribal groups and peasants, as well as some factions within the *Bashkim* clubs, supported the use of the Arabic alphabet by sending petitions to the government, which led the government to cancel the use of the Latin Alphabet in education.⁵⁷⁹ In this sense, the intra-ruling class competition for regional power and interest brought about different positions within the Alphabet discussions. Consisting mainly of the Muslim population, the majority of conservative tribal groups and bigger landowners remained outside the *Bashkim* networks because they considered the usage of the Latin Alphabet as a threat to their position in the region. In contrast, lesser landowners, urban notables, and intelligentsia resorted to Latin Alphabet to enhance their regional power and influence.

Similarly, these different attitudes were reflected in the parliamentary discussions. The rebellion and the aggressive campaign of Cavit Pasha kept Albanian deputies engaged in the

⁵⁷⁶ BOA, BEO, No: 269206, 7/4/1909.

⁵⁷⁷ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 377–89; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 179–80.

⁵⁷⁸ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 380–85.

⁵⁷⁹ BOA, BEO, No: 277181; 277339; 277472; 277666; 278028; 278092; 278264; 279176, 2/1-24/1910 and 3/1-27/1910.

parliament. Albanian deputies such as Hasan Pristine, Esat Toptani, Sahin Kolonya, and Necip Draga argued against the claims directed by the European press about the demands of autonomy to the Kosovar rebels and emphasized the loyalty of the Albanians to the Constitutional regime.⁵⁸⁰ Depending on the reports of the governor of Kosovo, Interior Minister Ferid Pasha defined the rebels as either reactionaries or those rejecting tax-payment. Therefore, the government considered using force to ensure the region's security, order, and necessary reforms. However, Albanian deputies such as Hamdi Bey rejected the attribution of “reactionism” to the rebellion.⁵⁸¹ Moreover, fearing government precautions against Kosovo insurrections, some Albanian deputies criticized the heavy-handed and indiscriminate tactics used by Cavid Pasha and offered the government to send a commission to the region. However, the Unionist deputies considered the rebels as the remnants of the Hamidian regime who tried to hold on to their privileges and called for the continuity of the violent measures in other regions as well.⁵⁸² Consequently, the uncompromising attitude of the CUP government regarding the centralizing reform policies as part of the state-formation efforts sowed the seeds of new dynamics of conflicts in the Albanian provinces.

3.2.4. 1910 Rebellion in Ghegland: Attempts to hold privileges

After the aggressive military campaign of Cavid Pasha, the CUP government asserted its power and control in the region by increasing the gendarmerie forces with the advice of its local governors. The government further advanced on the Albanian tribal and brigandage groups to undermine any reactions to its comprehensive reform and centralization program. Despite initial resistance against the advancement of the Ottoman military forces, many of the tribal groups in the boundary regions fled to Montenegro to escape from the military pursuit and punishments. Thanks to their struggle with the tribal groups, the government took the support of the landed classes and notables as well as peasants in the *Ghegland*, which prevented the spread of resistance to a broader population. The CUP government also referred to criminal activities of the tribal and brigandage groups, such as extortion, looting, and land grabbing, to justify their violent military actions in the region.⁵⁸³ Therefore, the provincial government officers started conducting general censuses and land surveys to execute proper taxation, military conscription, and disarmament at

⁵⁸⁰ MMZC, İ.78, C.2, 5/24/1909, 631.

⁵⁸¹ MMZC, İ.98, C.1, 6/22/1909, 546-48.

⁵⁸² MMZC, İ.1, İ.98, C.1, 6/22/1909.

⁵⁸³ Tanin published a letter by a man named Hacı Abdülkerim complaining of the extortion prevalent in much of the Kosova province. See, “Arnavutluk Hadisesi” *Tanin*, 4/9/1910, No: 575.

the beginning of 1910. Moreover, the governor of Kosovo introduced new taxes such as *kantar* (scales), contract (*kontrato*), and city toll (*oktruva/duhuliye*), enforced on all imported products and executed exclusively in Albanian provinces. Together with the land surveys, the introduction of the new taxes extended the tax-base toward the landowners and urban notables, and the tax-collection attempts deteriorated the situation in the region. Therefore, the taxation process paved the way for broader discontent in the region, which increased the popular support for the tribal resistance to paying taxes.⁵⁸⁴

The resistance to tax-collection turned into a rebellion against the government in the spring of 1910 when some leaders of tribal and brigandage groups such as Isa Boletin, Idris Sefer, and Bekir Karapilku came together around Gjakove district and gave a promise (*bese*) to fight against the CUP government.⁵⁸⁵ Initially, the number of insurgents reached about 800 who demanded the abolition of the new taxes, but the rebels found support among other tribal chiefs and peasants as well as landowners and urban notables covered by the new taxes.⁵⁸⁶ Therefore, the increasing number of rebels enabled the organization of a powerful insurgence in which the insurgents held several key strategic roads by using their knowledge of the terrain in Kosovo to resist the government forces. Meanwhile, the rebellion quickly spattered towards Shkoder provinces, and the number of the rebel forces reached about 7.000 people.⁵⁸⁷ Consequently, the Ottoman forces in the region, consisting of 16.000 infantry under the command of Sevkett Turgut Pasha, had difficulties suppressing the rebellion. Hence, the CUP government dispatched Mahmud Sevkett Pasha with an army of 40.000 soldiers with cannons to suppress the rebellion.⁵⁸⁸ After a series of fights between the Ottoman troops and the rebel forces who deployed in the strategic Kacanik pass, the former prevailed.⁵⁸⁹ After assuming control of the region, Mahmut Sevkett Pasha marched to Kosovo and proclaimed martial law.⁵⁹⁰ While several tribal chiefs and their families in Kosovo were executed after a trial by court-martial or exiled to Anatolian provinces, many rebels like Isa

⁵⁸⁴ BOA, BEO, No: 278586, 3/7/1910 and 279610, 4/8/1910.

⁵⁸⁵ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 386–87; Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 174–77; Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 371–72.

⁵⁸⁶ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 405.

⁵⁸⁷ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 177.

⁵⁸⁸ Sönmez, *II. Meşrutiyette Arnavut Muhalefeti*, 178.

⁵⁸⁹ Pollo and Puto, *The History of Albania*, 140.

⁵⁹⁰ BOA, BEO, No: 281411, 5/21/1910 and 282793, 6/28/1910.

Bolatin fled across the Montenegrin border.⁵⁹¹ The Montenegrin government published the names of twenty-six refugees, including Isa Bolatin and his men, and conveyed their demands for a pardon.⁵⁹² The government declared an amnesty for the refugees except for the rebel leaders.⁵⁹³ Meanwhile, Sevkett Turgut Pasha proceeded to Shkoder to ensure security and order in the region. After an armed conflict with the forces of Mehmet Sphendi, the chief of the Shale tribe, Sevkett Turgut Pasha's forces provided control in Shkoder as well.⁵⁹⁴ Immediately, Turgut Pasha also proclaimed martial law in Shkoder.⁵⁹⁵ The military tribunal decided on severe measures against the rebels' leaders who fled to Montenegro, ranging from the death penalty to exile.⁵⁹⁶

According to Ahmed Serif Bey, the reporter of *Tanin* (Echo) who was sent to the region during the military operations, Mahmud Sevkett Pasha and the government considered the military operation as means of showing the power of the new regime and the collection of weapons as a prerequisite for executing the reforms. He argued that the tribal groups resisted the measures of the CUP government as they considered the efforts of disarmament, conscription, and taxation as innovation (*bid'at*) concerning their privileged position in the Hamidian regime. Serif also claimed that the rebels did not compromise all Albanians but were limited mainly by the tribal groups manipulating the people by benefitting from their ignorance.⁵⁹⁷ Therefore, the military operations were instrumentalized in executing the reform program of the government. The tax collection, conscription registers, and seizing of the weapons were imposed under the shadow of guns and martial law in the region.⁵⁹⁸ One report in June 1910 gave the total number of weapons collected from Albanian provinces as 53,870.⁵⁹⁹ Kulce argues that Sevkett Turgut Pasha collected more than 20,000 weapons only in Kosovo,⁶⁰⁰ while another report highlighted that the forces of Sevkett Turgut Pasha collected 40,000 weapons in Shkodra in August 1910.⁶⁰¹ Ahmed Serif Bey also gave similar numbers regarding the weapons collected in the region. Furthermore, he reported that

⁵⁹¹ BOA, BEO, No: 283910, 7/31/1910 and BOA, HR. SYS., No: 133/19, 6/16/1910; *Tanin*, No: 646, 6/19/1910.

⁵⁹² BOA, HR. SYS., No: 133/23, 7/18/1910.

⁵⁹³ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 133/22, 7/13/1910.

⁵⁹⁴ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 406-7.

⁵⁹⁵ BOA, BEO, No: 283539, 7/20/1910 and "Arnavudluk'ta Tanin", *Tanin*, 6/1/1910, No: 628

⁵⁹⁶ *The Orient*, 9/7/1910, No: 1/21 and 11/2/1910, No: 1/29.

⁵⁹⁷ "Arnavudluk'ta Tanin", *Tanin*, 6/12/1910, No: 639 and 6/17/1910, No: 644.

⁵⁹⁸ "Arnavudluk'ta Tanin", *Tanin*, 6/1/1910, No: 628 and 6/2/1910, No: 629; *The Orient*, 6/8/1910, No: 1/8, 4.

⁵⁹⁹ *The Orient*, 6/22/1910, No: 1/10, 6.

⁶⁰⁰ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 390.

⁶⁰¹ *The Orient*, 8/3/1910, No: 1/16, 5-6.

hundreds of fortresses and households were destroyed, or their windows were enlarged while their inhabitants resettled.⁶⁰² According to a report from the government, the number of arms collected in Macedonia from 1908 onwards amounts to more than 150,000 in total.⁶⁰³ In this sense, the intensive disarmament attempts implied that the principal contradiction between the Albanian tribal groups and the CUP government was the struggle for control over the means of political accumulation. That being said, the state efforts of monopolizing the means of violence in the form of compulsory conscription and disarmament and the rights of collective surplus appropriation in the form of taxation provoked similar reactions in the other frontier regions, such as Eastern Anatolian and Syrian provinces.⁶⁰⁴

The aggressive disarmament and taxation process triggered a new resistance movement in which 2,500 people from Malisor tribes such as Hot, Grude, and Kastrati fled to Montenegro after being engaged in small-scale combat with Ottoman troops in the boundary of Tuz.⁶⁰⁵ The refugees demanded from the government (1) a general amnesty for the rebels, (2) military service within the boundaries of Albanian provinces, (3) the appointment of municipal officers among tribal groups, (4) Albanian-speaking local governors, (5) return of their weapons and exemption from the new taxes, (6) compensation for their confiscated properties.⁶⁰⁶ The demands of the rebels concentrated on preserving their privileges and local power rather than any political program or autonomist-nationalist ideology. However, these demands constituted an intransigent contradiction with the state-formation efforts of the CUP regime. Therefore, the government rejected the rebels' demands by claiming that the tribal groups oppressed the local people and caused turmoil in the region due to their possession of the means of violence.⁶⁰⁷ Since the government rejected enacting a general amnesty for the rebels, the influential tribal leaders found asylum in Montenegro, such as Isa Bolatin and Sokol Batzi, who came together to coordinate another rebellion by establishing agreements with King Nicholas to provide rebels with weapons. Some reports also indicated that a large number of Montenegrin volunteers supported the rebels

⁶⁰² "Arnavudluk'ta Tanin", *Tanin*, 5/30/1910, No: 626; 6/14/1910, No:641 and 6/17/1910, No: 644.

⁶⁰³ *The Orient*, 9/7/1910, No: 1/21, 4.

⁶⁰⁴ *The Orient*, 9/14/1910, No: 1/22; see also Blumi, *Rethinking the Late Ottoman Empire*; Hirmis Aboona, *Assyrians, Kurds, and Ottomans: Intercommunal Relations on the Periphery of the Ottoman Empire* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008); Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State*.

⁶⁰⁵ BOA, BEO, No: 286095, 10/25/1910 and 286096, 10/26/1910.

⁶⁰⁶ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 408–10; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 178.

⁶⁰⁷ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 133/30, 9/22/1910; 133/34, 10/10/1910, and 133/41, 11/1/1910.

and smuggled arms across the borders for distribution among the Catholic tribes.⁶⁰⁸ Moreover, Austria-Hungary consul Ippen also distributed arms and money to Malisor chiefs, particularly Hot and Grude tribes on the Montenegrin border, to balance the influence of Montenegro over the tribal groups.⁶⁰⁹ Towards the end of 1910, the Montenegrin government declared the presence of about 3000 Albanian refugees within its boundaries.⁶¹⁰ Therefore, the ability of rebels to receive foreign support emerged as another critical dynamic in the rebellions of Albanian provinces. From 1909 onwards, especially from Montenegro, the rebels took financial and weaponry aid, and used the borderline opportunities to flee during the military pursuit and prepare to launch attacks.

The application of reforms and the turmoil in the Albanian provinces became a subject of debate in the Parliament, which reflected the divergent positions of Albanian deputies. Necip Draga criticized the application of “band laws” for the Kosovar rebels, the violent dimension of the military operation, and the declaration of martial law. Hasan Pristine argued that the reason for the rebellion was the introduction of new taxes by presenting a telegram written by the urban notables in the region. Although the *Gheg* deputies agreed on the necessity of the reforms in the region, they called for the gradual application of reforms and asked the government to send a committee to run the process. While most Albanian deputies emphasized the population's loyalty to the regime, Unionist deputies, such as Sait and Hamdi Efendi, found the remnants of the Hamidian regime in the region as responsible for the rebellion and supported the necessity of the violent measures. On the other hand, liberal deputies like Ismail Kemal Vlore pointed out the violent operation of Cavid Pasha as the leading cause of the insurrections. In its detailed response, the government focused on the geopolitical importance of the region having boundaries with four Balkan states and insisted on the necessity of military measures to ensure security and order, as well as the implication of the reforms. The government suggested that the reasons for the rebellion were the manipulation of tribal leaders favored by the Hamidian regime, who benefitted from the ignorance of the people who were not familiar with the existence of the government so far.⁶¹¹

The government's explanations demonstrated that modern state-building (i.e., the monopolization of the means of violence in the public armed forces and the rights of collective

⁶⁰⁸ *The Orient*, 11/2/1910, No: 1/29, 4.

⁶⁰⁹ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 290.

⁶¹⁰ *The Orient*, 11/9/1910, No: 1/30, 6.

⁶¹¹ MMZC, İ.70, C.1, 4/11/1910, 5-19.

surplus appropriation in taxation) was the primary goal of the regime. Therefore, rather than nation-building or identity-formation, the primary target of CUP's state-formation attempts was to transform the forms of domination and exploitation and to ensure the territorial integrity of the region. Indeed, in the CUP congress, Halil Bey pointed out that so long as the Ottoman Slavs and Greeks of Macedonia found help from Bulgaria and Greece and the banded activity continued, the agitation in the region would not cease. Therefore, for the CUP, only a prepared and active army can serve to dispel the ideas of irredentism by virtue of ensuring law, security, and order in the region.⁶¹² Despite the reforms limiting their political strategies of accumulation, the Albanian deputies, mostly of landowning origin, supported the reforms which served their long-term class interests. Nevertheless, they criticized the maladministration of the local governors and harsh measures since they threatened their regional power, influence, and income. Hence, Albanian deputies intended to defend their local interests by calling for gradual reforms, loosening centralization measures, reestablishing the tribal commissions, limiting the military existence, and replacing provincial governors. To this end, the Albanian deputies insisted on sending a committee to the region, but the government rejected the sending of a committee with the excuse that it may promote a rebellion.⁶¹³

However, the determination of the CUP government for its aggressive reform program started to drive a wedge between the regime and different factions of the local ruling classes by threatening their regional political power. Together with the violent military operations and harsh enforcements and punishments to the rebels, the uncompromising attitude of the regime towards consolidating its authority against all odds led some Albanian deputies like Necip Draga to resign from the CUP. The military tribunal of Kosovo examined 4745 people, among whom 41 were executed, 325 were condemned to work on the roads, and the rest were either imprisoned or exiled.⁶¹⁴ Moreover, the government also promulgated a "Law on Associations," through which Albanian *Bashkim* clubs and their publications were closed.⁶¹⁵ Nevertheless, the CUP government divided the emergent opposition promising privileges to some tribal groups in return for their loyalty to the regime. For instance, Prenk Bib Doda from the Mirdite tribe supported the Ottoman

⁶¹² *The Orient*, 11/16/1910, No: 1/31.

⁶¹³ MMZC, İ.81, C.1, 5/1/1910, 473-476; İ.82, C.3, 5/4/1910, 551-577 and İ.12, C.2, 12/7/1910, 402-408.

⁶¹⁴ *The Orient*, 11/23/1910, No: 1/32, 6.

⁶¹⁵ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 137/6, 10/26/1910.

forces during the military operations; thus, he received a government salary, and the Mirdite tribe extended their landholdings by including forest lands in Shkoder in return for his support for the government.⁶¹⁶ In this sense, the persistence of the political strategies of accumulation affected the positions of the local ruling classes. Therefore, as it appeared in the different positionings in the Alphabet problem, the intra-ruling class conflict and competitions rendered the strategic orientations of the Albanians towards the regime unstable and prevented their unification.

3.2.5. 1911 Malisor Revolt: Articulation of Different Interests

The 1909-1910 rebellions demonstrated that the scale of the rebellions remained local and ineffective to the extent that they were not linked to any political program or the existence of the objective conditions or/and opportunity structures provided by the international geo-political competition. As also seen in the example of the *Prizren League*, different levels of class conflict and their regionally-specific resolutions created diverging dynamics of political conflict, which prevented the unification of the Albanians against the political regimes by producing competing strategies among the Albanian ruling classes. However, the existence of alternative political parties, autonomist-nationalist associations and committees, and organizational frameworks of the tribal groups provided organizational power for the Albanians in opposition to the regime.⁶¹⁷ Moreover, the possibility of foreign support thanks to the international geo-political competition also promoted the Albanian opposition to contact with alternative political programs. In this sense, the Malisor Revolt of 1911 exceeded the local scale in which different strategic interests were articulated against the state-formation efforts of the CUP government.

The government extended the application and content of the reform program all over the Albanian provinces by using the opportunity given by the marital law and its strong military existence. While the local officers continued to conduct censuses and land surveys to identify and collect the taxes, weapons, and soldiers, they demanded 20-25 years of accrued taxes and prosecuted the rebel groups, autonomist-nationalist associations, and publications. The extension of the reform measures caused further discontent in the region, which pushed different strategic and class groups into opposition against the regime. Consequently, the government took several reports from local governors indicating the smuggling of weapons from neighboring states to

⁶¹⁶ BOA, BEO, No: 284467, 8/17/1910.

⁶¹⁷ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 379.

prepare for a new rebellion.⁶¹⁸ Soon afterward, the highlander Malisors in Shkoder, chiefly Catholic tribes of Hot, Klement, Gruda, and Kastrat, whose number mustered some 4,000 men, withdrew into the mountains by proclaiming that they recognized only the law of mountains and refused to pay taxes and military conscription. Therefore, the government postponed the withdrawal of troops from the region and dispatched additional troops from other provinces.⁶¹⁹ Initially, minor conflicts occurred between the Ottoman troops and Malisor rebellions around the district of Tuz.⁶²⁰



Figure 7. Albanian highlander leaders with the Montenegrin army in front of Prince Mirko in Koplik, north of Shkoder (by Hugo Grothe, 1912) Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/grothe/index.html>

Meanwhile, fugitive rebels like Isa Bolatin and Sokol Batzi came together to coordinate another rebellion in Montenegro. These groups contacted the Malisor leaders such as Mehmet Shpend, Dede Gjo Luli, and Mirash Luca and organized a general revolt in March 1911. Together with the support of the Mirdite tribe and some landowners and notables, the number of the rebels reached about 25,000 participants, and the rebellion spread all over Shkoder and Kosovo provinces.⁶²¹ In addition to the involvement of different groups, the rebellion also benefitted from

⁶¹⁸ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 137/18, 1/5/1911 and 141/48, 2/27/1911 and *The Orient*, 11/16/1910, No: 1/31, 6.

⁶¹⁹ BOA, BEO, No: 289129, 2/12/1911 and 289375, 2/20/1911; BOA, DH. SYS., No: 16, 1-6, 1/17/1911.

⁶²⁰ BOA, HR. SYS, No: 141/46, 2/7/1911.

⁶²¹ BOA, BEO, No: 289819, 3/5/1911 and *The Orient*, 5/17/1911, No: 2/5.

foreign support. To illustrate, a series of reports informed that the rebels took financial and weaponry (arms and ammunition) support, particularly from Montenegro, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, which reached around 25,000 weapons.⁶²² After consolidating their power in Montenegro, the rebels returned from the border and captured the town of Tuz, burned the barracks, and carried off arms and ammunition.⁶²³

The CUP government sent a large military force to quell the rebellion under the command of Sevkett Turgut Pasha, who was appointed as the governor-general of Kosovo.⁶²⁴ Turgut Pasha attempted to divide the rebellion by calling Mirdite chief Prenk Bib Doda from Vienna to accompany him, and the imperial troops occupied some of the captured cities. Moreover, the government sent a telegram to Montenegro to keep its neutrality within the boundaries.⁶²⁵ However, as the rebellion was more widespread, the military troops in the region were not adequate to cope with the situation; thus, the local governors called for additional troops.⁶²⁶ Indeed, the geographical qualities of the region also made it harder for the imperial troops to end the rebellion by relying only on coercion. In this sense, the CUP government implemented consent-formation tactics to prevent the spread of rebellion by sending a delegation to persuade local Muslim people to stop supporting the rebellion by arguing that the insurgents were Catholics whose aim was to destroy Islam with the help of foreigners.⁶²⁷ Similar to Bib Doda case, the government awarded money and privileges to some of the Malisor leaders in Shkoder to ensure their loyalty and to cut their links with rebellion. The CUP government also tried to take advantage of the intra-ruling class competition and the Islamic faith in the region to halt the spread of the rebellion. Indeed, many Muslim tribes among Malisors had already declared their disapproval of the rebellion and support for the government.⁶²⁸ The government also encouraged rebels to return to their homes by declaring a pardon, except for the Malisor chiefs leading the rebellion.⁶²⁹

⁶²² For reports on Austrian support, BOA, HR. SYS, No: 144/4, 5/17/1911; for Italian support, 143/31 4/25/1911, 141/3, 3/2/1911, and 141/14, 5/12/1911; for Montenegrin and Serbian support, 147/71, 7/11/1911 and 141/7, 3/27/1911; for Romanian support, 141/21, 8/9/1911.

⁶²³ BOA, BEO, No: 290706, 4/4/1911 and 290850, 4/9/1911 and *The Orient*, 4/5/1911, No: 1/51, 1-2.

⁶²⁴ BOA, BEO, No: 290857, 4/9/1911.

⁶²⁵ BOA, BEO, No: 291920, 5/13/1911.

⁶²⁶ BOA, BEO, No: 290790, 4/8/1911 and *The Orient*, 4/12/1911, No: 1/52, 3 and 4/19/1911, No: 2/1, 3

⁶²⁷ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 403–5; Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 411–12.

⁶²⁸ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 144/22, 4/6/1911.

⁶²⁹ BOA, BEO, No: 290031, 3/12/1911.

However, different socio-political actors attempted to mobilize the Malisor rebellion into different political programs. For example, on 27 April 1911, an Albanian nationalist from Italy, Dr. Terenc Toci, declared the independence of Albania under a provisional government in *Ghegland* by gathering some of the Malisor and Mirdite tribes, who were up in arms against the CUP government.⁶³⁰ Although the declaration of Toci remained an ineffective initiative, the importance of the Malisor revolt lay in the fact that, this time, the rebellion exceeded beyond the local scale by spreading to all Albanian provinces, including many districts of *Toskland*. Despite differing in their strategic orientations and interests in involving the rebellion, the rebels from different socio-economic backgrounds banded together in their discontent with and opposition to the CUP regime and its reform program, which challenged their local interests in different ways. While the *Gheg* ruling classes, more conservative in nature, attempted to maintain their local privileges, many *Tosk* landowners and notables such as Ismail Kemal, Cemal Bey, Fazil Toptani, Fuad Toptani, Akif Pasa, Sevkert Verlaci, Kazım Bey seized the opportunity to consolidate their local power by supporting the rebellion.⁶³¹ Moreover, *Bashkim* organizations founded a “Central Revolutionary Committee” and joined the rebels’ ranks to create pressure to channel the rebellion into an autonomist-nationalist line.⁶³² This group demanded (1) administrative autonomy within the empire, (2) the union of the four provinces into a single Albanian province, and (3) the appointment of officers of Albanian origin.⁶³³ However, the majority of the Muslim Malisor tribes and landowners did not support the demands founded by the *Bashkim* groups by declaring their loyalty to the regime, while some confined their demands to the loosening of the reform policies.⁶³⁴

Although the CUP government sent a significant amount of military force to suppress the rebellion and used dividing tactics, the vast scale of the rebellion fortified with foreign support limited the ability of the government to suppress the rebellion. Therefore, the government was obliged to focus more on consent-formation by starting a negotiation with the rebels. Meanwhile, the government also attempted to pressure Montenegrin King Nicholas not to harbor the rebels.⁶³⁵ One of the precise indicators of the government efforts for consent-formation was the visit of

⁶³⁰ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 145/27, 6/5/1911; 145/34, 6/7/1911 and 145/37, 6/8/1911.

⁶³¹ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 140/7, 5/25/1911.

⁶³² BOA, BEO, NO: 293862, 7/22/1911 and 293968, 7/26/1911; BOA, HR. SYS., No: 146/1, 6/14/1911.

⁶³³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 420–22; Malcolm, *Kosovo*, 301.

⁶³⁴ BOA, BEO, No: 293518, 7/6/1911; 293236, 7/4/1911; 294208, 8/3/1911; BOA, HR. SYS., No: 147/7, 6/29/1911.

⁶³⁵ *The Orient*, 6/28/1911, No: 2/11.

Sultan Mehmed Reshad V to Kosovo on 11 July 1911.⁶³⁶ The CUP used the concept of Islamic brotherhood to galvanize the Muslim identity of the Albanian population over the cult of the sultan. Indeed, Sultan Reshad was greeted by an enormous crowd of people, about 150,000, who expressed their loyalty to the sultanate and caliphate during his entrance to the Albanian provinces.⁶³⁷ Since his visit was expected to persuade the rebels to abandon their resistance, he gave a series of concessions: proclaiming a general pardon, granting a moratorium on taxes, giving the right to carry weapons in the countryside, promising to grant 10,000 liras for restructuring of damaged houses, granting positions to the relatives of tribal groups if they return within ten days, otherwise taking several measures.⁶³⁸ While the promises of the sultan started to placate the rebellion, liberal-decentralist leaders like Ismail Kemal Vlore and Cemal Bey Tiran attempted to take advantage of the situation to obtain more concessions from the government by visiting the refugee Malisor rebels in the Montenegro village of *Gerche*, in which they formulated a memorandum to end the rebellion addressed both to the government and the great powers.⁶³⁹



Figure 8: The Albanians hasten to pay homage to Sultan Mehmed V (by Ernst Jäckh, 1911) Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/jaekh/index.html>

⁶³⁶ Erik Jan Zürcher, "Kosovo Revisited: Sultan Reshad's Macedonian Journey in 1911," in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation-Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).

⁶³⁷ *The Orient*, 6/14/1911, No: 2/9, 1 and 6/21/1911, No: 2/10.

⁶³⁸ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 145/61, 6/8/1911.

⁶³⁹ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 140/14, 6/13/1911.

Called as a *Gerche Memorandum* or *Red Book* because of the color of its cover page, the declaration included twelve points of demand: (1) a guarantee from the central and local governments not to repeat to arbitrary [military] operations, (2) the legal recognition of the national existence of Albanians like the fellow national elements, (3) a free elections of Albanian deputies according to the proportional representation, (4) the establishment of Albanian private and public schools with Albanian language, (5) a decentralized provincial administration respectful to requirements and capability of the region within the customary practices of the Constitution (6) the appointment of high officials like governor among the most capable officers preferably those who knew the Albanian language, and competent local Albanians for the other offices such as judicial, financial and civil posts as well as gendarmerie and police forces, and appointment of tribal chiefs as director in the villages (7) the appointment of an inspector-general specific to Albanian provinces, (8) using Albanian along with Ottoman-Turkish in local correspondences, (9) the fulfillment of compulsory military service for Albanian soldiers, during the peace time, in the Albanian provinces to protect the boundaries (10) the allocation of taxes towards local needs and giving the right to manage the forests to nearest villages, (11) preparation of provincial budget via the parliament, (12) the restitution of confiscated weapons and payment for the restructure of properties damaged by the Ottoman army and settlement of those who lost their households.⁶⁴⁰ The memorandum was signed by twenty-two Malisor leaders, including the tribes of Hot, Grud, Shkrel, Kastrat, Klement, and Shale.⁶⁴¹ The rebels also sent telegrams to the European and Ottoman authorities, emphasizing the rigged poll, unjust and high taxation, corrupting central officials, and the issue of disarmament.⁶⁴² While the government attempted to arrange the terms with the rebels, some brigandage groups organized by *Bashkim* clubs in Vlore took the mountains and proclaimed their support for the *Gerche* memorandum.⁶⁴³

Since the CUP government refrained from foreign intervention by turning the rebellion into an international problem, it started the negotiations immediately. Meanwhile, Abdullah Pasha replaced Sevkett Turgut as commander-in-chief of the Ottoman forces in Shkoder to placate the rebels. While the demands of *Gerche* were discussed in the government, the government agreed

⁶⁴⁰ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 140/19, 6/23/1911.

⁶⁴¹ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 416–17 and 423–24; Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 186–87.

⁶⁴² Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 205.

⁶⁴³ *The Orient*, 7/12/1911, No: 2/13, 4.

with Montenegro through the mediacy of Russia and Austria-Hungary, in which King Nicholas promised to expel the Malisor refugees within forty-eight hours.⁶⁴⁴ The CUP government announced its response by declaring (1) a general amnesty for the Malisor rebels, (2) the fulfillment of military service for Malisors two years in Shkoder, one year in Istanbul (3) the appointment of Albanian-speaking provincial officers, (4) a two year moratorium on local taxes, (5) amendment for cattle-tax in the boundary regions, (6) granting right to carry guns for shepherds and forest guards on the condition of prohibition in towns and markets, (7) to build one or two primary schools in each of the villages of tribes and paying the salaries of the teachers in those schools, (8) taking steps to build roads in the region, (9) the government help for reconstruction of households for those Malisors returning from Montenegro whose houses were damaged during the military operations, (10) the use of 10,000 liras were granted by Sultan Reshad to compensate the damages and reconstruction, and allocating more in case of necessary, (11) the distribution of food and one liras for once to refugees returning from Montenegro.⁶⁴⁵ Therefore, the agreement was signed at Podrogica between the government and the rebels. When it became evident that the CUP regime was not able to deal with the rebellion, about 3000 Muslim insurgents withdrew to the mountains in Janina and Vlore with the demands of extending the privileges given to Malisor all over the province, and Catholic Mirditas also demanded the same concessions as well.⁶⁴⁶

The primary *modus operandi* of the points articulated in the *Gerche Memorandum* was local political levels reflecting the intra-ruling class conflict between the government and Albanian ruling classes or/and strategic groups over the control and share of the means of political accumulation and social surplus. The divergent positions within pro- and anti-regime strategies reflected regionally-specific resolutions of different levels of class conflicts depending on the variations in the class constellations and their balances of forces. Although *Bashkim* committees formulated an alternative set of demands towards administrative autonomy and attempted to mobilize the rebels into their program by distributing money and weapons, their program failed to provide a basis among the insurgents.⁶⁴⁷ It is the fact that the emphasis on the Albanian language, nation, and people in the memorandum seems like “nationalist” demands at first glance, but the

⁶⁴⁴ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 147/58, 7/7/1911.

⁶⁴⁵ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 149/9, 8/3/1911.

⁶⁴⁶ *The Orient*, 8/2/1911, No: 2/16.

⁶⁴⁷ BOA, BEO, NO: 293862, 7/22/1911 and 293773, 7/20/1911.

recontextualization of these keywords reveals that they predominantly corresponded to regional interests than nationalist ideology. Since the political strategies of accumulation remained the dominant form of reproduction for the provincial ruling classes, the emphasis on the Albanian language implied that they intended to consolidate their local power and influence by ensuring the dominance of Albanians in the local positions. In other words, instead of an ideological cause, the autonomist-nationalist discourse functioned as an opportunistic discourse for the provincial ruling classes to gain local leverage to secure and consolidate their share over the local surplus appropriation and political domination against both their local and central competitors for power.⁶⁴⁸ Indeed, the idea of Albanian nationalism became the discursive framework for the liberal-decentralist opposition and intelligentsia to increase their power and impact in the local administration and central politics.⁶⁴⁹

That being said, rather than a single and organized leadership, the movement consisted of temporary cooperation of different strategic groups on the common ground of opposing the extended reform program of the CUP government. To illustrate, the *Gheg* leaders of the tribal and brigandage groups, such as Isa Bolatin, Sokol Batzi, and Bayram Cur, were interested in restoring the old status-quo by regenerating their privileges enjoyed in the Hamidian regime, such as exemption from taxation and military service. Therefore, as it is well located by Skendi, regionalism and tribal particularism prevailed over the autonomist-nationalist ideas among the *Gheg* tribal groups.⁶⁵⁰ Thus, as soon as the CUP government made concessions for its program by restoring many of the local authority and traditional privileges of the tribal and landowning groups, such as permitting them to keep their weapons, tax moratoriums, and granting of local administrative posts, the majority of the rebels were withdrawn from the rebellion. Moreover, when the rebel tribal and brigandage groups restored their former privileges to a large extent, nearly all of the refugees returned from the Montenegrin border.⁶⁵¹ Despite adopting an anti-regime position, most *Gheg* landowners and notables such as Necip Draga, Hasan Pristine, Akif Pasa, Sevkett Bey, and Kazım Bey tended to increase their share over the surplus and local domination within the centralization. Kulce argued that many of the landed classes were involved in the

⁶⁴⁸ Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 74.

⁶⁴⁹ Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 539; Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 59–60.

⁶⁵⁰ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 349.

⁶⁵¹ *The Orient*, 8/10/1911, No: 2/17 and 8/17/1911, No: 2/18, 5.

rebellion because they considered the CUP government responsible for the turmoil in the *Gheghland* and its ineffectiveness treated their long-term regional interests.⁶⁵²

However, some of the *Tosk* landowners, urban notables, and intellectuals who were already deprived of their means of political accumulation and left out of the hierarchy of the power bloc, such as Ismail Kemal Bey, Cemal Bey, and Fazil Pasa Toptani, adopted decentralist demands by using the nationalist discourse to regenerate their socio-political base of exploitation and domination.⁶⁵³ In the last analysis, the fact that the status-quoist factions absorbed the rebellion after restoring their local powers and privileges demonstrates the determinant effect of the resolution of the intra-ruling class conflict. In other words, the dismantling of the rebellion demonstrated that the majority of the rebels were concerned with preserving their traditional privileges or/and local interests rather than a national cause. Moreover, the existence of pro-regime strategies adopted by different Albanian ruling classes, such as tribal leader Prenk Bib Doda and landowners Esad Toptani and Ekrem Vlore, contradicted with the rationality of the nationalist arguments. Meanwhile, some of the Muslim *Tosk* landowners blamed the irredentist activities of Greece and the non-Muslim peasants for the brigandage activities in Janina and called for government intervention.⁶⁵⁴

The parliamentary debates during the rebellion also reflected the different approaches of the Albanian deputies to the rebellion. The majority of the Albanian deputies criticized the uncompromising attitude of the government towards the region regarding the harsh reform measures and punishments under martial law. For instance, Hasan Pristine and Necip Draga considered the attempts of collecting the accrued taxes together with new taxes, land registers, violence, and incapability of local governors as the main reason for the rebellions in the region. Unionist Hasan Basri Bey pointed out the resistance of tribal groups and foreign influence as the main reason for the revolt by giving the example of the conflict between the Klement and Selça tribes and the Montenegrin support. Therefore, he supported the reform process of the regime as a necessity to save the empire and compared the effects of military conscription and disarmament in the emergence of the Malisor revolt with the rebellion in Yemen. Moreover, almost all the deputies emphasized foreign influence and intervention, especially from Montenegro. Therefore, the

⁶⁵² Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 397.

⁶⁵³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 416–28; Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, 450–51.

⁶⁵⁴ BOA, BEO, No: 29433, 8/8/1911.

deputies argued that the rebellion was not only a domestic problem of resistance against the reforms but an international problem invoking foreign intrigues.⁶⁵⁵ The government presented many telegrams from Albanians declaring their support for the government against the Malisor revolt and the Montenegrin intervention.⁶⁵⁶ In the name of the government, Ibrahim Hakkı Pasha informed the deputies about the government's communications with Russia and Montenegro and ensured them for the neutrality of Montenegro. He also guaranteed the government's ability to defend the Albanian provinces from any irredentist attacks.⁶⁵⁷ However, it became apparent that Montenegro provided the rebels with weaponry and monetary and other supplies.⁶⁵⁸

On September 29, 1911, the Italian declaration of war on the Empire transformed the relations between the rebels and the CUP government. Since the Italian occupation jeopardized the Ottoman existence in the Balkans, it caused many of the Albanian ruling classes to avoid further turmoil in the region. The CUP government also abided by the agreement and sent two inspectors to implement the agreed demands in the region, including the building of religious and teaching schools which taught Albanian along with Ottoman-Turkish, the development and training of new farming techniques, the construction of a hospital and a pharmacy in Shkoder, the building of roads linking the strategical regions and of military barracks in borderlands, the dispatch of blood-feud commissions, the lowering of taxes and relaxing the land surveys, the appointment of tribal leader's relatives to the offices of directors, and the sending of propaganda commissions to the region.⁶⁵⁹ However, the council of ministers refused to appoint the incapable relatives of the Malisor tribal chiefs as local directors unless they received proper training for the requirements of the posts.⁶⁶⁰ The government also provided loyal tribal leaders with privileges such as decorations, medals, and ranks to divide the tribal power by integrating some of them into the hierarchy of the power bloc.⁶⁶¹ Having ensured the total dismantling of the insurgence activities in Kosovo and Shkoder, the government focused on suppressing the *Bashkim* activities in Janina and

⁶⁵⁵ MMZC, İ.70, C.1, 4/1/1911, 517-518 and İ.83, C.1, 4/19/1911, 443-464.

⁶⁵⁶ MMZC, İ.74, C.1, 4/6/1911, 77-78 (Koprulu and Gustruvar) and İ.77, C.1, 4/11/1911, 37-38 and 200-201 (Preveze and Kalkandelen); İ.88, C.1, 5/1/1911, 44-45 (Debar).

⁶⁵⁷ MMZC, İ.110, C.1, 5/29/1911, 289-91.

⁶⁵⁸ MMZC, İ.110, C.1, 5/29/1911, 287-291.

⁶⁵⁹ BOA, BEO, No: 297725, 10/1/1911; 300464, 2/25/1912; 300677, 3/2/1912; and 300950, 3/10/1912.

⁶⁶⁰ BOA, BEO, No: 300186, 2/15/1912.

⁶⁶¹ BOA, BEO, No: 295294, 9/15/1911.

Monastir.⁶⁶² The government also used the opportunity of tranquility to reinforce the Ottoman troops resident in the Albanian provinces and to reconstruct the damaged communication lines like telegrams and railways.⁶⁶³ However, although the concessions of the government to the tribal groups brought an elasticity effect in the region, their resistance to any efforts of taxation, conscription, and disarmament became epidemic.⁶⁶⁴

Although the *primum mobile* of the rebellion was the intra-ruling class conflict, the inter-ruling class conflict, which materialized in the international geo-political competition between the Ottoman state and the neighboring states, provided different opportunity structures directing the course of the rebellion. For Austria-Hungary, Albanian provinces could serve as a bastion against the direct threat of Slavic expansion possessed by Serbia and Bulgaria, which indirectly increased the power of the Russian Empire in the region. Italy also wanted to increase its influence on the Mediterranean and the Adriatic Sea to remain in the competition. Although Austro-Italian interests centered on preserving the status-quo in the Balkans and the Adriatic coast, the geo-political competition compelled the two states to carry on a peaceful penetration in the Albanian provinces depending on their Catholic networks throughout educational and welfare institutions, commercial activities, and supporting different autonomist-nationalist activities as well as rebellions.⁶⁶⁵ The neighboring Balkan states, namely Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece, had their competitive and irredentist geo-political considerations over the region, relying on their *kin-groups* living in the Albanian provinces, which became apparent during the Balkan Wars. Therefore, the uneven regional *realpolitik* of the Albanian borders affected both the regime-building strategies of the CUP regime towards the region and the strategic orientations of the Albanian ruling classes within the rebellion.

As a result, the CUP government had to digress from its reform program to overcome the crisis in the Albanian provinces. Along with the Albanian crisis, the Italian declaration of war strengthened the political opposition against the CUP government in central politics as well. To illustrate, the Malisor revolt led CUP to lose its power in the cabinet with the resignation of Talat Pasha from the Interior Ministry and the appointment of a moderate Hacı Adil Bey to his posts.

⁶⁶² BOA, BEO, NO: 293862, 7/22/1911; 293773, 7/20/1911; 294327, 8/8/1911.

⁶⁶³ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 150/7, 12/13/1911.

⁶⁶⁴ BOA, BEO, No: 299314, 1/17/1912.

⁶⁶⁵ For detailed account of the strategies. See, Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 238–86.

Moreover, unlike their positions in the previous insurrections, Albanian deputies aired their opposition and criticisms of the government, which were sometimes framed by nationalist discourse. For instance, Hasan Pristine resembled the Ottoman Empire as a “corporate company with a common interest which was jointly owned by both Turks, Albanians, and also other nations with equal shares” by situating the autonomist-nationalist discourses into the framework of Ottomanism.⁶⁶⁶ The majority of Albanian deputies criticized the government for failing to execute the necessary socio-economic and cultural reforms, such as infrastructural and economic investments and construction of schools and roads, but rather provoking the population through high taxation and harsh punishments. They argued that the government's actions alienated the Muslim Albanians at such a critical juncture that the risk of irredentist claims and foreign intervention increased.⁶⁶⁷

Meanwhile, the government accused liberal-decentralist Albanian deputies, such as Ismail Kemal and Mufid Libovhe, of the provocateurs of the rebellion with foreign support.⁶⁶⁸ Unionist Albanian deputies such as Hasan Basri from Debar argued that the Malisor rebellion was directed against the comprehensive reform policies rather than disloyalty to the empire and constitution.⁶⁶⁹ Similarly, Esat Bey from Drac criticized the concessions given to the Malisor and Mirdite tribes by arguing that the government provided 4500 riffles to Mirdites. Therefore, he asked for additional troops to ensure security and order without violence in the region.⁶⁷⁰ When the CUP government experienced difficulties dealing with the Italian occupation of Tripoli and the Libyan coast, the political opposition further increased, leading many deputies to switch to the liberal side. Therefore, the liberal opposition, including many Albanian deputies, such as Ismail Kemal, Hasan Pristine, Hasan Basri, and Midhat Fraseri, seized this opportunity by forming a new political party, namely the Freedom and Accord Party (*Hurriyet ve Itilaf Firkasi*), in November 1911.⁶⁷¹ This party can be considered the regeneration of the Liberal Party (*Ahrar Firkasi*), for it adopted the same program of liberal decentralization as opposed to the centralist political program of the CUP

⁶⁶⁶ Quoted in Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 542.

⁶⁶⁷ MMZC, İ.26, C.1, 12/18/1911, 220-224.

⁶⁶⁸ MMZC, İ.12, C.2, 11/8/1911, 303.

⁶⁶⁹ MMZC, İ.35, C.1, 1/6/1912, 441-453.

⁶⁷⁰ MMZC, İ.26, C.1, 12/18/1911, 220-224.

⁶⁷¹ *The Orient*, 11/29/1911, No: 2/33 and 12/6/1911, No: 2/34.

government.⁶⁷² In this respect, the liberal-decentralist faction among Albanian ruling classes compensated for their efforts in the Malisori revolt by gaining political returns in central politics.

3.2.6. 1912 General Rebellion: Instrumentalization of Autonomist-Nationalist Discourse

Having lost the cabinet to the Freedom and Accord Party in by-elections on December 1911, with only one vote (215 to 216), the CUP forced the new cabinet for a snap election in the next month. In the new elections, called as Big-Stick Elections (*Sopalı Seçim*) in the Ottoman-Turkish historiography, the CUP won 215 of 222 seats of the parliament with fraud and intimidation on April 1912.⁶⁷³ In the Albanian provinces, the CUP followed two different methods to manipulate the elections. On the one hand, it attempted to benefit from intra-ruling class competition and conflict in the region by supporting the local rivals of the liberal-decentralist candidates, mainly from landed classes. To illustrate, the CUP supported Sureyya Bey Vlore against Ismail Kemal Vlore in the elections and appointed his son Ekrem to the district governorship in Vlore; thereby, Sureyya Bey became the deputy from Berat.⁶⁷⁴ On the other hand, the CUP ensured the defeat of liberal-decentralist candidates either by taking administrative measures and using military troops to intimidate the voters or by using some incentives such as bribes and money. Therefore, the former Unionist deputies who shifted to liberal opposition, such as Hasan Pristine and Necip Draga, could not be re-elected. During the elections, small-scale clashes happened in the region, which increased the unrest and tension in the Albanian provinces as well as opposition against the CUP regime. Since the factions within the Albanian ruling classes, who were already excluded from the hierarchy of power bloc and deprived of their means of political accumulation, now lost their means of political representation and power in the central politics with the elections, they turned into a radical opposition by fomenting another rebellion.

Having failed to impose the decentralist-autonomist program during the *Gerche* negotiations, Ismail Kemal had already initiated a secret meeting with *Bashkim* clubs and other influential *Tosk* Albanian leaders. After the CUP sealed the political channels for the opposition, Hasan Pristine also contacted the *Gheg* tribal groups to provoke another rebellion, while Ismail Kemal looked for foreign support for the financial and logistic means of the rebellion.⁶⁷⁵ In

⁶⁷² Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 163–285.

⁶⁷³ Tunaya, 27 and 271–73.

⁶⁷⁴ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 191.

⁶⁷⁵ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 471.

consequence of these initiatives, some influential tribal and brigandage leaders who were active in the rebellion of 1911, such as Isa Bolatin, Bayram Cur, Rıza Gjakove, and representatives of landowners and urban notables such as Hasan Pristine, Zeynullah Bey, Necip Draga met at the city of Yunik, near Gjakove district of Kosovo to organize another rebellion to overthrow the CUP regime.⁶⁷⁶ After the meeting, the group formulated a list of demands to the CUP government, including (1) the unification of Albanian provinces into one province, (2) the education in the Albanian language, and the use of local taxes for the construction of schools, (3) the right to nominate people from Albanian origin to the provincial civil and administrative offices, and the use of Albanian language in the courts, (4) the fulfillment of military service for Albanian soldiers only in Albanian provinces during the peacetime.⁶⁷⁷ When the CUP government used dilatory tactics to negotiate these demands, a rebellion started in Gjakove and quickly spread into the Kosovar districts of Pec, Pristine, Vulcitrin, Gusinje, Prizren, and the Malisor districts of Shkoder and Debar.⁶⁷⁸ The number of rebels reached about 50,000, which concentrated on different parts of Kosovo and occupied some of its towns.⁶⁷⁹ The insurgents attacked the reform committee of the government in accordance with *Gerche memorandum*, workers of road building, and communication lines. The provincial governors called for additional troops, and the government dispatched twelve battalions from Salonica, Adrianople, and Monastir to these regions.⁶⁸⁰

Meanwhile, the opposition to the CUP government also grew in the military with the initiatives of the Freedom and Accord Party. The military officers formed an association, Savior Officers (*Halaskar Zabitan*) with the demand for the resignation of Said Pasha cabinet, while a group of Albanian officers in Monastir led a minor revolt under the leadership of Captain Tayyar Tetovo by deserting the army.⁶⁸¹ This group also contacted the leaders of the *Bashkim* clubs in Monastir, such as Dervis Hima.⁶⁸² Although the Savior group declined categorically to recognize the autonomist demands of the *Bashkim* organizations, they supported the rebellion on the common

⁶⁷⁶ BOA, BEO, No: 302965, 5/16/1912 and 303048, 5/20/1912.

⁶⁷⁷ *The Orient*, 1/10/1912, No:3/2.

⁶⁷⁸ BOA, BEO, No: 303161, 5/23/1912; 305058, 7/11/1912 and BOA, HR. SYS., No: 151/1, 5/17/1912.

⁶⁷⁹ BOA, BEO, No:305002, 7/31/1912.

⁶⁸⁰ BOA, BEO, No: 304307, 7/2/1912 and 314268, 7/17/1912 and *The Orient*, 5/22/1912, No: 3/21.

⁶⁸¹ BOA, HR. SYS., No:151/51, 6/26/1912; The Minister of War affirmed that 12 officers and 81 soldiers in Monastir from Albanian origin deserted. See, *The Orient*, 7/3/1912, No: 3/27.

⁶⁸² BOA, BEO, No: 305000, 7/31/1912.

ground of overthrowing the CUP government and its political regime.⁶⁸³ The fact that Savior Officers paved the way for mutinies and desertions within the army prevented the CUP government from mobilizing a sufficient number of troops to quell the rebellion, and almost all the major cities of Kosovo fell to the rebels.⁶⁸⁴ Although the government faced serious hardships against the rebels, the threat of foreign invasion with the Italian attack on Dardanelles forced both sides to negotiate. In addition to previous demands, the insurgents of Kosovo requested (1) the restoration of their weapons, (2) removal of certain local officials, and (3) exemption from the payment of the sheep tax and abolition of all other superfluous duties.⁶⁸⁵

Moreover, the growing instability in the Albanian provinces brought about fragmentation in the power bloc by alienating some factions of the ruling classes who formerly supported the CUP regime. However, the conservative and status-quoist factions within Albanian dominant classes continued to resist the spread of autonomist-nationalist discourse within the rebellion. The discussions in the parliament demonstrated the factionalism and divisions among the Albanian deputies. During the rebellion, different telegrams, mainly signed by landowners and notables, were sent to the government, which declared the loyalty of the Albanian population to the regime.⁶⁸⁶ Depending on the telegrams and report of his reform commission, the Ministry of Interior Hacı Adil Bey, on behalf of the government, argued that the rebellion was purely a local movement provoked by some groups who manipulated people against the government with rumors like the introduction new taxes or foreign interventions.⁶⁸⁷ The government found the malevolent people who did not want the development of the Albanian provinces and the ignorance of the population who did not understand the benefits of reform measures, such as building government offices and police stations in the region, as responsible for the rebellion. Moreover, the government criticized the actions of former liberal deputies such as Ismail Kemal and Hasan Pristine and charged them with causing a disturbance to provoke foreign intervention. In this respect, the government considers rebels as a reactionary-conservative alliance of tribal groups, some

⁶⁸³ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 430; Tunaya, *Türkiye’de Siyasal Partiler Cilt 1: İkinci Meşrutiyet Dönemi*, 354.

⁶⁸⁴ Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, 409–11.

⁶⁸⁵ *The Orient*, 6/5/1912, No: 3/23, 3.

⁶⁸⁶ Telegrams sent by Prizren, Kalkandelen, Tiran and Durac; Debar, Shkoder and Skopje declaring their loyalty to the Ottoman government and ready to fight for the fatherlands. See, MMZC, İ.8, C.1, 5/29/1912, 117-118; İ.9, C.1, 5/31/1912, 143; İ.11, C.1, 6/8/1912, pp.212-213; İ.13, C.1, 6/12/1912, 217.

⁶⁸⁷ MMZC, İ.9, C.1, 5/31/1912, 144-145.

landowners and notables seeking decentralized administration who manipulated the innocent population, while rejecting the existence of nationalist ideas among the Albanian people.⁶⁸⁸

In the session of July 8, 1912, the declaration of the insurrectionists was presented in the parliament. The rebels argued that the policies of the CUP government paved the way for the dissolution of the empire, and they would be trampled from the fatherland to the enemies in the end. Moreover, they criticized the violation of the constitution and free elections. They also declared that many soldiers in the military sided with them.⁶⁸⁹ In response, the Unionist deputies, represented by Sureyya Vlore and Esad Toptani, underlined the loyalty of Albanians to the Ottoman sultanate and the regime. However, they insisted that the Albanians had genuine grievances which should be readdressed by the government. Sahin Bey emphasized the maladministration in the region and criticized the government's refusal to allow the Albanian language in schools, and emphasized the insecurity and disorder, unfulfilled promises, unfinished public works, and lack of schools as the real problems in the Albanian provinces. Sureyya Vlore also criticized the use of violence in the region by underlining that the region was occupied by 70-80.000 soldiers and offered a good administration to solve the region's problems. However, Esad Toptani and Tevfik Bey criticized the government for giving concessions to the insurgents from the first rebellions onwards on the ground that they increased the power of tribal groups in the region. Esad Bey argued that the government disarmed only Muslim tribal groups while giving concessions to the Malisor and Mirdite tribes after every rebellion, encouraging these groups to demand more and more privileges. Therefore, he recommended a more aggressive and total reform process in the region with the help of a special commission.⁶⁹⁰

Together with the rebellion in Albanian provinces and the mutiny within the military, the Italian attack created a significant cabinet crisis which reached its peak with the resignation of Mahmud Sevket Pasha from the post of the Ministry of War. As a result, the pressures of the liberal deputies caused the CUP government under Said Pasha cabinet to fall from political power.⁶⁹¹ It is

⁶⁸⁸ MMZC, İ.10, C.1, 6/ 5/1912, 178-184.

⁶⁸⁹ The signatories of the memorandum consisting of the following names: Hasan Pristine; Rıza Gjakove; Bayram Cur; İsa Bolatin; Yahya, Musa, Abdurrahman, Rifat, Aziz and Şaki from Prizren; Ahmet from Gjakove; Rıza, Zeynullah, Abdurrahman, Mancukzade Recep and Cemal from Vulcitrin; and Rifat, Ebubekir and Ahmed from Pristine, Ferhad from Mitrovica. See, MMZC, İ.28, C.1, 7/8/1912, 126-133.

⁶⁹⁰ MMZC, İ.28, C.1, 7/8/1912, 133-159.

⁶⁹¹ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 151/93, 8/10/1912.

important that the cabinet's resignation was one of the demands of both the Albanian insurgents and Savior Officers. On July 23, 1912, Sultan Mehmed V appointed Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Pasha as grand vizier. His new cabinet included CUP opponents in critical posts, such as Mehmed Ferid Vlore as the interior minister and Huseyin Nazim Pasha as the minister of war. Meanwhile, the rebels, estimated to be around 60.000 men, took advantage of the cabinet crisis and occupied more towns in Shkoder, Kosovo, and Monastir, including the districts of Prishtine, Gilan, Vucitrin, and Mitrovice, where they forced provincial officers to flee.⁶⁹² Moreover, the encounters between the rebels and the imperial troops on the Montenegrin and Bulgarian borders strained their relationship with the Empire. Consequently, the new government of Gazi Muhtar Pasha moved toward a negotiated settlement with the rebellious Albanians rather than sticking to a military solution.

In September 1912, the government founded a special commission under the leadership of Ibrahim Pasha to negotiate with the rebels. Hasan Pristine participated in the negotiations on behalf of rebels and presented the demands including: (1) the enforcement of the law of the mountains in the [highland] areas, (2) the fulfillment of military service in Macedonia except in case of war, or in exceptional internal difficulties, (3) redistribution of confiscated weapons to their owners, (4) the appointment of Albanian-speaking officials familiar with the local customs, (5) the constructions of technical and agricultural schools where Albanian language shall be used, in counties with over 300,000 inhabitants, (6) an addition to the budget of pious foundations of the necessary sum for the upkeep of modern Muslim religious schools and the founding of new ones, (7) freedom to open private schools, (8) the inclusion of Albanian language in education, (9) the extension and development of public works, commerce, agriculture, railroads and carriage roads the improvement and expansion of roads, (10) the establishment of additional villages and state offices, (11) honoring the Islamic moral and decency and of the constitutional law, (12) the bringing to trial of Ibrahim Hakki and Mehmed Said Pasha's cabinets, (13) a general amnesty for rebels as well as officers who engaged in the last uprising, (14) the compensation for the damaged properties during the military operations.⁶⁹³

The *memorandum* of Hasan Pristine represented the combination of the initial demands presented by the separate rebellious organizations. Therefore, similar to the *Gerche Memorandum*,

⁶⁹² *The Orient*, 7/31/1912, No: 3/31, 1-2 and Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 432–36.

⁶⁹³ BOA, HR. SYS., No: 2911/49, 8/19/1912 and *The Orient*, 8/28/1912, No: 3/35, 5.

these demands reflected the divergent interests of the competing factions of the provincial ruling classes, namely the tribal groups, unionist-centralist and liberal-decentralist segments of the landed and mercantile classes, notables, and intellectuals. Nevertheless, the demands were not necessarily nationalist-separatist ideas but corresponded to decentralist-autonomist administration, which predominantly reflected the regional interests of the Muslim Albanian ruling classes for increasing their means of domination and exploitation. The majority of the demands provided tribal groups with maintaining their traditional privileges depending on their control over the means of violence and exemption from the collective exploitation of the state, such as performing their customary laws, carrying their weapons, and exempting from military services and taxation. For the part of the landed classes and urban notables, the demands attempted to increase their share over the surplus appropriation and political domination by regenerating their extra-economic means of exploitation and political participation through administrative positions as well their long-term private exploitation through infrastructural investments, controlling local budgets, and representation in central politics. To illustrate, the establishment of additional villages and state offices divided the administrative authority and enabled local dominant classes to increase their regional power by holding the local administrative posts. Therefore, the administrative demands increased the control of the local ruling classes over the means of political accumulation to the detriment of the central government. Similarly, the infrastructural and educational developments, such as the building of roads and technical and agricultural schools, served the landed and mercantile interests by increasing the productivity and agricultural surplus appropriated from the peasant producers. Although the demands on education in the Albanian language seem *prima facie* to reflect the nationalist tendencies, they did not necessarily serve nationalism, but they provided opportunities for class reproduction and vertical mobility for the children of the dominant classes as well as an alternative to the denominational school networks which invoked foreign influence in the region.⁶⁹⁴

The reference to Islamic morals and the lack of the issue of Latin Albanian Alphabet also indicated that the class interests were more influential than ethno-nationalism and ideology in the process. The government also avoided discussing the alphabet issue in the government schools since Muslim tribal groups resisted Latin Alphabet.⁶⁹⁵ Most importantly, the primary target of the

⁶⁹⁴ Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 366; Blumi, *Reinstating the Ottomans*, 152–63.

⁶⁹⁵ BOA, BEO, No: 299810, 2/3/1912.

rebellion was to overthrow the Unionist government since the demands of a decentralized authority constituted an intransigent contradiction with their centralization program. Therefore, the Albanian ruling classes who were excluded from the hierarchy of power bloc and further lost their collective representation in the parliamentary mechanism used the potential of the rebellion to regenerate their control and domination over local sources by functionalizing the autonomist-nationalist discourse in their competition and conflict against the CUP regime. While the demands were discussed in the new government, the rebels advanced on the towns of Kosovo and occupied the district of Skopje.⁶⁹⁶ Under the pressure of the occupation, Ibrahim Pasha declared to accept all of the demands on behalf of the government, known as the Skopje agreement, except the 3rd article that demanded the restoring of military rifles and the 12th article that requested the trial of previous cabinets.⁶⁹⁷

However, the unstable coalition of the different strategic orientations and competition within the rebel leadership started to crumble during the negotiations. Notably, the intra-ruling class conflict among the tribal groups and the landowners-notables became apparent in the struggle for domination within the rebellion, i.e., among the group of Isa Bolatin, Bayram Cur, Idris Sefer, and Riza Gjakove against Hasan Pristine, Necip Draga and Ismail Kemal. It is possible to categorize the factions within the rebellion under four main categories regarding their strategies and positions after the government's response. The first group was the conservative faction consisting mainly of *Gheg* tribal and brigandage leaders who intended to continue the rebellion to further consolidate their privileges by restoring the Hamidian regime and demanded the return of sultan Abdulhamid II to the throne. Their position can be traced in the interview of Isa Bolatin, one of the leaders of this group, with an English diplomat during the rebellion:

“.. I asked, "Did the Albanians want autonomy?" "No," he said, "they did not; what they wanted was not to be interfered with." "Do you want union," I said, "between the north and the south?" "Well," he said, "we are one people" but he went on to say that the union would not be advantageous to the north, for the Tosks, the southerners, were more educated and clever than the northerners. Albania wished to be under the Sultan, but the Albanians must have arms to defend their country, and these arms had been taken from them by the foolish Turks. When the *bessa* (truce) ended at Bairam, he could not say what was going to happen.

⁶⁹⁶ BOA, BEO, No:305904, 9/1/1912.

⁶⁹⁷ *The Orient*, 8/28/1912, No: 3/35, 5.

It was all incalculable. The Albanians would have liked to have fought the Italians. (There they joined with the Turks.).”⁶⁹⁸

In this sense, the conservative Muslim tribal leaders felt suspicious towards the urban dominant classes, particularly from *Toskland*, and the autonomist-nationalist ideas within the rebellion. It is important here to recall the opposition of tribal groups to the Latin Alphabet, which was considered a mechanism for urban ruling classes to consolidate their political power in the region. Although the schism among the leadership led the rebellion to lose ground, the tribal groups in Kosovo continued their armed resistance with approximately 20,000 rebels. Therefore, the Kosovar chiefs such as Isa Bolatin and Idris Sefer established a power base in their control zones.

As opposed to this strategy, the second group consisted of the landed classes and urban notables who tended immediately to accept the offer of the new government since their power base was less powerful than the tribal groups, and they had already ensured to increase their political domination and share over the local surplus with the Skopje agreement. However, the regionally-specific class constellations also affected their strategical orientations. Since the continuity of the rebellion challenged their long-term socio-economic and political interests by increasing the power of the tribal groups in the region the *Gheg* landed classes took a more moderate position during the negotiation process and pushed for finishing the rebellion. As emphasized before, the competition between Isa Bolatin and Necip Draga in the city of Mitrovice reflected the impact of the intra-ruling class conflict between the tribal groups and landed classes in the *Ghegland*. Moreover, the majority of the *Gheg* dominant classes invested in the continuity and capability of the Ottoman government as an antidote against both the increasing power of the tribal groups, peasant resistance, and foreign intervention in the region.

The absence of the challenge of rival strategic groups like tribes, their *Tosk* counterparts attempted to further consolidate their regional power within the decentralist profits of the liberal and autonomist-nationalist discourses. In other words, they tended to share less of the local surplus and political domination with the central government. Moreover, the nationalist discourse also served as a counter-tendency to the geo-political pressure of the Greek and Slav irredentism towards their *kin-groups*, including non-Muslim peasant producers in the region who were exploited by these groups. Hence, the emergence of decentralist or/and autonomous administration

⁶⁹⁸ Aubrey Herbert, *Ben Kendim: A Record of Eastern Travel* (London: Hutchinson, 1924), 205.

was in the interest of the *Tosk* dominant classes since it enabled them to further consolidate and institutionalize their regional domination and exploitation as well as to absorb the peasant resistance and challenge the irredentist claims towards the region. In addition, the domination within the autonomist-nationalist discourse was also functionalized by the great landed families such as Vlore, Vroni, or Toptani as means of increasing their role in the emergence of any possibility for the alternative political structure in case of autonomy or independence depending on the imperial ability to preserve its sovereignty against geopolitical pressures.

The third group consisted mainly of the lesser landowners, some urban notables, businessman, and particularly intelligentsia who intended to change the existing social order by using nationalism as the foundation of alternative regional socio-political order providing an opportunity for their vertical mobilization. Many of these groups supported *Bashkim* organizations and demanded the autonomy of Albania under the Ottoman suzerainty. As a direct opposition to these three, the fourth group involved Unionist-centralist dominant classes, mainly from landed origin, such as Sureyya Vlore, Ekrem Vlore, and Esad Toptani who attempted to increase accumulation within centralization program of the CUP regime as part of the power bloc. This group did not support the autonomist-national program, but also seized the opportunity to consolidate their means of domination and exploitation under the new government. In this sense, the regionally-specific relations of the different levels of class conflicts depending on the uneven regional class structures, the balance of class forces, and the geo-political opportunity structures brought about different strategical orientations for the Albanian ruling classes ranging from attempts to hold traditional privileges to the demands of decentralization and regional autonomy in their competition for increasing their control and share on political domination and exploitation.

Nevertheless, the autonomist-nationalist program remained within the confines of decentralization rather than separation to the extent that the imperial center continued to be capable of ensuring the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces. Consequently, the group under the leadership of *Gheg* landowners Necip Draga and Hasan Pristine exerted their dominance in the negotiations, and the rebels accepted the government's terms. In return for their support in the agreement, the Albanian landowners took their place in the hierarchy of power bloc by obtaining important positions in the provincial administration, i.e., Hasan Tahsin as the governor of Janina, Mehmet Pasa Drala as district-governor of Pristine, Ali Danis from Pristine as a Minister of Interior

in the new cabinet, and Esad Toptani as commander of Shkoder troops.⁶⁹⁹ In other words, they consolidated their means of political accumulation in the region by relying on their positions in the local administrative offices. Nevertheless, despite the agreement with the government to put an end to the rebellion, some of the tribal groups in the *Ghegland* continued to raise small-scale armed resistances, while the autonomist-nationalist groups continued their activities.⁷⁰⁰ In this framework, as long as the intra-ruling class conflict produced different strategic orientations, the consensus between the government and the Albanian ruling classes remained fragile and unstable. Therefore, the dynamics of political conflicts rooted in the class conflicts over the appropriation, share, and distribution of surplus brought about a ‘revolutionary situation’ that rendered the autonomist-nationalist program a historical possibility for the Albanian provinces. However, the course of this historical moment depended on the internationally-mediated opportunity structures which became apparent shortly after the breakout of the Balkan Wars.

3.2.7. *Balkan Wars: Crystallization of “Nationness”*

The Balkan states of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro formed a League for a joint attack against the Ottoman Empire by a series of treaties and mutual agreements between March and October 1912. At the beginning of October, rumors were circulated about the mobilization of the armies and preparations of war by Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Montenegro against the Ottoman Empire. The breakout of the Balkan War radically changed the course of the events in the Albanian provinces since all these states asserted national rights on the Albanian provinces by relying on their *kin-groups* in the region.⁷⁰¹ In line with their national aspirations, the states in the Balkan League had different and contradictory interests, but their disputes and ambitions concentrated on the territories in the Albanian provinces. In other words, each of the states in the Balkan League had its own designs on the Albanian territories. The Serbian claims were most important because they sought to acquire the *Gheg* territories of Kosovo and Shkoder provinces as part of the “Old Serbia,” in which they provided access to the Adriatic Sea. Montenegro also coveted territories in Shkoder province, considered the center of the medieval Montenegrin Kingdom, as well as the district of Novi Bazar as the frontier with Serbia. For the *Tosk* territories, Greece aspired to possess Janina and Monastir provinces as well as eastern Thrace and southern

⁶⁹⁹ BOA, BEO, No: 307976, 10/23/1912.

⁷⁰⁰ Gawrych, *The Crescent and the Eagle*, 197.

⁷⁰¹ *The Orient*, 10/2/1912, No: 3/40 and 10/9/1912, No: 3/41.

Macedonia, in which a significant number of Orthodox populations existed. Bulgarians also claimed some territories in Monastir province.⁷⁰² Therefore, the Albanian provinces became the main battlefield of the Balkan Wars.

In accordance with the treaties, on October 8, Montenegro started hostilities toward the boundaries of the Shkoder, followed by the Balkan allies' declaration of war on the Ottoman Empire on October 17, 1912. Meanwhile, the Ottoman government was obliged to sign a treaty with Italia on October 18, 1912. In fact, the 1912 rebellion in Albanian provinces encouraged the emergence of the Balkan Wars in different ways. To illustrate, it was not a coincidence that Montenegro was the first Balkan state declared war against the empire. As it is discussed, despite the Skopje agreement, some of the tribal groups in the *Ghegland* continued to raise small-scale armed resistances under the leadership of Isa Boletin and Idris Sefer, which made Montenegrins think that the rebels would clear the way for them.⁷⁰³ Moreover, King Nicholas sought the gain the cooperation of the *Tosk* leaders by sending proposals to Ismail Kemal and Esad Toptani to support the creation of an Albanian state in return for acknowledging Montenegrin claims in *Ghegland*.⁷⁰⁴ However, since the irredentist aspirations of the Balkan League led the war to concentrate on the Albanian provinces, the Albanian ruling classes were obliged to prevent the realization of these aspirations. Therefore, the majority of the Albanian ruling classes cast in their lot with the imperial center as their long-term interests relied on the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces.

Although their positions were mixed, most of the Albanian population fought on the side of the empire, including the rebel leaders of the previous rebellions, to defend their territories. For instance, while most of the Muslim population fought beside the Ottoman army, some of the Catholic tribal groups and brigandage leaders, who were not satisfied with the Skopje agreement, either supported the invading armies or demonstrated weak resistance.⁷⁰⁵ Nevertheless, despite all the strong resistance, the forces of the League prevailed over the Ottoman and irregular Albanian troops, and the greater part of the Albanian provinces was invaded. While Montenegrin armies advanced on the Northern and Central Albanian provinces by occupying many districts of Shkoder,

⁷⁰² Constantine A. Chekrezi, *Albania, Past and Present* (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1919), 74–75; Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, acts 95–100.

⁷⁰³ Mary Edith Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle* (London: George Allen & Unwin LTD, 1920), 231.

⁷⁰⁴ John Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom* (London: Williams & Norgate LTD, 1929), 136.

⁷⁰⁵ Leon Trotsky, *Balkan Savaslari*, trans. Tansel Güney (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2012), 163–64.

Serbia attacked Kosovo with Bulgarians and seized Prishtine, Prizren, and Gjakove. Meanwhile, the southern parts of the *Toskland* fell into the possession of the Greek armies.⁷⁰⁶ When the defeat of the Ottoman Empire became apparent, the influential Albanian ruling classes attempted to search for the help of foreign powers by sending petitions to the ambassadors of the European powers with the demand of guaranteeing the territorial and political integrity of Albania.⁷⁰⁷ For instance, the *Gheg* leaders such as Hasan Pristina, Necip Draga, Bayram Cur, and Salih Gjuka declared to the foreign powers that the Albanians were fighting to defend their own lands rather than saving the Turks. However, when the Serbian armies arrived at Skopje, they asked for the help of the Ottoman Empire to maintain the territorial integrity of the Albanian provinces. Therefore, the *Gheg* leaders attempted to re-organize the armed resistance against the annexation of the region by Montenegrin and Serbian armies, but the leaders of the resistance, such as Necip Draga and Hasan Pristina, were arrested.⁷⁰⁸ One of the most influential leaders of the rebellions, Isa Bolatin, was killed by Serbian General Zhivkovitch while fighting against the occupation on the imperial side.⁷⁰⁹ Similarly, most of the *Tosk* landed classes also organized armed resistance against the Greek invasion with the Ottoman troops. Ismail Kemal Vlore argued that when the Serbs seized Skopje, it became clear that the time had arrived for the Albanians to take measures for their own salvation.⁷¹⁰

The most intensified efforts to secure the great-power support for preserving the Albanian territories were made by Ismail Kemal Vlore. He went to Bucharest to organize a meeting with the prominent diasporic Albanians, where it was decided to establish an executive committee for governing the Albanian territories. After the meeting, Kemal contacted Austria-Hungary and Italian ambassadors, as the most powerful powers inclined to preserve the status-quo in the Balkans, as well as other European powers to advocate the independence of Albania. However, even this meeting fell short of specifying whether future Albania would be autonomous or independent since the objective possibilities depending on the opportunity structures provided by the course of events and the responses of the great powers.⁷¹¹ To this end, Ismail Kemal telegraphed

⁷⁰⁶ Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle*, 40–45.

⁷⁰⁷ *The Orient*, 11/20/1912, No: 3/47, 7.

⁷⁰⁸ Mary Edith Durham, *The Struggle for Scutari: Turk, Slav and Albanian* (London: Edward Arnold, 1914), 247 and 253; Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 548-49.

⁷⁰⁹ *The Orient*, 11/13/1912, No: 3/46, 8.

⁷¹⁰ Sommerville, *The Memoirs of Ismail Kemal Bey*, 369.

⁷¹¹ Sommerville, 372; Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, acts 136–137; Chekrezi, *Albania, Past and Present*, act 78.

to leaders of the tribal groups and urban ruling classes, announcing his intended arrival to convene a national congress in Vlore. However, the intra-ruling class conflict revealed itself within the efforts of the foundation of the future Albanian state as well. When the news of Ismail Kemal's intention arrived in Albanian provinces regarding the national congress in Vlore, his rival Esad Toptani cooperated with Midhat Fraseri and some tribal chiefs to undertake another congress in Tiran to mobilize the Albanian dominant classes under his leadership. Therefore, the two leaders competed to create their own networks of supporters to have the political leadership of the movement of founding the new nation-state. Although Esad Toptani established contact with influential landholders and Malisor chiefs and tried to dissuade Ismail Kemal's arrival to Vlore, the latter succeeded in gathering a national congress there.⁷¹² As a result, on November 28, 1912, a national assembly of eighty-three Muslim and Christian delegates founded a national assembly that proclaimed Albanian independence, and the flag of the black double-headed eagle of Scanderbeg was hoisted over the town.⁷¹³

While a Provisional Government was founded under the presidency of Ismail Kemal Vlore and vice-presidency of Dom Nikol Kachiori, the government became increasingly dominated by Muslims, especially the landowners. However, the cabinet consisted of seven Ministers of both Christian and Muslim origins, including Mehmed Pasha Dralla as minister of war and Abdi Bey Toptani as minister of Finance. The Provisional Government sent official notifications appealing for the recognition of independence to the great powers.⁷¹⁴ However, the Provisional Government had many rivals, and its political authority could not extend beyond the boundaries of the district of Debar. While many of the *Gheg* tribal groups remained indifferent to the independence process and the provisional government, the Mirdite region remained a separate entity under the leadership of Prent Bib Doda, though submitting to the control of the provisional government. Meanwhile, Esad Toptani seized the political power in the Central Albanian provinces, mainly Elbasan and Tiran, with his military force, in which he founded a Senate of Central Albania with himself as President. Although Ismail Kemal offered Esad Bey the position of Interior Ministry in the new cabinet to pacify his rivalry, he refused to acknowledge the political authority of the provisional

⁷¹² Skendi, *The Albanian National Awakening 1878-1912*, 357–462; Clayer, *Arnavut Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, 549–50.

⁷¹³ BOA, BEO, No: 309319, 12/17/1912.

⁷¹⁴ *The Orient*, 12/4/1912, No: 3/49, 3.

government. Hence, competition and fighting broke out between the two governments over the political authority of the independent Albanian state.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, the Ottoman garrisons continued to occupy different parts of the Albanian provinces, while the Balkan League already occupied a large segment of territories. In fact, contrary to common expectations, the proclamation of independence did not prevent the occupations of the Balkan League, particularly Montenegrins, and Serbians continued to advance in the *Gheg* provinces.⁷¹⁶



Figure 9. The provisional government of the “Republic of Central Albania” (by Edith Durham, 1913)

Available at: <http://www.albanianphotography.net/durham/index.htm>

As a result, the Great Powers called a conference in London, namely the Conference of Ambassadors, to arrange the new Balkan settlement to end the conflict in the region, which included deciding the boundaries of the nascent Albanian state. The conference initially announced that Albanian autonomy was accepted in principle, together with guaranteeing Serbia commercial access to the Adriatic Sea.⁷¹⁷ Therefore, the characteristics and the future of the Albanian state, including its boundaries, depended on the negotiations of the Conference of Ambassadors among the Great Powers, the Balkan League, the Ottoman Empire, and the Albanian representatives.

⁷¹⁵ Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, 138–39 and 179–80.

⁷¹⁶ Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle*, 240–45.

⁷¹⁷ Durham, 233; Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, act 146.

In this sense, the developmental potential of the ‘revolutionary situation’ in the Albanian provinces which articulated in nationalization predicated upon internal regionally-specific class conflicts and mediated by international geopolitical pressure of the Balkan War. Therefore, the regionally-specific conflicts in the Albanian provinces shaped and were shaped the timing and form of geopolitical pressure and the political strategies of Albanian classes and strategic groups. In other words, while the dynamics of political conflicts rooted in the geo-political strategies of accumulation that created the Albanian rebellion paved the way for the breakout of the Balkan Wars, the internally-mediated opportunity structures provided by the Balkan Wars crystallized Albanian nationalization. These geo-political strategies of accumulation which created the crisis dynamics between the Albanian classes and strategic groups, the CUP government, and the Balkan states, continued to produce divergent dynamics of political conflicts and shaped the future course of the Albanian nation-state in the following century.

Conclusion

From the 1990s onwards, a renewed interest in the role of nationalism in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire produced two dominant approaches in Ottoman historiography. While some revisionist interpretations provided a series of innovative approaches revealing the variable conducts of provincial actors by making “societies” as the central unit of analysis, the others focused on the nation-building efforts of the “state” as the primary agent in transition to the nation-state through conflictual and violent processes like assimilation and demographic engineering. Recently, Sohrabi published a critical study that pointed out some limitations of both approaches in addressing the dynamics of nationalization over the example of the Albanian case.⁷¹⁸ He has developed a multi-causal framework to explain the development of Albanian nationalism within the framework of imperial nation-state building and irredentist pressures of external states, which united the revisionist and nation-building approaches. Relying on the nation-building literature, he argued that the neo-Ottomanist policies of the CUP for creating an imperial nation-state galvanized nationalistic activities among Albanian intelligentsia. Here, the concept of neo-Ottomanism is regarded as a state policy of nation-building combining centralization and identity-formation, including assimilation, which caused reactions among Albanians that were articulated within nationalism as a counter-identity movement. Nevertheless, depending on the revisionist literature, he emphasized the fluidity of identities among the Albanian population, constituting different allegiances and factions, including regionalism, religion, and language. In this framework, he claimed that the nationalist reactions of Albanian intelligentsia against the neo-Ottomanist policies of the CUP turned into a “reluctant” nationalism with the ethno-national mobilization of the Albanian population in the face of geopolitical insecurities resulting from the irredentist policies of neighboring states as a survival strategy.

His eclectic approach successfully combined the domestic and external dynamics in the development of Albanian nationalism. More importantly, the concept of reluctant nationalism explores the unstable coalitions and different strategic orientations within the Albanian “nationalist” movement and pays attention to its internationally mediated development. However, nationalist teleology enters the analysis when he contends that these divergent strategies relied on religious, ideological, and regional divisions. In this sense, the argument falls short of addressing

⁷¹⁸ Nader Sohrabi, “Reluctant Nationalists, Imperial Nation-State, and Neo-Ottomanism: Turks, Albanians, and the Antinomies of the End of Empire,” *Social Science History* 42, no. 4 (2018): 835–70.

the different dynamics of political conflicts which constituted the social conditions of the possibility of Albanian nationalization. In other words, the concept of reluctant nationalism failed to explain what happened to the social relations that directed the divergent strategies and positions of different factions producing the unstable coalitions within the Albanian rebellions. Moreover, on the one hand, it takes the “state” and “Albanians” as two autonomous entities with antagonistic interests, while on the other hand, the domestic and external variables as two discrete dynamics, which creates very tantalizing problems in the absence of an alternative theory: how to balance the society-based and state-based analysis and how to explain the interplay of internal and external dynamics without an infinite regression to the contingency?

I have argued that the theory of social-property relations provides an alternative theoretical framework to create both a dialectical nexus between the endogenous and exogenous dynamics, and the co-constitutive relations between the state-formation, the socio-political conflicts, and the role of the international in the Ottoman transition in general, and the development of Albanian nationalization in particular. The interface between the crisis and restoration corresponding to different stages of state-formation within the transition of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime, rooted in the different levels of class conflicts, including domestic and international competition and struggles over the politically-constituted powers of exploitation, provided the dynamics of political conflicts which influenced and transformed the course of Albanian nationalization. My core theoretical argument is that the regionally-specific and internationally-mediated resolutions of class conflicts depending on the uneven balance of class forces and structures directed the rules and forms of conflict and cooperation among heterogeneous Albanian actors and between them and the political regimes, which produced divergent strategies towards nationalist mobilizations. In this sense, the social-property relations emerge as the key to unlocking the socio-historical conditions of the uneven and combined development of nationalization practices by providing an organic understanding of how different strategic orientations of Albanians, including nationalism, were restrained, accelerated, or deflected internally by different levels of class conflict and externally by the geopolitical pressure of Balkan irredentism and the great power imperialism. In other words, rather than ideology or culture, the rules and geo-political strategies of reproduction and the relative sets of class interests directed the sources of identity-formation and constituted the social preconditions of Albanian nationalism as a contested practice.

Since the socio-political relations in the Ottoman old-regime operated on and were limited by the parameters of non-capitalist property relations, which relied on the fusion of the economic and the political, the external logic of geopolitical accumulation through territorial expansion and the internal logic of political accumulation through distributional struggle were the necessary sources of income and the preferred strategies of reproduction for the pre-capitalist ruling classes of the Ottoman Empire. While the politically constituted property regimes institutionalize class conflicts, they were contested in times of crises, which provided moments of limitations and opportunities for structural changes depending on the time-bound balances of class forces and external geopolitical conjunctures. In this sense, the logic of geopolitical accumulation embodied the centrifugal tendencies of regional appropriation and the centripetal tendencies of political consolidation depending on the (re)organization and hierarchy of the ruling classes constituting the power bloc. Due to the limits for increasing the absolute surplus with the turning of external conquests into defensive wars such as the 1768-74 Russo-Ottoman War and the increasing peasant resistance against intensified domestic exploitation like the *Celali Rebellions*, the seventeenth-century crisis of the Ottoman geo-political accumulation regime produced endemic class conflicts and struggles in different levels for the internal resources. The crisis ended up with the corrosion of the central power by the regionalization of the political power and competencies with the rise of *semi-autonomous provincial regimes*. Within this framework, the rise of Janina Pashalik of Ali Pasha (1788-1822) and Shkoder Pashalik of Mehmed Bushati (1757-1831) brought critical regional variations regarding the class constellations and their balances of forces in the Albanian provinces which influenced the dynamics of political conflicts in the following centuries.

Although the crisis and the fragmentation of ruling classes brought the political integrity of the empire into question, the possibility of central government always rested on the fragile solidarity among Ottoman ruling classes for domestic control over the peasant producers and for the necessities of external defense. Therefore, different stages of state-formation and respective regime-building strategies shaped and were shaped by different levels of class conflict both at central and provincial levels. The *Nizam-i Cedid* restoration and the *Tanzimat* regime emerged as anti-crisis strategies depending on different consensus among the ruling classes constituting the Ottoman power bloc against the double threats of domestic disputes materialized in peasant rebellions combined with ethno-national discourses and international pressures and wars such as Austro-Ottoman (1789-91) and Russo-Ottoman (1789-92) Wars. These subsequent stages of state

formation attempted to increase the share and control of the political center over the mechanisms of indirect-collective exploitation by monopolizing the means of political accumulation and coercion through reorganizing the hierarchy and composition of the power bloc and redefining the boundaries of political society to ensure the survival of the empire. However, the state-formation attempts were not capable of constructing and asserting a centralized system of a modern-state over all of the Ottoman provinces because of the uneven transformation of the existing social-property regimes; thereby, they could not totally break down the political or extra-economic powers of the provincial ruling classes. Nevertheless, the *Tanzimat* regime attempted to create the administrative and politico-legal framework of the private-economic means of exploitation for the Ottoman dominant classes, which planted the seeds of capitalist property relations through imperfect separation of the political and the economic.

Consequently, the state-building attempts produced various dynamics of political conflicts in Albanian provinces by creating pressure on the present property relations and class structure. While the application of these attempts varied regionally and temporarily, the local reactions also included more complex strategies depending on the local class structures and the geopolitical imperatives inherited from the eliminations of the Janina and Shkoder *provincial regimes*. In the *Ghegland*, where the tribal groups acted as a class depending on their control over the means of violence in their conflict against the political center and neighboring states, the control of the political center remained nominal due to the intense reactions of the tribal groups in the region. Contrarily, in the *Toskland*, where the central conflict was among the landowners and non-Muslim peasants, the political center accommodated itself with the cooperation of local ruling classes who gradually gave up their regional political power by consolidating their reproduction through economic means and central administrative apparatus. These groups also founded the basis of the emergence of Albanian autonomist-nationalist programs in the following political conflicts between the political regimes and the Albanian population.

The changing balance of the international geopolitical competition and the emergent crisis in the Balkans started with the rebellion in Bosnia-Herzegovina and resulted in the definite defeat of the empire in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877–78, which jeopardized the existence of the Ottoman sovereignty. While the crisis became international with the Berlin Conferences, it conditioned the Hamidian regime-building strategies and the corresponding dynamics of political

conflicts. The regime reversed the *Tanzimat* transformation towards de-personalization of the forms of domination and appropriation by implementing the politics of unity to reorganize the hierarchy of power bloc around the loyalty to the sultan and with the redefinition of political society along the Islamic line. The politics of unity included the strategies of centralism and the politics of notables which blurred the lines between the private-regional and central control over the means of violence. For the regions possessing ethno-religious rivalries like Albanian provinces, the Hamidian regime consolidated the local powers of the local Muslim ruling classes both to make loyalty to the regime more rewarding and to mobilize their private means of violence as a counter-revolutionary power against the revolts of non-Muslim peasants mobilized into the autonomist-nationalist movements. Therefore, the danger of extinction and the opportunities of the internationally mediated crisis led the Hamidian regime and provincial ruling classes to develop different and selective strategies.

These strategies appeared in the different factions within the Albanian League of Prizren. The League consisted of a loose coalition among various Albanian classes and strategic groups with alternative programs that coalesced under the common ground of urgency against the territorial loss. Therefore, these alternative programs reflected the intra-ruling class conflict between the central and provincial segments of the ruling classes in which two distinct factions emerged. While the group of *Gheg* tribal leaders focused more on local issues and keeping the empire intact by emphasizing their loyalty to the regime, the radical *Fraseri* group consisting primarily of *Tosk* landowners and intellectuals drew up an autonomist-decentralist program. Nevertheless, since the primary condition of the ruling class solidarity depended on the capacity of the political center to ensure their local powers and the integrity of the empire, the autonomist program increased its influence within the League after the territorial losses within the Albanian province with the mediation of the Hamidian regime. In this respect, the dominant class factions who were losing their opportunities to increase their local political power and control over surplus against the Hamidian status-quo attempted to increase their power and influence within an autonomist program. However, the regime quelled the movement with the strategy of “carrot and stick,” in which the opposition was crushed by force and incorporated into the power bloc through rewards and privileges. This strategy consolidated the power of the tribal and brigandage groups in the Albanian provinces, which increased the climate of violence in the region and upset the balance of class forces to the detriment of landowning classes and urban notables, as well as

peasant producers. Therefore, it was not a coincidence that the followers of the autonomist program joined the Young Turk opposition.

The CUP came to power in the middle of another crisis, concentrated on Macedonia, which threatened the existence of the empire. For the CUP, the state monopolization of the means of violence and taxation was not only crucial for increasing the state capacity of surplus extraction and imposing hierarchy to the power bloc, but also for preventing the dissolution of the empire by ensuring external security and internal order in the face of increasing geo-political pressure and domestic turmoil. To this end, the CUP regime attempted to implement a stronger centralization and reform program, which shaped and was shaped by the dynamics of political conflicts inherited from the previous regimes and the different factions of ruling classes constituting the power bloc. In this sense, the CUP introduced various regime-building strategies ranging from centralization, assimilation, and integration to violence and nationalization, which developed regionally and temporarily unevenly. In addition, their main target was not a nation or identity-formation but a state formation. Although the re-establishment of the constitutional regime attempted to transform the existing social-property regime and to create impersonal relations of power by providing an opportunity for the Ottoman dominant classes to defend their collective interests in the parliamentary mechanism within the politico-legal framework of the individual mechanisms of accumulation or reproduction, the provincial struggles over the control and share of the means of political domination and surplus appropriation produced different dynamics of political conflicts because some segments of the provincial ruling classes grabbed on their political means of accumulation. The Albanian rebellions that emerged between 1909 and 1912 were good examples to pinpoint how the different dynamics of political conflicts rooted in the class conflict over the appropriation, share, and distribution of surplus brought about a 'revolutionary situation' that rendered nationalization a historical possibility for the Albanian provinces.

Since the centralization and reform program of the CUP threatened the long-existed privileges and the private means of violence possessed by the tribal groups, the 1909 and 1910 rebellions concentrated on the *Ghegland* provinces. The rebellions remained at the local level to the extent that they were not linked to any political program or international support. However, since their local power and interests were threatened by the increasing dominance of the tribal groups in the region, the *Gheg* landowners and notables supported the regime. When the regime

extended its program through violence and harsh enforcement, it started to alienate different factions of the Albanian dominant classes by threatening their local political power. Therefore, the revolts in 1911 and 1912 exceeded the local scale with the involvement of different classes and strategic groups and the opportunities provided by foreign support. Nevertheless, instead of a unified movement, the rebellions brought together different factions with conflicting strategic interests under the joint opposition against the regime. The primary *modus operandi* of the rebels' different demands and positionings in the negotiation process reflected the intra-ruling class conflict among Albanian dominant classes and against the central government over the control and share of the political domination and social surplus.

The *Gheg* tribal groups tended to maintain their local privileges and restore the Hamidian regime to restore the old status-quo consolidating their means of political accumulation. The landed classes and notables divided into two main factions in their struggle to seize the opportunity to increase their political domination and surplus appropriation: while some assumed the leadership of the rebellion by adopting liberal-decentralist strategies against the regime through autonomist-nationalist discourse, others kept their distance with the rebellion by adopting unionist-centralist strategies as means of consolidating their position within the power bloc. While these groups did not put a total autonomy or separation on the agenda, a group involving the lesser landowners, urban notables, and intellectuals organized around *Bashkim* supported autonomous Albania under Ottoman suzerainty to change the existing social order by using nationalism as the foundation of alternative regional socio-political order providing an opportunity for their vertical mobilization. The divergent strategies and positions pointed out that the nationalist ideology or identity itself did not characterize the rebellion, but it was one of the political strategies articulated by the Albanian ruling classes. Moreover, the emphasis on the Albanian nation, language, and education in the demands did not necessarily mean nationalism; instead, these demands were functional for the Albanian ruling classes, who lost their opportunities to increase their positions within the power bloc by being excluded from parliamentary mechanisms, to re-consolidate their control over the social surplus and political domination. In other words, some factions of the Albanian ruling classes gave ethno-national form to their social interests. Moreover, the nationalist discourse served as a counter-tendency against the pressures of Balkan irredentism over the non-Muslim peasant producers in the region. Indeed, the divergent positions for the Alphabet question

challenged the cultural-ideological and nationalist rationality by revealing the conflictual strategies of the Albanian ruling classes.

However, the divergent strategies also did not exclude the fact that the possibility for the emergence of an alternative state-formation in case of the dissolution of Ottoman sovereignty would be legitimized by nationalism. In this sense, the nationalist discourse was also functional for the Albanian ruling classes to increase their role in any future nation-state formation. From this point of view, it is possible to recontextualize the rebellions in the Albanian provinces as a ‘revolutionary situation’ which rendered Albanian nationalization a historical possibility. Therefore, recalling the theoretical contribution of Rogers Brubaker, the crystallization of the *nationness* depended on the uneven regionally-specific resolutions of class conflicts which originated in the persistence of geo-political strategies of accumulation and depended on the domestic balance of class forces and structures and internationally-mediated opportunity structures. Consequently, the Balkan Wars provided a moment of opportunity for the emergence of an independent Albanian nation-state. Nevertheless, the class interests prevailed over nationalist identity. For instance, the majority of the Albanian ruling classes cast their lot with the imperial center during the war until the defeat of the Empire became apparent. More importantly, the state-formation and nation-building efforts after the independence continued to witness the intra-ruling class conflict between different factions of Albanian dominant classes and the inter-ruling class conflict between them and neighboring states. In other words, the competitive regional and class dynamics rooted in geo-political strategies of accumulation continued to influence the power relations and political conflicts in the Albanian nation-state during its formation process and long after its independence.

After the declaration of independence, the provisional government of Vlore had both internal and external rivals for its political authority and territorial integrity. While the Malisor and Mirdite regions which were secured against the foreign occupations remained as separate power bases, Esad Toptani seized the political power in the Central Albanian provinces and established another government with a Senate under his presidency in October 1913.⁷¹⁹ Meanwhile, the Balkan states continued to occupy territories that were considered Albanian territory. Due to the frontier problems in the Albanian state, the great power representatives founded an international

⁷¹⁹ Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, 179–81.

commission of control to investigate local conditions and draw the boundaries of the new state, which still remained without international recognition by other states. While the Gheg towns of Pec, Prizren, Gjakova, and Deber were ceded to Serbia and Greece received the sizeable southern region of Chameria within Epirus, Montenegro lost Shkoder in which the commission established an international administration.⁷²⁰ In this sense, the future of the Albanian state depended on the resolution of the domestic intra-ruling class conflict materialized in rival governments and power bases and the external inter-ruling class conflict appearing in the form of inter-state rivalries including the great powers, neighboring states, the Ottoman Empire and the nascent Albanian state which originated in the geo-political strategies of accumulation.

These strategies reflected themselves in the discussions for the future ruler of the Albanian state in the Conference of Ambassadors. The candidates included Aladro Castriota from the Albanian diaspora in Italy who claimed descent from Skanderbeg, Prince Ghika of Romania and Prince Arthur of Connaught, Princes Burhan and Abdulmecid from the Ottoman dynasty, and Prince Ahmed Fuad Pasha of Egypt, who was a descendent of Ali Pasha Janina.⁷²¹ The conference's commission decided on German Prince Wilhelm of Wied, a captain in the German army and nephew of the Queen of Romania, to rule the Albanian state in November 1913. The decision further escalated the domestic struggles between the various factions among the Albanian ruling classes and between them and the representatives of foreign states. Moreover, the CUP government attempted to restore the Ottoman suzerainty over Albania by sending Major Bekir Grebeneja in order to propagate the ascendance of Izzet Pasha, the Ottoman Minister of War of Albanian origin, as a Muslim prince for the Albanian state.

Meanwhile, the commission forced both the provisional government of Vlore and Esad Pasha's government in Drac to resign in favor of the rule of Prince Wilhelm. While Ismail Kemal abolished the provisional government, Esad Toptani headed a deputation of the Albanian ruling class to offer Wilhelm the crown in return for the resignation of his government. Consequently, the new Albanian state officially came into existence on 7 March 1914, with the arrival of the new ruler. Indeed, it was the great power solidarity, especially Austro-Italian interests towards Albanian unity, that had been a more crucial factor in the emergence and continuity of the Albanian nation-

⁷²⁰ Vickers, *The Albanians*, 79–81.

⁷²¹ Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, 182–83; Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle*, acts 257–261; Çelik, *İttihatçılar ve Arnavutlar*, act 521.

state than the Albanian nationalism or its sovereignty. When the great power solidarity turned into a competition, the external pressures aggravated the domestic conflicts in the Albanian kingdom. Hence, their interplay paved the way for the failure of the experiment of the first independent Albanian state, which could last only six months.

During the six-month period of the Albanian kingdom, different levels of class conflict depending upon the strategies of geo-political accumulation prevented the establishment of a consistent power bloc and political sovereignty. When Prince Wilhelm came to rule, his state-building efforts created a multitude of problems stemming from an increasing intra-ruling class conflict between different factions of Albanian ruling classes. The king began his regime-building by forming a cabinet where an eventual fight broke out between supporters of the provisional government and the central Albanian government. Then, the declaration of Drac as the capital of the Albanian kingdom and the appointment of Esad Toptani as the Interior and War Minister aggravated the existing rivalries between the supporters of Drac and Vlore governments.⁷²² The conflicts materialized in a series of small-scale rebellions that erupted in central Albanian territories in May 1914. The rumors that Esad Toptani supported the insurgents with military supplies to overthrow the regime led king Wilhelm to charge Esad with treason, and he was arrested by Austrians. Subsequently, Esad was released with an Italian initiative and sent into exile.⁷²³ However, the regime failed to contain the rebellion since different domestic strategic groups and external states attempted to direct and exploit the rebellion. Most influential among these initiatives was the propaganda of CUP, which claimed that the prince would exile the Muslim Albanians and that a Muslim prince was necessary for their protection. Therefore, the rebels established a Senate for Central Albania by hoisting an Ottoman flag and demanded the restoration of Ottoman suzerainty in Albania or the appointment of a Muslim king from the Ottoman dynasty.⁷²⁴ The rebellion reveals that many Albanians continued to support the idea of a reunion with the Ottoman Empire even after the foundation of the nation-state. Thanks to outside support from different states, the rebellion scattered around central Albania, and the insurgents surrounded the cities of Drac and Tiran. Having a limited military force, including a small number of

⁷²² Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, 200–201; Durham, *Twenty Years of Balkan Tangle*, act 261; Vickers, *The Albanians*, act 83.

⁷²³ Swire, *The Rise of a Kingdom*, 207–9.

⁷²⁴ Swire, 209–15; Jacques, *The Albanians*, acts 356–357; Vickers, *The Albanians*, act 85.

gendarmeries, foreign officers, and volunteers, the king demanded the support of tribal groups, including Mirdites and Ahmet Zogoglu from the Mat tribe and nephew of Esad Toptani, who had conflictual interests with him. Moreover, king Wilhelm appealed to the great powers for military and financial assistance to put down the rebellion. Meanwhile, the commission recommended the king leave the city with an Italian ship which *de facto* ended his reign.

In fact, similar to the developmental pattern of Albanian independence, the dynamics of political conflicts depended on the geo-political strategies of accumulation paved the way for the fall of the Albanian kingdom with the breakout of another war. Together with the breakout of World War I, the great powers started to withdraw their representatives in the Albanian kingdom.⁷²⁵ As a result, the Albanian kingdom went into World War I without establishing consistent political sovereignty and formal boundaries, and an endemic intra-ruling class conflict hampering the existence of a power bloc. Therefore, the war pushed Albania into a condition of political turmoil in which different classes and strategic groups competed for political power and influence. During the war, the *Gheg* ruling classes formed a Committee for the Defense of Kosovo, while another provincial government was established in Drac by the Ottoman officer, Turhan Pasha. After the struggle between Esad Pasha and Turhan Pasha for political power during the years of war, the imminent threat of survival forced the Albanian ruling classes to cooperate by convening a National Congress in Lushnja in January 1920, which declared Tiran as the new capital of the Albanian state under the presidency of Süleyman Delvina. Nevertheless, the initial cooperation of the Albanian ruling classes turned into conflict and competition among different factions of ruling classes which caused a series of government changes in the following years of Albania.

In conclusion, it is possible to argue that class conflicts played a much more critical role in the developmental patterns of nationalization than is commonly accepted since class interest is one of the major impetuses for allegiance to one or the other political identity. The continuity of the class struggle and different allegiances of Albanians after the emergence of an independent state demonstrated that rather than the political ideology or culture, the rules and geo-political strategies of reproduction and the relative sets of class interests directed the sources of identity-formation. In the last analysis, the social-property relations approach rejects the teleological tendencies inherent in the nation-oriented and state-centered paradigms in the Ottoman historiography by

⁷²⁵ Vickers, *The Albanians*, 87–90.

preserving the moment of historical openness and alternatives developments in the nationalization process, which were latent in the unpredictable endogenous and internationally-mediated resolutions of class conflict. It implies that nationalization *per se* was neither the only nor necessary-inevitable, but one of the possible outcomes of the dynamics of political conflicts originated in different levels of class conflict. I claimed that this theoretical framework could yield interesting insights both for pinpointing the dynamics of political conflicts inherent in the Ottoman transition and for the comparative analysis of the different nationalization practices in the Empire.



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