

CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

---

Elections and the Electoral Process in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1919

Author(s): Hasan Kayali

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1995), pp. 265-286

Published by: [Cambridge University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/176251>

Accessed: 04/12/2012 08:11

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Cambridge University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to  
*International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

***Hasan Kayalı***

## ELECTIONS AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1876–1919

The 1876 constitution and its reinstatement in 1908 have been acknowledged as landmarks in the historiography of the late Ottoman Empire. The promulgation of a constitution signified a critical political transformation despite the brevity of the First Constitutional Period (1876–78). During the next three decades of Sultan Abdülhamid's autocratic rule, the ultimately successful struggle to restore the constitution against the Sultan's relentless resistance became central to the political life of the empire. In 1908, the Young Turk Revolution inaugurated a decade of social and political change, the Second Constitutional Period.

Despite due recognition of the implications of a charter, the institutions inherent in the constitutional regime—among them elections—have received inadequate attention. The socioeconomic underdevelopment of the Ottoman society, the weakness of political and professional institutions, forceful interventions in the political process including the elections, and restrictions in suffrage seem to have rendered close examination of elections of little merit, particularly in view of the inherent scholarly bias against studying managed elections that did not seem to offer a credible choice.<sup>1</sup>

However, a convincing case can be made for proposing Ottoman elections as a significant topic of investigation. A political community's electoral experience may fall short of the democratic standards that belong to competitive elections, but the elections still reveal much about that community's social, political, and ideological evolution. Genuinely competitive elections that are free of manipulation remain an ideal even in advanced Western democracies. Ottoman elections, despite their apparent shortcomings, provided precedents and standards that are yet to be equaled in the Middle East and many other parts of the world; introduced the Middle Easterners to fundamental norms of political participation and mobilization; and defined the main contours of political contestation that have endured long after the end of the empire. As Dale Eickelman has argued with regard to postcolonial Morocco, "elections, even if 'managed' by the government, signal an implicit recognition of changed attitudes toward authority, and a heightened recognition of those in authority of shifting popular expectations."<sup>2</sup>

Six parliamentary elections were held in the Ottoman Empire. The electoral regulations and processes of the two elections of the First Constitutional Period will

Hasan Kayalı teaches at the Department of History, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla, Calif. 92093-0104, U.S.A.

© 1995 Cambridge University Press 0020–7438/95 \$7.50 + .10

be examined here as a backdrop to a more detailed analysis of the 1908, 1912, and 1914 elections of the Second Constitutional Period.<sup>3</sup> While the aborted reelection that followed a government crisis in 1912 will also be examined, the 1919 election, which belongs to the Armistice period, will be treated only briefly.

The focus in the exemplification of the electoral process will be on the Arab provinces, as this study is part of a broader research effort aimed at reintegrating the history of the Arab provinces into that of the central institutions of the Ottoman state in the last decades of the empire. The emphasis on the Arab provinces in this overall appraisal of the Ottoman elections also serves to illustrate the emergent interplay of ethnicity with politics. Particularly after 1908, electoral politics animated and politicized protonationalist movements among the Muslims, while it also crystallized competing multiethnic agendas.

#### ELECTIONS OF THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD

The Ottoman public had acquired some experience in political representation as a result of the secularization of confessional communities (*millet*) and the reorganization of provincial administration in the 1860s. The newly created *millet* general assemblies were partially elected. The Provincial Law of 1864 stipulated administrative councils based on a limited electoral process that allowed elimination of names from candidate lists drafted by central authorities.<sup>4</sup> Although the elective principle was introduced with these measures, religious leaders controlled the composition of the *millet* assemblies, and the Porte that of administrative councils, especially above the district (*kaza*) level.

The Provisional Electoral Regulations<sup>5</sup> issued on 29 October 1876 stipulated that the provincial administrative councils were to elect the representatives to the first parliamentary term that would convene at the beginning of March 1877 and “last no less than three months” (Art. 5). The regulations posited this method as tantamount to popular election, because council members had been “appointed by popular vote” (Art. 2). Provisional arrangements were necessary because the internal and external circumstances that accompanied the drafting of the constitution in 1876 necessitated quick action.<sup>6</sup> To wait for the constitution to take its final shape and draft an electoral law accordingly would have delayed the opening of Parliament and might have jeopardized the entire effort.

The Ottoman constitution, promulgated two months after the Provisional Electoral Regulations on 24 December 1876, prescribed a nominated senate (*Heyet-i Âyan*) and an elected chamber of deputies (*Heyet-i Mebusan*) and detailed the qualification requirements, which remained valid through the Second Constitutional Period (Art. 68). Every Ottoman male above the age of thirty with ability in Turkish and enjoying civil rights could be elected deputy, unless he had accepted citizenship or employment in the service of a foreign government, was bankrupt or a domestic servant, or was stigmatized by “notoriety for ill deeds.”<sup>7</sup> A caveat to the language requirement was that after four years (i.e., 1880) candidates would be expected to read and “to the extent possible” write Turkish, which Article 18 stipulated as the official language of the state.<sup>8</sup> These constitutional eligibility requirements were in the same spirit as those that had been posited by the provisional regulations, except they were more detailed and explicit. The substantive differ-

ences in the regulations were the requirement to own real estate (of an unspecified nature and size) and the lower candidacy age of twenty-five.

Parliament convened on 19 March 1877, and this first session adjourned on 28 June. The regulations were implemented a second time in the elections of the summer of 1877, notwithstanding the few discrepancies between its clauses and the more recently promulgated constitution and, indeed, the specific constitutional stipulation (Art. 119) that these provisional regulations would govern only the first elections. A new electoral law had in fact passed the chamber,<sup>9</sup> but was still under deliberation in the Senate at the closure of the first term.<sup>10</sup> The law under discussion put forth such elaborate electoral procedures that their implementation would have required long preparation. The second Parliament, where the chamber consisted of a new crop of delegates chosen by administrative councils, met on 13 December 1877, only to be dissolved by the sultan on 14 February 1878, on the pretext of an emergency related to the ongoing war with Russia.

In these first two elections, provincial councils determined deputies through informal procedures that were not immune to local patronage relations and governors' interventions.<sup>11</sup> There is little reason to believe that the composition of the chamber would have been different, had popular elections been held according to the indirect two-stage system put forth by the draft election law. There were no empire-wide parties or other political organizations to sway provincial votes, nor a politically conscious public informed by a free press or enjoying freedom of association. Provincial councils sent delegates who happened to be eminently conversant in imperial issues. The Arab provinces dispatched younger members of prominent local families familiar with the trends of the *Tanzimat*.<sup>12</sup> For the older notables, political ambitions centered on provincial posts that could not be forfeited for the dubious glory and prestige of imperial deputyships. The linkages between Istanbul and the periphery and the integration of provincial power to the center were to gain strength during Abdülhamid's rule and after the demise of the constitutional experiment.<sup>13</sup>

The provisional regulations set the size of the chamber at a fixed number (130) to be distributed to the provinces in proportion to population. Foreign pressure on behalf of non-Muslim communities and the government's desire to appeal to these groups in an effort to defuse nationalism and separatism resulted in disproportionately large quotas for provinces with non-Muslim populations.<sup>14</sup>

In its short life, the Parliament of 1877–78 lived up to the spirit of constitutional representative government. Diverse issues were contested vigorously. The sultan and his cabinet confronted an unanticipated challenge from the deputies. Abdülhamid, however, had astutely preserved the extensive powers of the executive and circumscribed those of the new Parliament. Alarmed by the impetuosity in the chamber, the sultan disbanded the body. When Parliament was restored in 1908, the new regime implemented both the 1876 constitution (with revisions that curtailed the sultan's prerogatives) and the Electoral Law that had been deliberated in the first Parliament.<sup>15</sup>

#### THE SECOND CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD

After 1908, the revolutionary Young Turk regime subscribed to a notion of representative government that stressed integration. The Electoral Law embodied this

new Ottomanist vision, particularly where it differed from the Provisional Electoral Regulations. Remarkably, the political leaders of the Second Constitutional Period did not in any way modify the Electoral Law that had been conceived and drafted—though not implemented—during the First Constitutional Period, even as they amended the constitution. The hiatus of thirty years and Abdülhamid's passionate and drawn-out struggle against the constitutionalists effaced these beginnings of a supranationalist Ottomanist conception, which later was reappropriated by the Young Turk regime.

In 1908, the Young Turks felt that the reconciliation of communal differences and the forging of an Ottoman identity among the diverse peoples of the empire should not be prejudiced by the electoral system. In contrast to the Provisional Electoral Regulations that designated Muslim and non-Muslim provincial quotas for a chamber of fixed size, the Electoral Law stipulated one deputy to every 50,000 males and eliminated any formal quota arrangement. The Young Turks, especially the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), made the elimination of quotas the cornerstone of their integrationist and secular Ottomanist policies. Confessional representation based on a quota system would be incompatible with Ottomanism, as it would promote division rather than the unity of different "elements" (*anasır*). Although the sincerity of this position should not be doubted, later political developments did little to sustain the Unionist point of view and indeed led them to revise their thinking as early as the next elections and certainly by 1914. Large European territories of the empire (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria) populated predominantly by non-Muslims had to be ceded even before the first elections of the Second Constitutional Period could be held. In an increasingly Muslim empire, the non-Muslims feared being relegated to minorities with no political representation.

The Electoral Law was consistent with the CUP's broader policy of centralization. Even though the CUP's attempts to promote Turkish as the state language in various spheres of government gradually became the central point of contention between the Unionists and their opponents in non-Turkish-speaking provinces, the question of language was deliberately left flexible in the electoral requirements. The constitutional clause pertaining to candidates for deputy that stipulated more stringent criteria for ability in Turkish "after four years" was retained, with the same vague phrasing, thirty years later. In August 1909, a proposed constitutional amendment that sought to institute reading and writing ability in Turkish as additional eligibility requirements failed to pass in the chamber.<sup>16</sup>

#### THE ELECTORAL LAW

The main features of the Electoral Law need to be delineated before discussing the elections it governed. The law underwent very minor amendments during the course of the Second Constitutional Period and was retained by the Turkish Republic with slight revisions until 1946.<sup>17</sup> With its eighty-three clauses, the law is striking in the detail with which it addressed electoral matters: designation of electoral districts and determination of the size of their parliamentary contingents; preparation of registers; selection and duties of electoral inspection committees, suffrage requirements, and conduct of elections; updating of registers; penal clauses; and general matters.

The law stipulated the *sancak* (provincial subdivision) as the basic electoral unit, which was entitled to one deputy in the chamber for every 50,000 male residents of all ages (Art. 1).<sup>18</sup> Registration was the task of village and neighborhood headmen (elected in accordance with the provincial law) and religious leaders (Art. 5). Electoral inspection committees were organized on the *kaza* level under the presidency of the mayor and consisted of members from the administrative and municipal councils (Art. 10). Thus, general elections utilized preexisting elective arrangements.

All males above the age twenty-five who paid some direct taxes were entitled to vote, unless they were protégés of a foreign government, were bankrupt or under legal restriction to dispose of their property, or deprived of their civil rights (Art. 11). The vagueness of the taxation requirement possibly also mitigated its restrictiveness.<sup>19</sup> Eligible voters elected secondary voters, one for every 500 primary voters (Art. 21). Secondary voters, like candidates for deputy, had to have all the qualifications of primary voters except the tax requirement (Art. 22). It was technically possible then for a male who was disenfranchised on grounds of the tax requirement to stand as candidate for secondary voter or deputy. Again, like the candidates for deputyship, whose qualifications were laid out by the constitution, secondary voters could not be domestic servants or persons of bad repute.

The two-stage indirect election process was the singular feature of Ottoman elections. In choosing electors who then voted for the actual deputies, the ordinary voters deferred to community leaders who would presumably better judge the interests of the constituency and select the right representatives for the chamber.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the two-stage system preserved and reinforced patronage relationships and precluded the election of candidates truly representative of the common people. Moreover, it facilitated manipulation. In a constituency with a population of 50,000, for instance, a maximum of about twenty-five secondary voters would be determined to vote for provincial candidates for deputyship, a number that could be influenced easily. In fact, particularly in more remote provinces, the pool of primary and secondary voters was considerably smaller than the number of male inhabitants would suggest. The statistics provided by the British consul on the *sancak* of Tripoli in the 1908 elections, for instance, suggest that less than one-fifth of males above twenty-five were designated as eligible primary voters, roughly half of whom reached the polls in order to elect twenty-two secondary voters, who in turn voted for the three deputies to whom the *sancak* was entitled on the basis of its total male population.<sup>21</sup> The apparent exclusion of four-fifths of males eligible by age may have been due to the failure of tribal elements to register in population, and hence election, registers.

Candidacy for deputy was province-wide, allowing secondary voters from a certain *sancak* to vote for candidates from other parts of the province. Balloting, in both stages, was based on the multiple-member plurality system,<sup>22</sup> where the voters wrote in as many names as there were candidates.<sup>23</sup> The constitution stipulated that candidates for deputy had to be “from the people” of the particular province of their candidacy (Art. 72), providing for a degree of decentralization that the CUP did not modify until 1916.<sup>24</sup> The evidence suggests that a candidate could run either in his province of residence or province of origin.<sup>25</sup>

The Electoral Law made elaborate provisions for the secrecy of balloting and security of tallying and tabulating. The election was a staggered and drawn-out

process that was not coordinated throughout the empire or even the province. Prior to the primary elections (i.e., the first stage) electoral committees provided the *nahiye* (precinct) officials with as many blank ballots as there were registered voters (Art. 25). Then the same officials invited the voters to the *nahiye*'s center in groups of about 300 (Art. 26). The voters had to be present at the appointed site at the appointed time (Art. 34) or vote by proxy with an absentee ballot placed in a sealed envelope and accompanied by a letter explaining the reason for absence (Art. 40). Following eulogies to the sultan by the Muslim and non-Muslim religious heads of the community, ballots were cast, as the headman of the village or neighborhood testified to the identity of the voter or the absentee voter.

The ballot box was stipulated to have double locks with keys that did not match, one to remain with the precinct officer, the other entrusted to an official from the *kaza* (Arts. 29 and 32). During counting and tabulation, batches of ballots that could be processed within a reasonable amount of time would be taken out of the box, which would then be relocked and resealed (Art. 43). This process could be repeated several times, since the determination of the winning candidates—the secondary voters—could take days.

The successful secondary voters would be presented with a document certifying their election as well as a list of the province's candidates for deputy and asked to travel to the *kaza* center on a specific day for secondary balloting (Art. 45). On that occasion, they obtained, filled out, and cast their ballots, once all voters assembled in the polling area (Art. 46). Whereas in the primary balloting the previously distributed slips could be (and undoubtedly very often were) filled out by others, the secondary electors could technically exercise their free will. If it was determined that at least four-fifths of eligible electors had presented themselves and cast their vote, the electoral committee would proceed with the counting (Art. 49).<sup>26</sup> Winners would receive certification to present to the presidency of the chamber in the first session of Parliament (Art. 52).

The procedures outlined in the Electoral Law were often flouted, if one judges by the numerous complaints that arrived in Istanbul. Nevertheless, the existence of established and publicized procedures, enforcement of these detailed procedures (even if partially), and, indeed, the energetic submission of election petitions all point to a certain degree of electoral sophistication. A manifestation of the keen general interest in elections is the annotated translation by Mehmed Ata of the French scholar Raoul de la Grasserie's detailed comparative study of electoral systems.<sup>27</sup>

As is also evident in that work, the Ottoman electoral system compared favorably to its contemporary Western counterparts in the extent of suffrage it provided for, notwithstanding problems inherent in indirect voting. Two-stage elections had their roots in the 1789 French electoral law, and, indeed, the eligibility requirements for primary voters in the Ottoman law bore a striking resemblance to those set forth in the French law of 1789.<sup>28</sup> The requirement for payment of direct taxes was probably not enforced rigidly in the Ottoman Empire, and the categories of "active" (voting) and "ordinary" citizens did not exist as sociopolitical markers.<sup>29</sup> Complaints about disenfranchisement are noticeable by their absence in election petitions, although those excluded would not be the persons likely to lodge formal complaints.<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to contemporary electoral systems of Germany, Russia, Japan, and England, there was no legally stipulated weighting that distributed the franchise

unequally among different social groups.<sup>31</sup> A comparison closer to home is with Iran,<sup>32</sup> where in the elections of 1906 the electorate was divided into different social categories with set quotas for each. Unlike Tehran and London, Istanbul was not given larger representation relative to the provinces, although special regulations determined the electoral districts of the capital, because it was not organized as a province.<sup>33</sup> In the absence of concrete data on the numbers of eligible and actual voters, no sound conclusions can be reached about how participatory the Ottoman elections were. The legal framework, however, provided for popular elections with relatively few suffrage restrictions.

#### 1908 ELECTIONS

By the fall of 1908, when the first elections of the Second Constitutional Period were held, the CUP had hardly grasped the reins of government. The euphoria of having cast off the Hamidian oppression was still in the air. The CUP was a secret body that had not yet constituted itself as a political party with a coherent program, and could not count on an ideological following. It had restored the constitution and was preparing to revive parliamentary government, and therefore enjoyed a moral authority that disarmed its political rivals. In this climate, political aspirants had nothing to lose and much to gain by identifying with the CUP. "All that [was] necessary [was] to have ideological supremacy (or, better, supremacy of passions) on the chosen day, in order to win a majority that [would] govern for four or five years in spite of the fact that the mass of the electorate would disassociate itself from its legal expression once passions [had] died."<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the Unionists' fortunes declined quickly, as even segments of their own majority gradually assumed an oppositional stance.

The 1908 elections were not as colorless as this brief description of the political climate at the end of 1908 suggests. Immediately after the revolution, the CUP opened up provincial clubs and made contact with local groups, particularly in those parts of the empire where it had not been able to organize prior to the revolution. Meanwhile, its decentralist opponents from the constitutionalist movement organized in the new *Ahrar* (Liberal) Party that came into existence only weeks before the elections.

The 1908 elections were the first general elections. The local notables who emerged as secondary voters from the primaries picked candidates many of whom the CUP had entered into its lists on the basis of their local influence, particularly in the countryside. But the CUP did more than recognize and enlist candidates who stood to win. It also secured the election of officials loyal to the committee and not necessarily native to their electoral province. Because of the low level of contestation and relatively little electioneering, there was minimal coercion and fraud in the 1908 elections. With only three months to prepare for an empire-wide election, however, there were electoral irregularities. Quite apart from the inevitable fact that the vote of the common people was manipulated by local notables, in certain regions such as the province of the Hijaz primary voting was bypassed altogether.<sup>35</sup>

The Liberal Party was too weakly organized and totally overshadowed by the CUP's aura in winter 1908 to be able to carry out an effective campaign. The campaign was by and large restricted to the press.<sup>36</sup> The CUP organized conferences



that were more in the spirit of club meetings than public rallies. Taking advantage of unprecedented press freedom, several newspapers gave their support to the opposition, but could hardly prevent the CUP from carrying the day. Only one deputy was elected from the Liberal lists; however, the CUP would soon encounter opposition from the independents and even from its own ranks in the chamber.

Balloting took place in a festive atmosphere and became the occasion for celebrating the principles that the elections symbolized: liberty, equality, and justice. The transporting of ballot boxes to and from the polling stations occurred sometimes in a carnival atmosphere with drums and trumpets at the head of the processions.<sup>37</sup> Large crowds saw off deputies-elect in their hometowns.<sup>38</sup> Such celebrations, while possibly spontaneous and most convivial in 1908, recurred in future elections as well. The opening of Parliament on 17 December 1908, too, was the occasion of a big parade, with a band leading the 115 carriages that carried the deputies and playing the "Anthem of the Deputies," which made reference to such heroes of liberty and revolution as Namık Kemal, Midhat Paşa, Enver, and Niyazi. Crowds coming from the provinces to witness the opening filled the Istanbul hotels, forcing the late arriving deputies into the dormitories of the capital's boarding schools.<sup>39</sup>

The first general elections revealed the difficulty of enforcing eligibility requirements for candidates for deputyship. Though provincial electoral councils inspected candidate lists for legal qualifications, the effectiveness of such scrutiny was limited, indeed somewhat academic, as secondary voters were free to cast their votes for nonlisted individuals. In case the elections produced deputies-elect whose eligibility was suspect, only the convened chamber could reject them. Since the deputies were by law required to have moral rectitude, it would be relatively simple for the majority in the chamber to reject unwanted deputies on grounds of infamy.

In its first sessions, the chamber questioned the eligibility of several deputies, including a number of deputies from Arab provinces. Shafiq al-Mu<sup>3</sup>ayyad of Syria was implicated with prevarication in a personal legal matter. Both of the Benghazi deputies faced challenges: <sup>c</sup>Umar Mansur was charged with forging election papers and Yusuf Shitwan with using intimidation. Shitwan was also implicated in having spied for Abdülhamid, perhaps the most insidious manifestation of "notoriety" and the sure and convenient formula for defamation.<sup>40</sup> Yet, once elections were concluded and the chamber started its work, its rejection of deputies-elect on the basis of eligibility criteria posed practical and political problems. Of the above, only in Shitwan's case was the election repeated. He won again and was endorsed by the chamber. Meanwhile, when the deputy-elect for Karak relinquished his seat, the runner-up candidate, Tawfiq al-Majali, was endorsed as deputy in violation of the law that required reelection. Clearly, the requirement to be proficient in Turkish was not enforced either. Tawfiq al-Majali, for instance, did not speak Turkish when he entered the chamber in 1908.<sup>41</sup>

The CUP failed to sustain its support within and outside Parliament due to the waning of its revolutionary appeal and its failure to take charge of the government despite its strength in Parliament. Following the failed counterrevolution of April 1909, the CUP took a more active role in government and sponsored centralizing policies, which revoked some of the liberties of the immediate post-1908 period and subjected the CUP to charges of attempting to "Turkify" the empire's various groups. The Liberal opposition reorganized itself as the *Hürriyet ve İtilâf* ("Liberty

and Entente” or the “Liberal Entente”) and jolted the CUP by winning the contested seat in the November 1911 by-election in Istanbul 196 to 195. The CUP lost no time in maneuvering the dissolution of the chamber, where it had dissipated its moral authority—and together with it its majority—creating the conditions for early elections in 1912.

#### 1912 ELECTIONS

These were the outstanding elections of the constitutional periods. Their portrayal as the “big stick elections” does justice neither to the spirited contestation nor to their significant implications. When elections were announced in January 1912, both the CUP and the Entente, around which many factions opposed to the CUP or alienated from it had coalesced, engaged in a heated campaign. These elections ultimately produced, largely owing to manipulation and fraudulent practices, an overwhelmingly Unionist chamber. However, this unforeseen and startling result may trivialize the sophistication of the election campaign.

The 1912 elections should also be seen as a landmark in the “development of a culture of mobilization” because of their contribution to the public sphere.<sup>42</sup> Electioneering occurred both on public platforms and in the press. Campaigning went beyond the confines of clubs and halls to large mass rallies. The press, both in the capital and in the provinces, not only covered the campaign but became an integral part of it by contributing to the political agenda. The number of petitions from individuals and local groups arriving in various government agencies increased dramatically.

Neither party had a sharply defined platform. The CUP represented centralized administrative practices against its decentralist opponents, some of whom were inclined to accommodate European patronage. The program of the Entente catered to localist sentiments by advocating education in the local language; by stipulating an extension of prerogatives to local authorities as well as the separation and clearer definition of the functions of local versus central government; and by sanctioning economic and intellectual institutions specific to ethnic and religious groups.<sup>43</sup> Those who were not the beneficiaries of CUP’s administrative overhaul or felt handicapped by increasing central controls gravitated toward the opposition. Allegiances of ethnic groups continued to cut across party lines despite the obvious appeal of the Entente’s decentralist program to these groups.

The decentralization–centralization debate had only a weak ideological content. The two sides were in agreement on basic political objectives but remained divided over leadership disputes and, to some extent, social background. Therefore, party lines remained diffuse. Voting was more for the candidate than for party or issue. Each party showed a preoccupation with publicizing defections. The Entente was the less institutionalized and more heterogeneous of the two rival groupings; it was also a recent political formation that had coalesced around a negative platform, anti-Unionism. As such it was more vulnerable to defections, particularly when the CUP used the state machinery staffed by its supporters to promote its position in the elections.

The prominent leaders of the Entente were Turkish-speaking and no different from the Unionists as far as their basic attitudes toward Islam were concerned. Nevertheless, they sought to frustrate the CUP by encouraging non-Turkish groups to attack

it for pursuing a policy of Turkification and by pointing out to the conservatives its alleged disregard for Islamic principles and values. The overall effect of this propaganda was to instill ethnic and sectarian-religious discord, which survived the Entente's defeat at the polls.

The CUP was particularly vulnerable to charges of Turkification. Its main cadres consisted of Turkish speakers, and that contributed to the perception of its centralizing policies as Turkification. Furthermore, consistent with the constitutional stipulation, the CUP-dominated government declared in 1912 its intention to apply the requirement of Turkish proficiency more strictly for prospective deputies, presumably in the expectation of blocking a group of minority candidates who followed the Entente.<sup>44</sup> Those opponents of the CUP who had voiced as early as in 1909 their disquiet about Turkification/Islamization and the Turkish preponderance in government gravitated toward the Entente.

The Unionists proved to be less vulnerable to accusations of disregard for Islamic precepts and values. Some of the Entente members were known for their cosmopolitan attitudes and close relations with foreign interests. But this did not keep the Entente from accusing the CUP of violating Islamic principles and attempting to restrict the prerogatives of the sultan-caliph<sup>45</sup> in its pamphlets. One such pamphlet, *Açıksöz* (Candid Words), appealed to the religious-national sentiments of Arabs and claimed that Zionist intrigue was responsible for the abandonment of Libya to the Italians.<sup>46</sup>

Such propaganda forced the CUP to seize the role of the champion of Islam. After all, the secular integrationist Ottomanism that it had preached was failing, and the latest manifestation of this failure was the Entente's appeal to segments of Christian communities. The Unionists used Islamic symbols effectively in their election propaganda in 1912. They accused the Entente of trying to separate the offices of the caliphate and the sultanate and thus weakening Islam and the Muslims.<sup>47</sup> There seemed no end to the capital to be gained from the exploitation and manipulation of religious rhetoric. In Izmir, the Entente attacked the CUP's intention to amend Article 35 of the constitution by arguing that the Unionists were thus denouncing the "thirty" days of fasting and "five" daily prayers. This led the town's *müftü* to plead that "for the sake of Islam and the welfare of the country" religion not be used to achieve political objectives.<sup>48</sup> As with the rhetoric on Turkification, Islam too remained in political discourse long after the elections were over.

The politicization of Islam and ethnic differences increased the attention of both parties to the Arab provinces. The ethnic homogeneity of this region, coupled with historical traditions of the relative autonomy, made the Arab provinces, which were also intimately linked with the early glory of Islam, fertile ground for opposition propaganda. The focus of this new political activity was Greater Syria. Political consciousness was relatively more advanced in Syria, particularly near the coast. Beirut had become an urban center of Arabist thought and activity with strong links to Damascus, Cairo, and Europe. Emerging concerns about Zionist immigration stimulated Arabist and anti-Istanbul sentiments. In contrast, in the socially less developed and politically inward-looking Arabian Peninsula elections failed to arouse public sentiment, while in Iraq the iron rule of Cemal Paşa as Governor of Bagdad stifled the Ententist opposition.<sup>49</sup>

The 1912 election campaign in Syria, as described and analyzed by Rashid Khalidi,<sup>50</sup> conforms to the more general trends that marked the election. Elections were hotly contested in Syria not only because they provided fertile ground for the newly emerging partisan discourse that appealed to ethnic sentiments and made political use of Islam but also because the race appeared close, and a good turnout on one side could swing the vote. In Syria, religious-sectarian discourse entered the campaigns in a negative way by reinforcing the appeal to the Muslim vote, rather than by soliciting the non-Muslim vote. Sectarianism was stronger in those parts of the empire where the non-Muslims were numerically stronger. For instance, in Izmir, the CUP prepared lists that would assure balanced representation of the different religious communities.<sup>51</sup> This apparent concern to court the minorities notwithstanding, mutual accusations of disregarding religious precepts and favoring the non-Muslims became a focus of the campaigns in the attempt to curry the all-important Muslim vote.

What were some of the circumstances that ultimately contributed to the lopsided outcome of an over 95 percent Unionist majority in the new parliament? The CUP's spectacular defeat in the Istanbul by-election of 1911 and its ensuing desperation encouraged many more dissident deputies to shift to the Entente. Subsequently, observing the CUP's determination to hold on to power through means legal and illegal, these deputies switched back to the CUP. In the absence of a well-defined ideological conflict, partisan politics remained weak and the propensity for opportunism strong. Just as there was a rush of defections from the CUP to the Entente following the by-election in Istanbul,<sup>52</sup> there was a similar switch of allegiances after the CUP demonstrated its determination to remain the dominant party.

The CUP went to early elections in order to nip the rival's organizational efforts in the bud. The Entente had no time to widen and deepen its party organization, a difficult feat in itself given the party's heterogeneous character. Particularly outside urban centers, the Entente remained an unknown quantity. The Ministry of the Interior instructed provincial authorities to inspect the registers of newly formed party branches, to bring any irregularities before law and to weed out "convicts and other undesirable or ineligible elements" from the branch organizations.<sup>53</sup> Such intrusions deterred prospective members, handicapped the organizational effort of the Entente, and also provided an excuse to detain opponents.

The opposition's inability to organize itself in the countryside partially explains the CUP's domination of the rural vote. More importantly, socioeconomic conditions outside the cities did not favor the Entente. It was the urban middle classes that championed greater political, cultural, and economic autonomy. Rural notables were mostly content to maintain their relationship with the CUP, which gave them social and economic preponderance as mediators between Istanbul and local peasant or tribal groups. Party organizations failed to permeate the countryside and take over the "brokerage functions" from the notables.<sup>54</sup> Thus, urban partisan propaganda in the Arab provinces and elsewhere had only a limited impact in determining the outcome of the elections. Moreover, the CUP had some success in forging a following among the urban workers and the poor and among their notable patrons.<sup>55</sup> Press backing and urban rallies are significant manifestations of how elections encouraged participation beyond the polls, but provide a too-favorable picture of the overall electoral support that the Entente enjoyed.

The elections were held in the middle of the war with Italy. Foreign crises that threatened the Ottoman state more often than not strengthened decentralist, even separatist, tendencies in Syria; but the impact of Italy's bombardment of Beirut at the time of electoral decision may have operated in conflicting ways. It reinforced the need for unity behind the government and gave justification to the use of emergency regulations<sup>56</sup> that placed fresh restrictions on the press and public meetings in the spring of 1912.<sup>57</sup> However, the Italian war also exposed the center's military weakness and forced measures such as the mobilization of local reserve units and their dispatch away from their hometowns,<sup>58</sup> hardly endearing the regime to the Syrians.

The CUP's most valuable asset in the 1912 elections was its control of the resources of the state. The Entente came into existence in large part as a reaction to the CUP's increasing control of the state machinery and drew supporters from those who were purged from the bureaucracy after the revolution. Those in office at the time of the elections, then, were the CUP's natural allies. However, overzealous local officials, and occasionally army officers,<sup>59</sup> often acted on their own initiative against the Entente in order to protect their very own careers and livelihood. The CUP did not inhibit such initiative, although there is evidence that it tried to curb excesses. For instance, when Sharif Ja'far, a cousin of Sharif Husayn of Mecca and the CUP's emissary and campaign propagandist in Syria, reported to Istanbul the violence in Latakia that supporters of the CUP candidate perpetrated, orders went out to the governor to bring an end to the violence and send the suspects to court.<sup>60</sup>

Intimidation was a cornerstone of the CUP policy in the campaign. The committee thus tried to prevail upon the Entente supporters to switch to the CUP, using both the carrot and the stick for this purpose. The Unionist press publicized the names of those who defected from the Entente to join the CUP. While this was a policy used, or perhaps initiated, by the Entente, the CUP outdid its rival.<sup>61</sup> Such publicity served as a kind of opinion poll aimed at influencing the voters. Indeed, conversions may have been engineered through browbeating and payoffs. Once the CUP's resolve not to abandon power became clear, defections followed, though they may have been motivated more by opportunism than by coercion or bribery.

In addition to violence, intimidation, and coercion, many cases of electoral fraud were reported and accusations of flagrant violations made. The authenticity of these reports was not always certain, but there is little doubt that the CUP and its partisans in the provinces did resort to desperate and scandalous measures. Some prominent party leaders in Istanbul were directly targeted: Gümülcineli İsmail, an outspoken opponent of the CUP in the chamber, was drafted into the army at the beginning of the campaign. Rıza Tevfik, philosopher and poet, was detained for having failed to notify the martial law authorities of a speech he gave in Istanbul. The victim of the choicest machination was Lütfi Fikri, arguably the most influential of the Entente leaders. On his way to his hometown, Dersim (in Kurdish Eastern Anatolia), in order to run for election, he stopped over in Beirut and Damascus to campaign for the Entente candidates.<sup>62</sup> When he reached Dersim several days later, he found that the local authorities had rushed and completed the balloting. In addition to these incidents, there were cases of more ordinary election fraud like secret counting and

reporting of votes, ballot stuffing, reapportioning electoral districts, etc. Haqqi al-<sup>ç</sup>Azm, one of the leading pro-Entente voices, enumerated the violations in the Arab provinces in a booklet printed for wide distribution.<sup>63</sup>

To dwell on electoral manipulation, however, and to characterize the 1912 elections as a mismanaged act of window-dressing would obscure their political significance. Despite their tarnished image, the elections witnessed a high degree of contestation, led to new political alignments, and sharpened the differences between the centralists and the decentralists. Nor would it be correct to explain the outcome of these elections by coercion, manipulation, and fraud alone. While in the urban centers a vocal but modest group of professionals, journalists, and merchants rallied around the Entente, in the countryside the CUP was still stronger, and in most places continued to enjoy the support of the notables with whom it had established a marriage of convenience.<sup>64</sup> The CUP's election-time policies demonstrated that it would go to any length to secure a comfortable margin in Parliament. It also became clear that local political leaders would not let their sympathy for a certain party stand in their way to office.

Not surprisingly, the majority that the CUP forged in the new chamber was not a comfortable one. Some deputies had jumped on the CUP bandwagon at the eleventh hour. Still others were an unknown quantity. Therefore, the CUP continued to seek measures that would diminish the powers of Parliament. The government led by Said Paşa, who had acquiesced in the CUP maneuvers by allowing early elections, was incriminated in the public eye. It had become apparent that the CUP domination of the political process could not be removed through constitutional means. In July 1912, a group of army officers sympathetic to the Entente, the Halaskâran (Saviors), intervened with an ultimatum and triggered a familiar series of events that led first to the replacement of Said's Unionist government by Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa's "Grand Cabinet" and then to the dissolution of the chamber.

#### THE ABORTED REELECTION OF 1912

On 5 August 1912, Sultan Reşad called new elections. The campaigning that followed has escaped notice, because the elections were interrupted in October by the outbreak of war in the Balkans, as balloting was under way in some localities. The conduct of the reelection by Ahmed Muhtar Paşa's government suggests that the cabinet consisting of "Old Turks" aspired to rise above the political struggle between the CUP and the Entente in the hope of arbitrating a consensus.

As soon as the sultan dissolved the chamber, the Entente asked for the dismissal of several governors for the security of the upcoming elections. The royal decree of 5 August had stressed the importance of measures that would assure free and fair progress of the elections. A government communique detailed the kinds of fraud and corruption perpetrated by government officials in the previous elections and warned against abuse of official duties.<sup>65</sup> Despite pressure from the Entente, the government did not purge Unionist administrators, who were held responsible for irregularities in the spring elections. Even as the CUP was considering whether or not to boycott the new elections, preparations were under way in the provinces, and

letters of complaint about local officials' interventions started to arrive. With a new non-CUP cabinet, the opponents of the committee in the provinces hoped in vain to dislodge local officials by complaining about alleged misdeeds.<sup>66</sup>

Election petitions suggest that the campaigns were marked by tactics similar to those in the previous elections, with issues taking the backseat to inflammatory accusations and personal attacks. A case in point is a complaint by members of the Abu Khadra family in Jerusalem about the pro-CUP partisanship of the *mutasarrif* of Jerusalem, Mehdi. The petitioners accused the *mutasarrif* of serving champagne on the occasion of the celebration of the national holiday of the Ottoman Caliphate and extending preferential treatment to the Jewish element, to whom he allegedly intended to sell all of Palestine.<sup>67</sup>

The eclipse of the CUP in the fall of 1912 had alarmed the Armenian patriarch and the Jewish grand rabbi, as the CUP had implicitly recognized a quota for their communities.<sup>68</sup> The CUP had informally honored such demands from the mainstream of the non-Muslim communities to prevent the wholesale shift of their vote to the Entente, which actively sought their support. The Armenian patriarch asked the government to encourage the people not to vote along ethnic lines, a practice fostered by party propaganda, while the Grand Rabbi requested the enforcement of the convention "acknowledged in the previous two terms," namely the allotment of four deputyships to the community. The Porte could do little about the Armenian demand; it rejected the Jewish request outright as being contrary to the Electoral Law.<sup>69</sup>

The delay in communicating to the provinces the regulations and instructions concerning the balloting raised questions about the new government's commitment to elections. It was, though, the ongoing war with Italy and warlike stirrings in the Balkans that delayed and then aborted the elections. Before the elections were finally cancelled with the royal decree of 25 October 1912,<sup>70</sup> they had already been concluded in some districts.<sup>71</sup> When the Ottomans entered the Balkan War, Grand Vizier Muhtar Paşa deferred to the beacon of the Ententists, Kamil Paşa, whose good relations with the British were expected to produce a quick and favorable settlement to the disastrous Balkan War.

#### 1914 ELECTIONS

New elections could not be held until the winter of 1913–14. The foreign crisis interrupted the parliamentary process but did not bring an end to political struggles. Unlike Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa, Kamil was determined to use his reappointment as grand vizier to destroy the CUP. The CUP had no political means to fight Kamil Paşa, but military catastrophe provided the CUP with its motive to topple him with a coup in January 1913 and gradually bring the entire cabinet under its strict control. The role that Entente supporters played in the assassination of Grand Vizier Mahmud Shawqat Paşa in June 1913 gave the CUP the pretext to crush the Ententists once and for all.

In addition to Unionist reprisals, the Entente was weakened by its inability to hold together its varied constituent groups and by the loss of some of its natural supporters, when the largely Christian Balkan territories were further dismembered. Furthermore, the CUP embarked on a policy of conciliation with the Arab leaders

and managed to defuse the pro-Entente reform movements in the Arab provinces. With the opposition dispersed, co-opted, and dispirited; with the CUP now in firmer control of the cabinet than ever; and with the Balkan complications having ended with the recapture of Edirne and face-saving agreements for the Ottomans, the Unionists could proceed to undertake fresh elections.

The CUP leadership felt that while forceful interventions in the political process, including a high-handed coup d'état, could be justified on grounds of national emergency, treason, and conspiracy, it was too closely identified with the constitutional movement to desire to flout representative government altogether. But in 1914, the CUP was not simply going through the motions of elections to legitimate itself, even though the absence of a credible opposition would suggest so. The CUP knew too well by now that it was the opposition in "friendly" parliaments, and not in contentious elections, that posed the real challenge to its political supremacy.<sup>72</sup> The parliaments of the Second Constitutional Period did not display the secure majorities of authoritarian regimes, but rather the instability of legislatures more characteristic of participatory regimes, where elections are contested tightly.

After the 1912 elections, the CUP reappraised the implications of a quota-based parliamentary representation. Appeals to communal and regional sentiments had brought political returns during the 1912 campaign. Acceptance of the reality of communal cleavages, rather than insisting that constitutional-representative government would depoliticize them, might offer increased chances for integration. Once communal quotas were guaranteed, there would be greater scope for different ethnic-religious groups to cooperate and form alliances along noncommunal interests. Invoking ethnic or sectarian sentiments would not then pose itself as the natural avenue to obtain votes in elections.<sup>73</sup> Soon after the Unionists seized power in 1913, the minister of the interior, Talat Bey, requested from the Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, former Unionist Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa, a report on the workings of the Austro-Hungarian electoral system and copies of electoral regulations. He wanted to gain insight into how Austria-Hungary dealt with its communal problems.<sup>74</sup> While no changes were made in the Electoral Law prior to the 1914 elections (and the Austrian law as revised in 1907 could hardly offer a good solution<sup>75</sup>), the CUP negotiated with the leaders of the Greek and Armenian communities for parliamentary quotas. These elections also produced a significant increase in the number of Arab deputies compared with previous elections.<sup>76</sup>

The 1914 elections resembled the 1908 elections more than the 1912 elections with no real two-party contest but tactical maneuvers to co-opt candidates into CUP lists. There was, however, politics, and its extralegal continuation in the form of coercion and fraud. The latter elicited bold protests and appeals uncharacteristic of authoritarian regimes. In Hama, twenty-seven of the forty-eight secondary voters signed a petition that alerted the government to the lawlessness that marked the secondary election in neighboring Homs,<sup>77</sup> but the petitioners stressed that government officials were not responsible for these unruly acts of the relatives of certain candidates. Two days later, on Hama's polling day, two-thirds of the secondary voters did not report to the polling site in protest against the events at the Homs election.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, a large number of the secondary voters of Acre refused to vote in protest over irregularities in the Safed and Tiberias elections that assured the election of



candidate ʿAbd al-Fattah even before the Acre vote.<sup>79</sup> From Nablus, some notables sympathetic to the losing candidate, Haidar Tuqan, sent a vituperative letter reporting fraud in balloting and denigrating the character of the successful candidate, Tawfiq Hammad.<sup>80</sup> This complaint was dismissed by the Nablus *mutasarrif*, who, in denying the charges, mentioned that Tuqan had a record of instigating letters with spurious claims. In both Acre and Nablus, the CUP deputies from the 1912 elections, Tuqan and Asʿad al-Shuqayr,<sup>81</sup> were replaced by newcomers. This sampling of election petitions arriving in Istanbul from the Arab provinces in 1914 gives the distinct impression that after calling the elections, Istanbul stood on the sidelines to appraise local forces, rather than seek to manage the elections. If there were electoral irregularities, and the CUP either prompted or tolerated these, it would appear that in many cases the committee switched its patronage from former clients to former challengers.

Indeed, further evidence relating to the 1914 elections does point to a definite change of policy toward accommodating local political forces. An illustration of this change of policy comes from Iraq. The Unionist candidate and former deputy for Ammare, Munir, submitted to Istanbul his grievances about deputy-governor İzzet Bey, who leveled fictitious charges against him and sought to deport him to Basra to prevent his candidacy against the Ententists. Munir expressed fear for his life in Basra—which was the domain of Sayyid Talib, the pro-Entente leader of the Basra Reform Committee—and described the deputy-governor as “the executioner of the Basra inquisition.”<sup>82</sup> İzzet may or may not have had Ententist sympathies, but in 1914 the CUP had made a special effort to bring Talib into the government’s fold and could hardly support Munir, a political foe of the decentralists, in Talib’s own backyard.

As Hermet argues, in authoritarian regimes elections serve as a means of communication with the people, “offering the voters the more or less fictitious opportunity of choosing—or, more precisely, endorsing—the nomination of prominent local people or members of traditional or new local elites who act as their spokesmen in negotiation with the central government.”<sup>83</sup> Many who entered the new Parliament on the CUP lists were in fact independents, some even with sympathies for the Entente.

When Parliament convened in May 1914, the configuration of the chamber corresponded more closely to the current ethnic composition of the empire. However, the elections in themselves were perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the Ottoman parliamentary experience in the last few years of the empire. World War I broke out and the Ottoman government entered it within months of the opening of Parliament. During the term that lasted from 1914 to 1918, Parliament was even less of a forum in policy making. Wartime cabinets assumed legislative prerogatives by issuing a series of provisional laws, as Parliament was put on long periods of recess. Nonetheless, attention was paid to filling vacant spots, which arose from resignations, through by-elections. When the Ottomans terminated Lebanon’s special administration in the thick of the war, the government conducted elections in Lebanon for three deputies.<sup>84</sup> On the whole, these elections allowed the regime to perpetuate the myth of a representative assembly and of popular sovereignty embodied in it.

The next elections were due in 1918. In March 1918, a constitutional amendment provided for the extension of a parliamentary term in the case of ongoing war

requiring mass mobilization. Accordingly, a law was passed on 1 April 1918, to extend the current parliamentary term for one year.<sup>85</sup> However, following the Armistice and the fall of the Unionist government, Sultan Vahideddin prevailed upon Grand Vizier Tevfik Paşa and engineered the dissolution of Parliament in December 1918.

After delaying tactics<sup>86</sup> and two cabinet changes, elections for the last Ottoman Parliament were decreed in October 1919. Even though the dissolution of the CUP had led to a proliferation of political parties, several of them, including a revived Liberty and Entente, boycotted the elections due to the attempts of former Unionists, who were now leading the incipient movement “the Defense of Rights” (*Müdafaa-ı Hukuk*) in Anatolia, to influence these elections.<sup>87</sup> Indeed, mostly the candidates of the Anatolian independence movement won seats in the last Parliament that convened in Istanbul on 12 January 1920. The new chamber’s endorsement of the National Pact, which had been drafted by Mustafa Kemal and his friends, triggered the Allied occupation of Istanbul on 16 March 1920, and the arrest and deportation of several deputies. A hostage of the Entente powers, the sultan dissolved the last Ottoman Parliament on 11 April 1920. The immediate reconstitution of Parliament in Ankara as the Turkish Grand National Assembly belongs to the Kemalist period.

#### CONCLUSION

An examination of Ottoman elections highlights transformations in social and political processes in the empire. The constitutional experiment of 1876–78 was an attempt to arrest separatism and dismemberment by including representatives of religious-sectarian communities in government via a quota-based legislature. The two elections of 1877 were the least democratic, not only because primary elections were omitted, but also because representation was heavily skewed in favor of non-Muslims and core provinces. In 1908, the Electoral Law instituted popular primary elections and eliminated the quota system in the hope of forging an Ottoman unity less shackled by primordial attachments. The Unionists enforced centralization as the means to achieve such unity. While the 1908 elections signified more the celebration of the restoration of a representative regime than a pluralist exercise, in the 1912 elections the balance sheet of three years of centralizing policies provided the agenda for the first true two-party contestation and an empire-wide campaign. The high-handed tactics to which the CUP resorted in these elections and the hollow victory it won pointed to the failure of its centralist policies. Continued dismemberment of Ottoman territories further discredited the committee. The 1914 elections constituted the legitimation of the single-party regime, which the CUP instituted after forcefully attaining power in 1913. This single-party rule was an accommodationist one meant to enforce the reconciliation of Ottoman peoples within the new geopolitical and demographic reality of a predominantly Muslim state.

The Ottoman elections do not fit the criteria of democratic elections. The freedoms of association and speech were not always guaranteed, and the electorate was restricted to tax-paying males. The two-tier electoral system limited the number of electors of deputies to a narrow group susceptible to manipulation. The combination of the lack of clear and ideologically coherent rival programs, intimidation, and the entrenched patron–client relationships was not conducive to the making of an

Ottoman electorate that voted its conscience on the basis of policy issues. However, the conduct of regular elections and by-elections and the nonexistence of financial restrictions for candidacy, socioeconomic electoral categories, literacy qualification, or rigid residency requirements were features of the Ottoman system that compared favorably with contemporary counterparts. The question of to what extent electoral maneuvers, apathy, and mismanagement restricted access to the polls, particularly in the countryside, will remain unanswered until further data are uncovered for electoral analysis.

Regardless of electoral flaws and the number of actual voters, the elections served both to legitimate the constitutional representative system and to promote political citizenship in the empire. They posited the Ottoman subjects as a “people whose political activities were institutionally recognized as something that had to be taken note of.”<sup>88</sup> Electoral politics exercised a mobilizational effect that was not restricted to the polls. It also contributed to the expansion of the public sphere in the Middle East, as the proliferation of journalistic activity, petitions, rallies, and festivals accompanied the campaigns. Thus, elections expedited the processes of social and political mobilization, particularly after 1908. Electoral competition for the allegiance of different social groups enhanced communal consciousness and cleavages, which the imperial government tried to contain by promoting an integrationist ideology and by co-opting the elites of these groups.

## NOTES

*Author's note:* I thank Feroz Ahmad and Michel Le Gall for their helpful criticism. I also thank the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Research Institute in Turkey, and the Academic Senate of the University of California, San Diego, for research support.

<sup>1</sup>This bias is discussed in *Elections without Choice*, ed. Guy Hermet, Richard Rose, and Alain Rouquie (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), where the authors discuss the merits of analyzing noncompetitive elections by examining more contemporary cases.

<sup>2</sup>“Royal Authority and Religious Legitimacy: Morocco's Elections, 1960–1984” in *The Frailty of Authority*, ed. Myron J. Aronoff (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1986), 201.

<sup>3</sup>The irregularity in the intervals of the elections is due to the dissolution of Parliament (except in 1877) by imperial decree triggered by political crisis or imperial emergency. In 1918, Parliament extended its own term on similar grounds, only to be dissolved by the sultan.

<sup>4</sup>Bedi<sup>c</sup> Nuri, *Hakk-ı İntihab* (Istanbul, 1330 [1914]), 164–71. Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 125–30, 148; and idem, “The Advent of the Principle of Representation in the Government of the Ottoman Empire,” in *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East*, ed. William R. Polk and Richard L. Chambers (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 93–108.

<sup>5</sup>*Meclis azasının suret-i intihab ve tayinine dair talimat-ı muvakkate in Anayasalar ve Seçim Kanunları*, ed. Tarhan Erdem (Istanbul: Milliyet, 1983), 135. Robert Devereux, *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), 124.

<sup>6</sup>Pressure from the Great Powers for concessions to Balkan Christians was mounting, with Russia in bellicose preparations. There were two Palace coups in Istanbul engineered by the constitutionalists that ultimately led to the ascension of Abdülhamid to the throne. Meanwhile, conservative and progressive elements at the Porte were contesting the final form of the constitution under draft with the sanction of the new sultan.

<sup>7</sup>This was a rather vague notion that would be interpreted as “notoriety gained through deeds that have incurred the hatred of the people” by the Ministry of the Interior upon inquiry from an electoral

committee in the 1912 elections. *Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BBA) Dahiliye Nezareti Siyasî Kısım (DH-SYS) 50/6-20* (15 February 1912).

<sup>8</sup>Article 68. A particularly useful source for the study of the Ottoman constitution is Tevfik Tarık, *Muaddel Kanun-u Esasi ve İntihab-ı Mebusan Kanunu* (Istanbul: İkbâl, 1327 [1911]) that includes the proposed and actual amendments of 1909. See also Erdem, *Anayasalar*, 9; Devereux, *The First Ottoman*, 145–46.

<sup>9</sup>“Chamber” will henceforth refer to the Chamber of Deputies.

<sup>10</sup>Devereux, *The First Ottoman*, 200–203.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 126–27.

<sup>12</sup>Hasan Kayalı, “Arabs and Young Turks: Turkish–Arab Relations in the Second Constitutional Period of the Ottoman Empire (1908–1918)” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1988), 17–20.

<sup>13</sup>Philip Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus 1860–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Engin Akarlı, “‘Abdülhamid II’s Attempt to Integrate Arabs into the Ottoman System” in *Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period*, ed. David Kushner (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1986), 74–89.

<sup>14</sup>Moreover, even though the regulations did not stipulate proportional representation for individual non-Muslim sects in mixed provinces, the authorities tried to ensure proportional sectarian representation. Devereux, *The First Ottoman*, 138–45.

<sup>15</sup>The law was endorsed with the royal decree of 2 August 1908. Recai Okandan, *Amme Hukukumuzun Anahtarları* (Istanbul: Fakülteler Matbaası, 1971), 1:249.

<sup>16</sup>Tarık, *Muaddel*, 55, 76.

<sup>17</sup>The Kemalists reduced the voting age and eliminated the tax-payment requirement. See Tarık Zafer Tunaya, “Elections in Turkish History,” *Middle Eastern Affairs* 5 (April 1954): 118.

<sup>18</sup>In smaller *sancaks* a male population of 25,000 would be sufficient for one deputy. This would correspond to a total population of 50,000. A *sancak* would be entitled to a second deputy if it had a minimum of 75,000 male residents. Thus, two *sancaks* with approximate total populations of 50,000 and 149,999 would both be entitled to one deputy.

<sup>19</sup>The ambiguity in the law was maintained, while its widest interpretation was encouraged by the government to include in addition to the property (*emlak*) tax, land (*öşür*) tax, and animal (*ağnam*) tax. See Okandan, *Amme*, 250, n. 25. For an official interpretation of the tax requirement that includes road (*tarik*) tax as well, see DH-SYS 103-1/1-7. Ministry of the Interior to the Province of Beirut (19 September 1912).

<sup>20</sup>Ahmed Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim* (Istanbul: Yenilik, 1970), 1:89.

<sup>21</sup>PRO (Public Record Office, Britain), FO (Foreign Office) 195/2271. Fontana to Lowther, Tripoli, 19 November 1908. I am indebted to Prof. Michel Le Gall for this reference.

<sup>22</sup>Peter J. Taylor and R. J. Johnston, ed., *Geography of Elections* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), 43.

<sup>23</sup>The size of the *nahiye* (subdistrict) population in the primary voting (Art. 33) and *sancak* population in the secondary voting (Art. 46) determined the number of candidates. Thus, a secondary voter could vote for only as many candidates as the male population of his *sancak* warranted, but his preference could go to someone outside the particular *sancak* in that province.

<sup>24</sup>An amendment to Article 72 on 21 March 1916, provided for candidacy in up to three provinces (Erdem, *Anayasalar*, 24).

<sup>25</sup>İsmail Hakkı (Babanzade), a *Tanin* columnist and later deputy for Bagdad, wrote that “sending ignoramus as deputies for the sake of sending provincials” would denigrate the honor of Parliament and that, to the extent possible, enlightened sons who have spent time in places like Istanbul, Izmir, and Beirut should be picked. (*Tanin*, 10 September 1908).

<sup>26</sup>If not, the box would be sealed, and a second call would be extended to the absentees.

<sup>27</sup>*Usul-ü İntihab* (Istanbul, 1329 [1913]).

<sup>28</sup>Alistair Cole and Peter Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections since 1789* (Aldershot: Gower, 1989), 36–37.

<sup>29</sup>In municipal elections, unlike parliamentary elections, franchise and candidacy requirements included payment of *specified* minimum taxes (*Tanin*, 5 September 1908).

<sup>30</sup>The only complaint related to the tax requirement that I have encountered was lodged against a secondary voter. As the ministry was quick to point out, there was no tax requirement for secondary

voters or candidates for deputy. DH-SYS 103-1/1-7. Ministry of the Interior to the Province of Beirut (19 September 1912).

<sup>31</sup>Hüseyin Cahid, editor of *Tanin*, favored weighted votes in favor of graduates of higher schools (24 September 1908). This was the case in England even after the establishment of full enfranchisement in 1918. Businessmen and university graduates were entitled to a second vote until 1948. Andrew Reeve and Alan Ware, *Electoral Systems* (London: Routledge, 1992), 35, 64.

<sup>32</sup>The electoral law of Iran divided the voters into six classes: (1) the royal house and the Qajar tribe, (2) the ulama and religious students, (3) nobles and *sayyids*, (4) merchants, (5) landowners and peasants, and (6) guilds. In each electoral district these groups met separately to elect a representative. Tehran was accorded 60 seats out of 156. Edward G. Browne, *A Brief Narrative of Recent Events in Persia* (London: Luzac and Co., 1909), 16–17, 67.

<sup>33</sup>This status of Istanbul became particularly problematic in the first elections of 1877, when deputies needed to be selected by provincial councils. By special arrangement, Istanbul's secondary electors were determined in a primary. Devereux, *The First Ottoman*, 130–35.

<sup>34</sup>Quoted by Guy Hermet in "State Controlled Elections: A Framework" in Hermet et al., *Elections*, 2. Original quote in Gramsci, *Passato e Presente* (Turin: Einaudi, 1952), 158–59.

<sup>35</sup>In the Hijaz, balloting took place only in the towns. Town leaders in Jidda designated 600 notables, who voted for 25 electors. The latter voted for the one deputy allocated to the *sancak* of Jidda. PRO, FO 195/2320, Monahan to Lowther, no. 97, Jidda, 5 November 1908.

<sup>36</sup>With *Tanin* as the strongest pro-Unionist voice and *İkdam*, *Sabah*, and *Yeni Gazete* supporting Ahrar. Tevfik Çavdar, "*Müntehib-i Sani*" *'den Seçmene* (Ankara: V Yayınları, 1987), 6.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>38</sup>PRO, FO 195/2320, Monahan to Lowther, no. 99, 10 November 1908.

<sup>39</sup>Çavdar, *Müntehib-i*, 7–8; Reşad Ekrem Koçu, "Türkiye'de Seçimin Tarihi, 1887–1950," *Tarih Dünyası* 1:181–82; Zafer Toprak, "1908 Seçimleri ve 'Meb'usan Hatıraları," *Tarih ve Toplum* (August 1988), supplement.

<sup>40</sup>Kayalı, "Arabs and Young Turks," 97–98.

<sup>41</sup>*Takvim-i Vekai*, (10 February 1909).

<sup>42</sup>Compare with Hilda Sabato, "Citizenship, Political Participation and the Formation of the Public Sphere in Buenos Aires 1850s–1880s," *Past and Present* 136 (August 1992), 139–63.

<sup>43</sup>For the Entente's program, see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler* (Istanbul: Hürriyet, 1988), 1:287–95.

<sup>44</sup>The Porte asked for a more stringent application of the Turkish requirement in Rhodes, for instance: "Candidates will be required in these elections to be able to read and, to some extent, write Turkish." DH-SYS 50/6-20 (15 February 1912).

<sup>45</sup>Ironically, the CUP was in fact trying to enhance these by revising Article 35 of the constitution and thus facilitating the dissolution of the chamber by the sovereign. It hoped to manipulate extended royal authority against the opposition.

<sup>46</sup>Twenty thousand copies of *Açıksöz* were printed and widely distributed. DH-SYS 53/46 (17 April 1912).

<sup>47</sup>Ali Birinci, *Hürriyet ve İtilâf Fırkası* (Istanbul: Dergah, 1990), 127.

<sup>48</sup>Fevzi Demir, "İzmir Sancağında 1912 Meclis-i Mebusan Seçimleri," in *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* (Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü), 1:168, 174.

<sup>49</sup>Bagdadis wrote numerous petitions and complaints forcing Cemal to defend his policies to Istanbul. This he did by instigating a progovernment petition campaign and publicizing a statement that he elicited from the province's electoral inspection committee that denied any gubernatorial intervention. DH-SYS 83-1/2-42 (12 and 20 March 1912).

<sup>50</sup>Rashid Khalidi, "The 1912 Election Campaign in Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16 (November 1984): 461–74.

<sup>51</sup>Demir, "İzmir," 182.

<sup>52</sup>Khalidi, "The 1912 Election," 463.

<sup>53</sup>DH-SYS 65-6 (27 March 1912).

<sup>54</sup>Sabri Sayarı has argued that this happened in Turkey only after the establishment of the multiparty regime in the Republican period. "Political Patronage in Turkey," in *Patrons and Clients in Mediterranean Societies*, ed. Ernest Gellner and John Waterbury (London: Duckworth, 1977), 104.

<sup>55</sup>Kayalı, "Arabs and Young Turks," 156–57.

<sup>56</sup>Khalidi, "The 1912 Election," 461, 465.

<sup>57</sup>Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), 103.

<sup>58</sup>*Genel Kurmay Başkanlığı Askeri Tarih ve Stratejik Etüt Başkanlığı* (ATASE) (Archives of the Turkish General Chief of Staff), Ottoman–Italian War 25/118-10, no. 2-5, Governor Hazım (Beirut) to Ministry of War (?) (30 November 1911).

<sup>59</sup>See DH-SYS 83-1/2-29 (8 April 1912) on the intimidation of secondary voters by army officers in Tripoli.

<sup>60</sup>DH-SYS 83-1/2-16 (31 March 1912).

<sup>61</sup>In Bagdad, for instance, the vali reported that half of the members who first joined the initiative to form a local Entente branch, and one-third of the actual founding members later announced their resignations, many in the press. DH-SYS 65/6 (27 March 1912).

<sup>62</sup>For an account of the Entente campaign led by Lütfi Fikri in Syrian cities, see Khalidi, "The 1912 Election," 467.

<sup>63</sup>*Haqā'iq ʿan al-intikhābāt al-niyābiyya* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa al-Akhbār, 1912).

<sup>64</sup>Hüseyin Cahid, a staunch Unionist, looked back to CUP loyalists in the countryside as men who ran after their day-to-day material interests and who did not share the ideals of the CUP. "Meşrutiyet Hatıraları," *Fikir Hareketleri* 123 (1936), 293. (Quoted in Birinci, *Hürriyet*, 125).

<sup>65</sup>DH-SYS 103-1/1-5 (13 August 1912). Recai Okandan, *Amme Hukukumuzda İkinci Meşrutiyet Devri* (Istanbul: Kenan, 1947), 166.

<sup>66</sup>See, for instance, *Dahiliye Nezareti Muhaberat-ı Umumiye İdaresi Mütenevvia Kısım* (DH-MTV) 22-2/14 (3 September 1912) for a complaint about the *kaymakam* of Jenin in Nablus, who was allegedly campaigning for the election of the Unionist candidate Amin ʿAbd al-Hādi; also, DH-MTV 18/58 (2 September 1912) about *mutasarıf* Ragıb's visits to the villages "in order to exert his influence in these elections as he did in the previous ones."

<sup>67</sup>DH-SYS 103-2/2-5 (22 September 1912; 30 September 1912, 13 October 1912).

<sup>68</sup>Feroz Ahmad, "Unionist Relations with the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish Communities of the Ottoman Empire," in *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 2 vols., ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis, (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1982); Braude and Lewis, *The Central Lands*, 1:422; Hasan Kayalı, "Jewish Representation in the Ottoman Parliaments" in *The Jews of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Avigdor Levy, (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1994).

<sup>69</sup>DH-SYS 103-1/1-6 (18 September 1912; 23 September 1912; 31 October 1912).

<sup>70</sup>Birinci, *Hürriyet*, 180.

<sup>71</sup>For instance, in Ammare (Basra). DH-SYS 103-1/1-8 (3 October 1912).

<sup>72</sup>Ahmad, *Young Turks*, 143.

<sup>73</sup>Engin Akarlı analyzes how confessionalism contributed in *mutasarıfıyya* Lebanon to the creation of a "public sphere and basically secular and centralized governmental system," in *The Long Peace: Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 161–62. As Akarlı argues, Ottoman statesmen played an active role in shaping the Lebanese political system, the prewar success of which may have inspired similar political strategies on the imperial level.

<sup>74</sup>BBA *Dahiliye Nezareti Kalem-i Mahsus Müdiriyeti* (DH-KMS) 15/7 (16 February 1913).

<sup>75</sup>It exacerbated ethnic tensions by correlating provincial parliamentary quotas to amount of taxes collected in that province. Andrew McLaren Carstairs, *A Short History of Electoral Systems in Western Europe* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 127.

<sup>76</sup>Ahmad, *Young Turks*, 144–45, 156.

<sup>77</sup>It mentioned that whip-wielding thugs stood at the gate of the town hall, who insulted and intimidated the secondary voters and put marks on their ballot papers. DH-SYS 122/5-1 (27 April 1914).

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 29 April 1914.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.* From the Acre notables and members of inspection committee to the Grand Vizierate (7 May 1914).

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*, 2 April 1914.

<sup>81</sup>Shuqayr was the CUP's key Arab delegate in the 1912 campaign, and later, in Cemal Paşa's Fourth Army headquarters in Syria. See Ali Fuat Erden, *Birinci Dünya Harbinde Suriye Hatıraları* (Istanbul, 1954), 1:137–39.

<sup>82</sup>DH-SYS 122/2. From Munir to the Ministry of the Interior (undated) and to the Ministry of Justice (16 January 1914).

<sup>83</sup>“State-Controlled Elections” in Hermet et al., *Elections*, 14.

<sup>84</sup>BBA *Dahiliye Nezareti İdare-i Umumiye* 12-2/4-4 (19 November 1916).

<sup>85</sup>Erdem, *Anayasalar*, 25–26.

<sup>86</sup>DH-KMS 54-3/36. Grand Vizier Damad Ferid Paşa advises the conduct of elections according to the “special regulations,” whereas no such regulations had been received by the provinces (30 July 1919).

<sup>87</sup>Tunaya, *Türkiyede Siyasî Partiler* (Istanbul, 1952), 452–54; idem, “Osmanlı İmparatorluğundan Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Hükümeti Rejimine Geçiş,” in *Türk Siyasal Hayatının Gelişimi*, ed. Ersin Kalaycıoğlu and Ali Yaşar Sarıbay (Istanbul, 1986), 298.

<sup>88</sup>Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 265.