

ger, aus der Mehrheit wurde eine Minderheit und aus der Minderheit eine Mehrheit. Die Grundrahmen der gesellschaftspolitischen Denkweise sind aber die gleichen geblieben. Dieser Umstand hat sich auch auf die verfassungsrechtlichen Grundlagen der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik niedergeschlagen, die in *statu nascendi* bereits die Keime der kommenden kaum zu überbrückenden Kontroversen auf der innenpolitischen Szene in sich trug, die dann langsam aber unaufhaltsam auch infolge der sich erheblich ändernden außenpolitischen Umstände zu einer ersten Krise des tschechoslowakischen Staats heranwuchsen. Eine der Hauptursachen für die innenpolitische Krise der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik war vor allem die künstlich geschaffene national-zentralistische Staats- und Verwaltungskonzeption, die auf allen Ebenen des soziokulturellen Lebens in erster Linie die nationalen Minderheiten benachteiligte. Dieser Konzeption haben sich nach und nach nicht nur die wichtigen nationalen Minderheiten in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik entgegengestellt, sondern auch die andere Hälfte des politisch deklarierten staatsrechtlichen tschechoslowakischen Volks, die Slowaken. Wiewohl der Staat schließlich doch Anstrengungen gezeigt hat, die Minderheitenpolitik wahrzunehmen, hat er gerade die slowakischen Forderungen langfristig unterschätzt. Parallel dazu muss natürlich hervorgehoben werden, dass die Erste Republik im mitteleuropäischen Raum unbestritten mit Abstand der demokratischste Staat war, der seinen Einwohnern breiteste politische und bürgerliche Freiheiten gewährte. Gleichzeitig muss auch im Zusammenhang mit den oben genannten Umständen betont werden, dass beim Studium von Haltungen der deutschen und ungarischen Minderheitsparteien in der Zwischenkriegs-Tschechoslowakei immer und in erster Linie darauf zu achten ist, sämtliche politikgeschichtlichen Aspekte der Ersten Tschechoslowakischen Republik unbedingt und konsequent im Zeitzusammenhang zu betrachten.

## The Question of Ottoman Weakness at the Beginning of the 20th century

ROMAN KODET

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Empire is often described as a “sick man of Europe”, which was doomed to break up. The goal of this article is to analyze if this statement was justified. With regard to the limited scope this contribution will concentrate on three main areas which determine the strength of a state – policy, economy and military.

### Policy

The investigated period era should be divided into two stages – before and after the Young Turk Revolution, which dramatically changed the character of the Ottoman state after a long rule of sultan Abdülhamid II.

The rule of this so-called “Bloody Sultan” represents an era of a certain tranquility (under Ottoman circumstances at least). “*Following the effective dissolution of the parliamentary order, the sultan began to fashion new methods of administration that resulted in the longest-lasting regime in late Ottoman history.*”<sup>1</sup> The sultan concentrated all power in his hands and the government became only a tool of his own policy. In this way the regime, which ruled in Istanbul, was strongly influenced by the personality of the sovereign.

He is often described as a cruel tyrant and had a reputation of a classical example of an oriental despot in the English speaking countries. However, this picture doesn't correspond with the complexity of his personality. It is undoubtedly true that the padishah was strongly influenced by

1) Şükrü M. HANIOĞLU, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton 2008, p. 123.

his fears of his personal security, which originated in his experiences from the years 1876–1878.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to this the position of the secret police gradually grew and the government introduced a strict censorship in 1888.<sup>3</sup> The government of the Yıldız palace where the sultan placed his seat was therefore steadily oppressive. On the other hand although Abdülhamid was “*bitterly hostile to liberal or constitutional ideas, [he] was by no means entirely opposed to reform and Westernization...*”<sup>4</sup> During his reign the Ottoman Empire changed considerably. His rule can therefore be described as a sort of an enlightened absolutism.

The sultan with his most prominent associates alternating in the role of Grand Vezir were Küçük Sait Paşa (1838–1914) and Mehmet Kâmil Paşa (1832–1913),<sup>5</sup> created a new style of government. This was ruled by “*modern bureaucracy headed by a cadre of technocrats*”, who were linked directly to the palace, which asserted a tight control of them and secured that the appointees to the high state offices owed their loyalty only to the sultan.<sup>6</sup> Logically the center of this new bureaucratic machine rested in Yıldız, where the sultan could assert his control over it and vice versa because the fact that they had “*daily access to the Sultan soon gave them more power than the ministers working in the Sublime Porte.*”<sup>7</sup> This form of centralizing government was also introduced in the provinces, were subjected under such supervision from the center which with the expansion of the telegraph net that wasn't possible before.

This new form of administration had some positive impact on the state of the Ottoman Empire. The process of westernization and the reforms started in the Tanzimat continued under the new regime with an increased speed. Sait Paşa started an extensive program of educational reform and si-

multaneously proceeded some advances in the reforms of justice and law, which were stopped by the sultan in 1888.<sup>8</sup> In a similar way, a modernizing process in the provinces went on, which was marked especially by the building program of the railroads especially thanks to the German investments. In the year 1888 there were 1,780 kilometers of railways, in 1907 this number increased to 5,883 km.<sup>9</sup> In short, it could be said, that during the reign of Abdülhamid II, the Ottoman state was in some sense strengthened internally, especially in those regions, which formed the core of the empire. On the contrary the process of disintegration continued in the peripheral provinces, where the majority of population was of a non-Muslim origin.

This was not only due to the continuing process of emancipation of the Christian nations, but also as a result of the official policy of the government. In an effort to strengthen the state internally by some kind of uniting idea the sultan turned to Islamism as a state ideology. The sovereign played a role of the Sultan-Caliph in this effort, which image was supported by the official state propaganda.<sup>10</sup> It happened together with the often brutal state policy inspired dissent among the non-Muslim population, which showed itself during the Armenian crisis and in the growing chaos in Macedonia, where the ethnic situation was especially complicated. The new forms of the state ideology had in this sense quite contradictory effects – instead of uniting the empire caused a deepened the ethnic some religious problems.

On the field of the foreign policy there were a lot of changes during the Hamidian Regime. The main diplomatic change was the fact that Britain gradually abandoned its long term policy of maintaining the Ottoman Empire as a buffer against Russia. This turn of London's policy finished in the second half of the 90's during the Armenian crisis that persuaded even Salisbury that supporting Istanbul is no longer in the British interest.<sup>11</sup> This meant a crucial blow to the Ottoman foreign policy. The Porte tried to replace its connection with Britain with closer relations with Germany,<sup>12</sup> which econo-

2) In 1876 his uncle and deposed sultan Abdülaziz was with the highest probability assassinated and on 20. 5. 1878 a radical Ali Suavi with a mob of his supporters attempted to depose the sultan – nearer see Joan HASLIP, *Der Sultan*, München 1958, pp. 145–147.

3) Eduard GOMBÁR, *Moderní dějiny Islámských zemí*, Praha 1999, p. 275.

4) Bernard LEWIS, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, third edition, Oxford 2002, p. 178.

5) To their career and role in the establishment see Stanford J. SHAW, Ezel Kural SHAW, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. 2, Cambridge, London, New York, Melbourne 1977, pp. 219f.

6) HANIOĞLU, p. 125.

7) Philip MANSEL, *Constantinople. City of the World's Desire, 1453–1924*, London, New York 1995, p. 318.

8) LEWIS, p. 184.

9) SHAW, p. 227.

10) Although the predicate of Caliph was held by the sultans since 16th century, under Abdülhamid II, this title gained a new sense and its prestige rapidly grew, because of the state propaganda. See HANIOĞLU, pp. 126f.

11) To this development nearer see C. J. LOWE, *The Reluctant Imperialists. British Foreign Policy 1878–1902*, London 1967, p. 196f.

12) HANIOĞLU, p. 132.

mic power projected itself on the Balkans and in the Near East. Although the cordial relations with Berlin brought some substantial results – as the modernization of the Ottoman army by the mission of colonel (and later field marshal) Colmar von der Goltz or the building of the Baghdad railway,<sup>13</sup> the Germans were never such a guarantee of the Ottoman independence as was Britain in the previous period. What was worse Abdülhamid wasn't able to establish permanently good relations with the Balkan states and his efforts to do so were more or less abandoned after the Young Turk revolution.

But despite of the above mentioned facts it must be concluded that although the Ottoman foreign policy suffered from several setbacks during the Hamidian era, it was able to secure the Ottoman territorial integrity from the year 1882 till the collapse of the regime in 1908: *“Abdülhamid II's dexterous acrobatics in the field of foreign policy helped the empire adjust to major changes in the balance of power and save off a large-scale conflict that might have gravely damaged its territorial integrity or even triggered its collapse. Given the impossibility of obtaining a significant European ally, this was a major achievement.”*<sup>14</sup>

The constellation created by the Hamidian government changed significantly after its fall during the Young Turk revolution. The idea of the opposition against the government of Abdülhamid II was a creation of constitutional and liberal regime with liberal parliament and policy. However, this conception wasn't fulfilled. *“Whatever liberal affinities the CUP leaders harbored prior to and immediately following the revolution quickly gave way to authoritarian tendencies.”*<sup>15</sup> The unity of the leaders of the former opposition and the revolution broke up soon after they had come to power. Two opposing cliques arose there – the liberals favoring decentralization and satisfying of the national aspiration of the border provinces and nationalists who tended to support centralism and among whom the ideas of panturkism spread.<sup>16</sup>

This disunity led of course to internal disturbances and considerable political instability, which further weakened the empire especially with regard to the growing foreign threats. The panturkic and islamistic elements in the government also did not lead only to growing instability in

Macedonia and Albania, but also caused an escalation of the spread of Arab nationalism, which threatened the stability of the state in the areas which were loyal to Istanbul to this date. The steps on the international field led in their consequences to the wars with Italy and the Balkan League, which resulted in the loss of the last African and above all the European provinces (except a small strip of land between Istanbul and Edirne). The new situation in the center of the empire after the revolution in the summer 1908 and the steps of the Young Turks had more opposite effect than the revolutionaries intended. Instead of strengthening the state, they weakened it internally and externally which in its consequences led to a disaster.

As a result of the external catastrophes a new form of government arose there in 1913. After the CUP had come to power again after a short interlude in January 1913<sup>17</sup> and after the death of Mahmud Şevket Paşa, the Ottoman Empire was de facto ruled by a triumvirate consisting of Cemal Paşa, Taalat Paşa and Enver Paşa, who stood before a task how to rebuild and revitalize the empire.<sup>18</sup> This was to be done by a series of reforms, most of that were never realized, because of the start of the First World War, but they helped the empire to endure the war burden for next four years in which it showed much more “vitality” than it seemed to have after the Balkan wars when the Great Powers were preparing themselves for the eventuality of abrupt fall of the empire. This war-capability was also caused by the higher internal stability under the triumvirate, whose regime however grew steadily oppressive.

One of the important lessons of the Balkan wars was the fact that unless the empire obtains some sort of protection from the Great Powers it wouldn't be able to survive and it can be said, that *“the Ottoman-German alliance of the following year must be seen in this context.”*<sup>19</sup> The creation of such a connection wasn't however a definitive certainty in 1913. On the contrary, during the spring 1914 Istanbul tended to have good relations with the Entente powers,<sup>20</sup> especially with Great Britain. At the end it was the case of the battleships built for the Ottomans which were confiscated by London in the

13) Nearer see L. RATHMANN, *Berlin-Baghdad*, Berlin 1962.

14) HANIOĞLU, p. 135.

15) Ibid., p. 153.

16) LEWIS, p. 213.

17) See GOMBÁR, pp. 305f.

18) SHAW, p. 298.

19) HANIOĞLU, p. 174.

20) Mustafa AKSAKAL, *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914*, Cambridge 2008, p. 90.

same day when they were intended to be handed over to the Turks<sup>21</sup> which eventually led Istanbul to the camp of the Central Powers.

At the end of this section it could be said that it was the growing instability after the Young Turk coup that led to the crucial weakening of the empire and its subsequent defeats. On the contrary the relative stability of the Hamidian regime helped the empire to live through several international crises without a loss of territory. On the other hand it was the character of this same regime which was among the main reasons leading to the growing international isolation of Istanbul, which was one of the main reasons of later defeats and substantial losses in Europe and Africa in its consequences.

### Economy

The most common assumption is that the Ottoman Empire became during the second half of the 19th century a semi-colony of the European powers, but under a thorough scrutiny it turns out, to be only a part of the truth. It is true that after the state bankruptcy in 1875 the external debt reached 220 million pounds<sup>22</sup> and this number went even higher during the war with Russia. With regard to this catastrophic situation, the Great Powers forced on the empire an international supervision of its debt at the Congress of Berlin. The Public Debt Administration then started work to resuscitate the Ottoman finances. It collected duties from the Ottoman trade and state monopolies such as on tobacco and salt. In this way it managed in collaboration with the government, which also tried to improve its situation to restore health to the Ottoman budget. Even the external debt fell from 239.5 million Ottoman pounds in 1881 to 125.3 million.<sup>23</sup>

This was of course a remarkable achievement, but the view of the Ottoman budget is not so impressive. The revenues of the government grew from 1,972.5 million kuruş in 1878 to 2,229.1 million in the fiscal year 1905-1906.<sup>24</sup> This trend improved during the Young Turk era, when in 1911

the revenue reached 2,878.3 million.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand the expenditures rose accordingly and the budget was always passive. In spite of this fact the government was able to reduce the percent of the budget which had to be used to pay the foreign debt. The structure of the budget also changed considerably during the Hamidian era, whereas the main enhancement of finance was evident on the side of the army.<sup>26</sup>

The gradual improvement of the economic situation came also in the field of the international trade of the empire. The average export amounted 18.6 million in the 70's and rose to 27.3 million average in the years 1910-1913.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly the imports rose, whose dimension was a little bit higher, so the empire trade balance was passive in the investigated era. However the rise of the international trade meant that the empire enjoyed an economic prosperity. The importance of the trade for the empire can be seen by the fact that "*in 1914, perhaps one-quarter of total agricultural production was exported; exports altogether formed nearly 14 percent of the gross national product and the 'ratio of imports to GNP was around 18 per cent.'*"<sup>28</sup> The trade main partners of the Ottoman Empire were Great Britain, France, Germany and Austria-Hungary. These four Great Powers "*shipped three-quarters of all imports and consumed 60-70 percent of Ottoman exports.*"<sup>29</sup>

From these numbers, there could be made several conclusions. Above all it must be said the empire enjoyed during the last decades of 19th and the first decade of 20th century a considerable economic growth and prosperity, which brought to the commercial centers an increase of level of living. These successes were however sorely paid. The dependence of the state on the foreign trade and investments gradually grew. In addition it was not the Ottomans who profited primarily from this development. The main profits were on the part of the Great Powers whose influence on the progress and control of Ottoman economy became even higher than in the previous period. The change of the regime in 1908 then led to the loss of a part of the foreign investments and the deficit of the public budget became to grow again. Due to the inadequate domestic investment possibilities the government

25) Ibid., p. 286.

26) Ibid., p. 225.

27) Halil İNALCIK, Donald QUATAERT (eds.), *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2, Cambridge 1994, p. 829.

28) Ibid., p. 829ff.

29) Ibid., p. 833, compare with SHAW, p. 237.

21) Nearer see MASSIE, Robert K., *Castles of Steel*, New York 2003, p. 22ff.

22) GOMBÁR, p. 234.

23) HANIOĞLU, p. 135.

24) SHAW, p. 226.

had to turn to the foreign loans again.<sup>30</sup> This process only emphasized the dependence of Ottoman economy on the European powers especially with regard to the increased government spending during the armed conflicts with Italy and the Balkan league. The end of the economic connection with the allied powers during the First World War, whose investments the Germans weren't able to replace eventually led to an economic catastrophe.<sup>31</sup>

In spite of these facts the Hamidian regime and even the Young Turks whom had to challenge increased internal instability and external threats achieved some very good results. The economic situation of the empire improved which mirrored in the development of railways, roads, agriculture and even in the creation of a nucleus of industry, although major industrial companies employed only 35,000 workers.<sup>32</sup> The Ottoman economical base rested in the agriculture which products were then exported to Europe. In this sense the Ottoman Empire remained in spite of all achievements relatively backward state compared with most of the European countries. This could be seen also from the comparison with other major European powers - the GDP of the empire before the First World War amounted only about 10 percent of that of Germany with about slightly above 20 percent of its population.<sup>33</sup> In this sense it must be admitted that the general assumption about the weakness of the Ottoman Empire from the point of economical view is justified, in spite of the above mentioned improvements, which on the other hand were mainly achieved with the help of foreign investments.

## Military

The views of the Ottoman armed forces differ a lot. At the beginning of the Hamidian period the view of the European observers on its capabilities was determined by its mediocre performance during the war with Russia in 1877-1878. *"The Ottoman soldiers showed their traditional valor, courage,*

*obedience, and sturdiness, especially in defensive operations..."*<sup>34</sup> but the war exposed the weaknesses of the Ottoman military system, especially the inability of the conscription to work properly and to use all its potentially huge resources.<sup>35</sup> Moreover the army lacked enough modern war materiel and the troops often lacked appropriate training. In addition the leadership was quite poor, although the army possessed some elite cadres of officers, but these were only few. In combat the Turks were much better in defensive (especially around fortified places as Plevno) than in offensive. Although the army was capable to defeat the Russians several times, the overall result of the war was a disaster.

The government had to reform the army in order to make it more effective and capable to lead a modern armed conflict. The real changes came after 1882, when the Germans established their military mission in Istanbul. A year later its chief became Colonel (later Field Marshal) Wilhelm Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, who was renowned for his book *Das Volk in Waffen* (The Nation in Arms).<sup>36</sup> Under this talented man, who stayed in his post until 1896, the Turks started a modernization program. Von der Goltz dramatically changed the training system and carried through a reorganization of the Ottoman general staff. The Germans also helped the Turks to newly equip the army with modern weapons, although the limitations of the military budget. During this period the German army organization and structure became to serve *"as the model for every aspect of the Ottoman military system."*<sup>37</sup>

The effectiveness of these reforms proved itself in the war with Greece in 1897, in which the Ottoman arms defeated the Greeks and opened the way to Athens.<sup>38</sup> The conflict was eventually solved by the mediation of the Great Powers, by whom the reputation of the Ottoman army was greatly

30) AKSAKAL, p. 59ff.

31) HANIOĞLU, p. 181.

32) İNALCIK, QUATAERT, p. 898. To some remarks on the Ottoman industry see SHAW, p. 236.

33) Stephen BROADBERRY, Mark HARRISON, *The Economics of World War I*, Cambridge 2005, see table on pages 9-10.

34) Mesut UYAR, Edward J. ERICKSON, *A Military History of the Ottomans*, Santa Barbara, Denver, Oxford 2009, p. 199.

35) Theoretically the Ottoman conscription system could muster some 702,000 men in 1869, but the real figure was much lower - see Virginia H. AKSAN, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870*, London, New York, San Francisco, Toronto, Sydney, Tokyo 2007, p. 478.

36) Edward J. ERICKSON, *Defeat in Detail. The Ottoman Army in the Balkans, 1912-13*, Westport, London 2003, p. 11.

37) UYAR, ERICKSON, p. 207.

38) The description of the war UYAR, ERICKSON, pp. 209f, compare with Alan PALMER, *Úpadek a pád Osmanské říše*, Praha 1996, p. 195ff.

improved. This easy victory had however a negative impact on the armed forces. The sultan and the army command overlooked the shortcomings of the army and considered the reforms as complete.<sup>39</sup> The increased prestige of the army also led the paranoiac monarch to doubts about the loyalty of the armed forces leading to some unpopular moves in the army command and to the suspension of bigger army maneuvers. These measures had however two negative impacts. Firstly, the preparedness and quality of the armed forces declined. Secondly it was inside the army, where the unpopularity of the Hamidian regime became quite strong. It showed itself especially in the units stationed in Macedonia, which was threatened by Bulgarian and Greek propaganda among local non-Muslim population. The development eventually led to the Young Turk revolution, conducted by the Macedonian army.

The new regime inherited the army structure and situation created by the Hamidian government. In 1908, there were altogether 26,611 officers, 286,112 men and 6,239 military students.<sup>40</sup> In the reserve units (Redif divisions), which were called to services in case of war, there were another 544,000 men.<sup>41</sup> These are quite impressive numbers, if it is considered that other sources of manpower could be found in the gendarmarie and in the paramilitary units. But the army had a lot of shortcomings starting with the inefficient organization and ending with the insufficient equipment.

These weaknesses were partly improved in the following years because of the fact that the role of the war ministers was gradually strengthened, which was apparent during the function of Mumut Şevket Paşa in this office (from January 1910 until July 1912). During this period the Young Turks tried to improve the organization, structure and training of the army. But due to the financial shortcomings and internal disputes they were not able to correct all insufficiencies, especially in the field of armament.<sup>42</sup> These shortcomings became clear during the two main conflicts waged by the Ottomans in this period. In the war with Italy in 1911-1912 the army wasn't able to intervene on the battlefield at all, because of the catastrophic state of the Ottoman navy, which was utterly neglected during the reign of Abdülhamid II, who remembered the role of the naval officers in the deposition of his

uncle Abdülaziz. At the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century, the Ottomans possessed only a handful of more or less obsolete ships with only 5,351 officers and 7,418 sailors.<sup>43</sup> The possibility of effective fight against Italy was therefore nil, which mirrored in the outcome of the war.

In the second of these conflicts - Balkan wars the army had to challenge several opponents under quite unfavorable conditions. The Macedonian forces were soon cut off from their supply bases by the Bulgarian attack and with regard to the inability of the navy to secure sea communications, these units were destined to be slowly annihilated by the enemy. Several defeats such as in battle of Kumanovo<sup>44</sup> deeply demoralized the Ottoman army, which had to moreover face much stronger enemy (the Ottoman armed forces surpassed the numerical strength of the single Balkan states, but were inferior to their united strength, especially when they had to challenge highly unfavorable strategic odds). Although the army recovered Adrianople in the Second Balkan War, its international reputation was totally ruined.

After the end of the conflict, which expelled the Turks almost completely from Europe a difficult task for the new triumvirate of Paşas now leading the empire remained. If they wanted strengthen the Ottoman state they had to modernize its army. In this process, they had to solve several problems. Firstly they had to replace the casualties sustained during the Balkan wars amounting to about 100,000 men.<sup>45</sup> Secondly there was the question of armament and thirdly the problem of new army organization. For help with this huge task, the Ottoman government turned to its already traditional ally - Germany, which sent to Istanbul a mission of Major General Otto Liman von Sanders.<sup>46</sup> Although the mission was eventually abandoned under a pressure of Entente powers, it brought some significant results. The Ottoman army was rebuilt on the basis of the German model. On the eve of the First World War it consisted of four armies with 36 divisions<sup>47</sup> and its

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43) Ibid., p. 19.

44) Richard C. HALL, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913*, London, New York 2000, p. 49.

45) Ibid., p. 135, compare with ERICKSON, *Defeat in Detail*, p. 329, where he claims that the total Ottoman losses were 50,000 killed, 100,000 wounded, 115,000 POW's with another 75,000 fatalities of diseases.

46) To its work on military mission see Edward J. ERICKSON, *Ordered to Die. A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, Westport, London 2001, pp. 11f.

47) Ibid., p. 5.

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39) UYAR, ERICKSON, p. 210.

40) ERICKSON, *Defeat in Detail*, p. 15.

41) Ibid., p. 18.

42) For example in 1912 the army possessed only 713,404 rifles for 730,000 men (in case of mobilization) - see Ibid. p. 59 and the situation of Ottoman artillery was even worse.

organization and equipment gradually improved, although the reformers had not time enough to complete their aims before the war.

Although this intensive reforms work, the reputation of the army abroad (especially in the west) remained poor. This was determined by the negative impression from its performance during the Balkan Wars and by the underestimating its real capabilities. The Turks were able to take lessons from their defeat and were able to implement them in the postwar reorganization.<sup>48</sup> The performance of the Turks during the Great War was therefore a huge surprise for the allies. They were able to achieve some remarkable military triumphs, such as at Gallipoli in 1915 and at Kut-al-Amara in 1916, although the organizational and supply achievements of the Turks were remarkable. During the war the Ottomans mobilized 2,608,000 men, of which they lost 725,000.<sup>49</sup> This considerable force was able to tie a substantial war resources of the enemy in the Near East and in this way to facilitate the war effort of the Central Powers in other regions: "Over the course of the war, Great Britain deployed 2,550,000 troops on the Ottoman fronts, constituting 32 percent of the total number of British troops in the field; at one point, the British had 880,300 men fighting the Ottomans, or 24 percent of British armed forces. The Russians initially mobilized 160,000 troops on the Caucasian front. By September 1916, they had 702,000 troops facing the Ottomans in Anatolia and Iran, out of a total force of 3.7 million. Additionally, 50,000 French troops fought the Ottomans, mainly at the Dardanelles. The Italians dispatched an expeditionary force of 70,000 soldiers to quell a rebellion of the local militia in Tripoli and Cyrenaica aided by the Ottoman government. Total Allied casualties on the Ottoman fronts amounted to a massive 650,000."<sup>50</sup> It must be underlined that this remarkable achievement was reached only a short time after the catastrophic defeat during the Balkan wars, in which the standing Ottoman army was virtually annihilated. This is such a remarkable deed, that it could be stated, that the Ottoman army was the strongest of the three researched elements of the Ottoman state focused in this article.

After a careful scrutiny of the Ottoman policy, economy and military a researcher finds a lot of weaknesses in these areas of a state power in the Ottoman Empire. The policy fought with instability, economy with the dominance of foreign powers and military with the lack of funds and will to

reform. But after a careful inquiry, it can be seen, that there were some positive aspects (the economic conjuncture, the abilities and achievements of the armed forces during the First World War, or the governmental reform program during the Hamidian era), which didn't correspond with the general picture of the "sick man on the Bosphorus". It were these positive aspects in the Ottoman state and society which were among the factors, that caused, that the empire, which was according the contemporary observers doomed to collapse, outlived such the Great Powers as Hohenzollern Germany, Romanov Russia, or Austria-Hungary. In the retrospect it can be said that the Ottoman Empire wasn't as weak as it is often assumed, but on the other hand its strength shouldn't be overestimated because of its internal problems and the development on the international field, which often determined its future.

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48) ERICKSON, *Defeat in Detail*, pp. 338f.

49) HANIOĞLU, p. 181.

50) *Ibid.*, p. 180ff.